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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
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BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
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CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
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GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
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KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
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SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
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WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Tuxedo	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory, that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Good morning, Honourable Speaker. Can you please call second reading of Bill 216, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), followed by Bill 212, The Asian Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will resume debate on—that we will proceed with second reading debate on Bill 216, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), followed by debate on Bill 212, The Asian Heritage Month Act, days, weeks, months—commemoration of days, weeks, months act amended.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 216—The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

The Speaker: The honourable—we'll start with Bill 216.

The honourable member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy)—Seine River. It's early.

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I would like to move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle), that Bill 216, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Cross: I rise today to present Bill 216, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act. This bill recognizes the month of May as a month for small businesses. It uplifts them, celebrates them and reminds us all of the importance of shopping locally within our province and communities.

It also recognizes the incredible economic and cultural contributions these businesses have made to our province and serves to educate and spread awareness of the many benefits that shopping locally can have for our communities and for ourselves.

Small businesses make up 95 per cent of our business sector here in Manitoba. We have over 40,000 small businesses. While they span across various industries, from agriculture to retail to tourism, they have one thing in common: they are run by Manitobans for Manitobans.

These businesses are community members who care about your local neighbourhoods as much as you do. They have the same concerns, the same interests and want to see local communities thrive and invest in our collective future.

We know that Manitobans want to use their money ethically, and supporting local businesses is the best way to do that. Not only can we rest easy knowing how products were made and who is profiting from them, but supporting small businesses means reinvesting in your community.

Of each dollar spent at a small retail business here in Manitoba, 66 cents stays in the local provincial economy. Two thirds of that dollar will be recirculated right here at home, benefiting Manitobans.

By comparison, each dollar spent at an online giant will only keep 8 cents in the local economy. That means buying local reinvests eight times the amount of money back into Manitoba's future.

But the contributions of small businesses in this province can't be just summed up with numbers. Small businesses are part of the rich soil that feeds Manitoba's cultural garden. Coffee shops give us places to meet with old friends and hear local bands, talented artisans from diverse backgrounds share their culture with us through art and food and young entrepreneurs give us hope for our province's future.

Small businesses are dedicated to giving back to their communities. They sponsor community events and sports teams, taking a leading role in community affairs and make charitable contributions of time and money to local organizations.

Think of, for example, a locally owned restaurant. That restaurant will not only provide delicious warm meals and a community space for gathering, but provide employment to community members. They can buy their ingredients and décor from other local retailers, host fundraisers for local charities. The employees who work at that restaurant will spend their wages at the local grocer, the local florist and on and on. That money stays in circulation within the community. And just like that, one locally owned restaurant can have an incredible positive impact on so many people.

We are all trying to make better, more conscious use of our money, and by shifting our spending towards small businesses, we can make sure our money contributes to a more robust economic backbone and a more vibrant soul for our province.

Now, small businesses are a topic close to my heart—quite literally. My constituency office is right next to the St. Norbert Farmers' Market. Members of my community and my own family are small-business owners, and every day, I see the good that they do, the investments they make financially and culturally into their communities. They inspire me to stand here before you today introducing this bill. They show me how small businesses play a critical role in fostering inclusive economic growth.

Small businesses offer opportunity for empowerment. In Manitoba, 12 per cent of our small businesses are owned by women, a number we are continuously trying to increase. We have programs targeted towards Indigenous youth, gender-diverse people and more, to inspire and support their entrepreneurial spirits.

Supporting small businesses means supporting Manitoba and supporting the vibrant diversity of our province. When we uplift our small businesses, we uplift all of our diverse and vibrant communities. They are the cultural heartbeat of our neighbourhoods.

* (10:10)

Like all of us, when I think of Manitoba, what makes me proud to live here isn't the local Walmart or McDonald's. If someone asks me for recommendations on where to shop and where to eat in Winnipeg, it's small businesses that come to mind, representations of Manitoba that I am proud to support. These small businesses will be able to utilize the small business month as a way of marketing and promoting themselves, helping to bring in more customers and revenue, and bring more eyes onto the local biz networks and groups that we have here in Manitoba.

However, small businesses will still face so many challenges. While many of us want to shop local, life gets busy and convenience can often take priority. The intense competition from multinational companies can severely impact the success of small businesses as well. Business support programs were underfunded by the previous government and with the financial impact of the pandemic, small businesses have struggled to recover.

Now, more than ever, we need to be uplifting and recognizing the struggles of small businesses and encourage all Manitobans to support them. Their resilience in the face of adversity is admirable and a testament to the indomitable spirit of Manitobans everywhere.

Affordability has been one of the core tenets of our government. Our approach has been to make life more affordable and to help to alleviate the struggles of small businesses that have been caused by rising inflation rates. Cutting the gas tax gave Manitoba the cheapest gas in the country, making it more affordable for small-business owners to operate.

In my home constituency of Seine River, we have dozens of small businesses centred around landscaping, farming and greenhouses. I have already seen how these measures have improved the lives of these

business owners, making it more affordable for them to operate.

The security system rebate will also help keep the homes and businesses of Manitobans safe and more affordable. While government can't do everything, we can do something. And making this rebate available is a step in the right direction, making it more affordable for Manitobans to secure their businesses.

We want to show all Manitobans that small businesses are important to us. We recognize the challenges that they face, the incredibly important role they fulfill in our communities, and we thank them for their resiliency.

Manitobans, I implore you to get out into your local and—communities. Connect with your small local businesses and show them your support. For the rest of May, I encourage you to follow small businesses on social media, look at your local bulletins and spread the word in your community about your favourite local vendors. Why not try a new restaurant, look for locally-sourced products on the grocery store shelves or check out your local farmers' market.

By supporting our small businesses and helping them grow, we keep competition alive in our local economies, making life more affordable for all Manitobans and making it easier for all of us to buy local in the future.

Manitoba is home to so many amazing small businesses who are so much more than just economic entities. They are integral to the cultural vibrancy of Manitoba.

And by recognizing May as Manitoba small business month, we can put the spotlight on local businesses and encourage everyone to help them continue to thrive.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): As a small-business owner for all my life, I have some serious reservations about the intent of this bill.

But I'd certainly like to ask the member opposite who in the community—the small-business community—did she speak with about this bill in drafting, and were any of those members outside of her constituency?

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): Thank you for the question.

I did quite a bit of consultation. I began with consulting with Chuck Davidson of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, who is very supportive of the idea and will be joining us sometime this morning. I spoke to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who were thrilled at the idea; they're thrilled at the idea of being able to market supporting local. I spoke with the owner of A&S Homes. I have spoken with numerous business owners in the downtown area.

I have done my consultation. I'm from a family of small-business owners, and I don't see any reservations anyone could have with a bill that encourages folks to support our local economy.

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): Well, first of all, I'd like to thank my colleague for introducing this very important bill. I would like to ask my colleague about small businesses.

The small-business community is diverse, resilient and they work hard for Manitobans. Their range of services can vary from the agricultural to retail sector, and they employ many people in our province.

My question to my colleague is: What are some of the ways small businesses contribute to Manitoba?

MLA Cross: Thank you to my colleague for that important question.

Small businesses make so many contributions to Manitoba. They represent over 95 per cent of all businesses in this province. They provide quality services, good jobs. As mentioned previously in my speech, they—every dollar spent, 66 cents of that dollar will stay in our province and be recirculated. They enhance the prosperity and cultural richness of our local communities.

It is my hope that the passage of this bill will celebrate small businesses for all of these reasons.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): How does this bill—and I thank the member for bringing this bill forward.

How does this bill address specific challenges small businesses face today?

MLA Cross: Thank you so much for that important question.

I know as a small-business owner myself—and, you know, there are many colleagues in here are also small-business owners—one of the biggest things that we're dealing right now, folks coming back into our shops, our stores and supporting local. Things have been tough. There's been a difficult time trying to recover from the pandemic, and more than anything, we need Manitobans to support locally owned businesses.

MLA Kennedy: Small businesses are important for our communities, building quality services, creating jobs and fostering a sense of local identity.

Bill 216 aims to celebrate small businesses and highlight their importance to Manitoba's economy.

My question for my colleague is: What was her inspiration behind the bill?

MLA Cross: Thank you for that great question.

I grew up in a family of small-business owners. My father was a journeyman bricklayer who owned his own business. I am married to a small-business owner, I am the sister of a small-business owner and I am the mother of a small-business owner. And so inspiration came from my family, initially.

But after speaking with so many other small-business owners, I understand the struggles that they are experiencing right now and, as I mentioned, one of the biggest ones is getting Manitobans to support local to keep dollars invested in this province.

I don't think it's tough to be inspired to want to help, to find inspiration to help other people, to make sure that people—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): The MLA mentioned that 95 per cent of all businesses are small business.

Could she define for us what she means by small business? Is it geographic? Is it based on gross sales? Is it number of stores, number of employees? Could she tell us how she defines small business?

MLA Cross: Thank you for that question.

When I say 95 per cent of businesses are small in Manitoba, I'm talking about the businesses that are not multinational corporations. I am talking about businesses that are run by Manitobans for Manitobans. I'm talking about those business owners that put their heart and soul and sweat equity into their business every single day.

Small-business owners—many folks who don't own a business think, oh, great, must be nice to own a business. Yet, they don't realize the amount of work that goes into being a small-business owner.

Everything is on that owner. There is no—they're the bookkeeper; they are the labourer; they are the marketing team; they kind of do it all. And so, when I talk about small business—

* (10:20)

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

MLA Kennedy: Our NDP team is thankful for the contributions small businesses make. They employ many Manitobans with good jobs, keep our hard-earned dollars in the provincial economy and continue to find ways to give back to their local communities. This makes for a large impact that deserves to be recognized.

My question to my colleague is: What initiatives or activities do you envision will take place during small businesses month?

MLA Cross: Thank you to my colleague for that great question.

In my consultations, in speaking with folks who support small businesses, one of the things they mentioned was, if we look at using the month of May—and Chuck Davidson in particular mentioned that Manitoba Day is May 12. It only makes sense to support—to encourage the support of small businesses in that month.

We could look at producing a calendar where you highlight a specific business sector or a type of business owner over the course of that month. I envision marketing campaigns being put on by businesses, BIZ groups, the Chambers of Commerce, to encourage Manitobans to support local.

My hope—

The Speaker: Time is expired.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Turtle Mountain): I just wanted to ask the member, being that she is from a

small-business community, or her family has, and I know myself, I come from a small-business community, I just want—like, challenges, when it comes to minimum wage, addressing that.

Does this bill address minimum wage, making sure that families, small businesses can actually achieve that when it comes to the minimum wage?

And also, taxation, when it comes to personal exemptions and stuff like that, or are—we increase the tax rate. Is this going to be addressed when it comes to this bill?

MLA Cross: Thank you for that thoughtful question.

The purpose of this bill is, it's a starting point. It's a starting point where we can start honouring and commemorating small-business owners. I'm surprised that this hasn't been done sooner. As a small-business owner, I understand quite sincerely the challenges folks face in trying to operate their businesses.

When you talk about minimum wage, I really do believe that when people are paid fair wages and they have a good income, they have more discretionary income to spend at our small businesses. I think we need to start thinking more that way.

I know, for our own personal business, during the pandemic, some folks who were receiving CERB, for example, had a little bit more discretionary income than they normally do—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

MLA Kennedy: Our NDP team is taking action to help small businesses after years of rising costs. We started doing this by cutting the provincial gas tax, which made Manitoba's inflation rate the lowest in the country. This is just the start, as we lower their costs and help all Manitobans take home larger paycheques.

My question to my colleague is: What can we do to continuing supporting small businesses and local entrepreneurs?

MLA Cross: Thank you to my colleague for that question.

I think the No. 1 thing that we can all do is think about the choices we make when we spend our dollars. A good example would be grocery shopping. Why not support a local bakery to purchase your bread or your buns or desserts for special occasions?

Why not use a local butcher to purchase your meat products? Why not attend the St. Norbert Farmers' Market

or any other farmers' market, for that matter, to purchase eggs or to purchase produce?

There are so many things that we can do to support local, and it starts by the choices that we make as a consumer.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I've owned multiple small businesses over the years, but my roots are in agriculture, and I grew up on a farm, which I think we can agree is a small business, especially the one in particular that I was on was.

But—so, can the member talk about the consultations that, maybe, they have had with Keystone Ag Producers, Manitoba Beef Producers, canola growers, flax association, beekeepers' association, poultry association—just list some of those farmers and commodity groups that the member has consulted with?

MLA Cross: Thank you for that question.

I spent significant time, actually, with producers. In particular, in—at the St. Norbert Farmers' Market, I spent several Saturdays sitting and speaking with vendors, speaking with folks about the importance of supporting local, supporting their small farms, supporting farmers in general.

I have great respect for farmers in our province. They feed us. And as someone who is a part owner in a butcher shop, I can tell you how important that industry is to our personal business.

And so my consultations were with the folks that were in those spaces, but along with speaking with the Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who thought this was a fantastic way to begin our journey to support small businesses.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I'd like to thank the member opposite for bringing this bill forward as a very proud small-business owner.

My journey in small business started 39 years ago: 16 years old, I started my first business. It was spraying lawns, chemical application fertilizer and weed treatment. I worked at that business very, very hard, and I found along the way the people that helped me get that business successful were other

small-business owners. People who looked at myself and being very young, gave me the inspiration to keep going when weather was bad or finances were poor. The—kind of gave me a little bit of a hope of what's going on.

And one of the people I talked to had said, if you—I don't know if you have ever seen the poster, but there's a poster of a frog about to be eaten by a large bird. And yet, the frog reaches out, and he's got his hand wrapped around the bird's neck, and it says: Never give up. And that's truly what small business is; you never give up.

Anybody who's ever had to face a financial loss in business knows that comes out of the owners' pockets.

And there's phenomenal business owners that contribute to our communities. They provide so much abundance in our economy by hiring people locally to come and work in the establishments. And a lot of those people learn from that business and perhaps even move on and create their own type of businesses that enhance what happens in that industry.

I went from being 16 years old having a lawn-spraying company to eventually owning a machine shop here in Winnipeg that employed 70 people, ran 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And we had everybody from every diverse background. I talk about it as the United Nations of employment industry. We looked at our people in the workforce and the people who supported us, the material suppliers, the employees, the—our legal representation, our accounting people.

And I often talk to people about the importance in small business, and I let people know if you have to pick—and pick a hierarchy of who is more important, would you pick the employees, would you pick the suppliers or would you pick the customers?

And everybody, depends on which side of the table you're on, will pick one or the other. And if you talk to the employees, they say: of course it's the employees; without us, you can't make any products. And if you talk to the suppliers, they say: well, without us, you have no raw goods to make your products from. And then if you talk to the customers, the customers will tell you: without us, you will have no revenue and your products will not be sold.

And the answer to that is, you need to foster a relationship with all of them. All of them are equally important to your business and equally important for your business survival.

And you see large corporations, as the member opposite said, that the money doesn't stay here in our province. And large corporations, they come in and they say: you got to cut your costs; you got to bring your costs down if you want to supply to us. And ultimately what happens is they're heartless. They have no care or consideration for the small business, and they keep eroding that profit until nothing is left. And then they move to the next supplier, because everybody wants to get that big contract.

* (10:30)

So when you have small businesses support each other—and profit is not a bad word in the business community. You want your supplier to make a profit, because you want them to be around for the long run.

After I left my business—machine shop business and I got into the fabrication of buildings, and I've been doing that for the last 24 years, I'm proud to say that every single person I established a relationship with at that point is either still connected to the business or supplying the business.

And what I mean connected to the business, 24 years ago, I had hired a gentleman to work for me by the name of Rob Austen. Rob Austen was a phenomenal employee. He showed up every day. He had the right attitude. He's a big strapping guy; he's six-foot-seven. He's got a gentle personality, and he always treated every single customer with the utmost respect.

When I decided to run for the nomination for Selkirk and I wanted to become the MLA, I reached out to Rob Austen to be my campaign manager. And I'm proud to say that, now, Rob Austen is my CA. He does a wonderful job every day with the same attitude. And it's those relationships that you develop in business with the community.

I get calls back from customers. A lot of our business is done on referral, and we do business North American wide. I got a call from people—and this happens quite often, but just on the weekend—who had bought a building from me 21 years ago and asked if we can show up, take it down and move it to their new location. That's pretty awesome when you have those kind of relationships.

We had another person who's out in Hecla Island also give me a call last week and asked if we would be able to take the building down from there, but their new property won't be ready. I said, not a problem, I'll hook you up with my son who runs the business. He'll

take down the building; we'll store it at our location until you're ready. And that's what small business does.

When small business comes into a community, they do much more than just provide employment. The social groups that contact us, the people who are getting married or trying to do fundraising are constantly asking the businesses to donate funds to help out the local—whether it's the local couple getting married or the local club trying to raise some funds. We have donated greenhouses for projects moving forward. We have given of time.

There was an event in Lockport called the Lockport children's festival. We got a call out that the crew that was supposed to put up the event wouldn't come out because it was colder than -40° . It was -52° with the wind chill. I had asked every one of our crew at that time—we had eight guys—if they would like to come out and help out for this event, and we showed up and we got those event tents put up at -52° with the wind chill.

Because that's what a small business does: it gives back to the community over and over and over and over again. You constantly have ability to take a look and do what's right.

And as government, we need to celebrate that. And we need to celebrate that and show them how important small business is.

Taking a look at a business and saying, thank you for everything you do, but we're removing the school tax exemption, is not beneficial to a small business. Every dollar raised or every dollar lost falls on the back of that owner. Having more stumbling blocks, having more bills to pay, having the increase of the carbon tax on their heating of that business hurts that business. It stops you from hiring people. It stops you from giving wage increases.

A lot of companies don't have the ability to provide group insurance to their employees. Fortunately for us, we can do that, but every time we have more and more government-directed cost associated, it makes it more difficult to provide those services.

We want our employees to come in with the right attitude, and we will show them how treated—how we should be treated and how loved they are in our organization, and we want them to eventually retire with us. We want to develop families in the small-business community.

And I see that in every business that I knock on the doors with or interact with. They're there for the

long term and really want to be a part of the community.

We need to take a look at what's really important for small business and make sure that the legislation brought forward in these Chambers represents what we need to do for small business, because they employ so many people in our workforce. They generate so much economy that we have for allowing people to be bonused, for flexibility of vacation days. We need to really respect that it's the business owners that put their funds on the line, their funds at risk every day, and we need to make sure that we're not jeopardizing that risk.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: No other members?

Is—the honourable member for Red River North.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Again, it's a pleasure to get up in the House and speak today to the small business month act presented by my colleague across the way in government.

I just wanted to put a little history on the record for some folks, maybe, that aren't familiar with—my wife and I had our own business for over 30 years, small business. We started our business, Honourable Deputy Speaker, from the spare bedroom of our home in Windsor Park, a small trucking firm. It was—the time, we had two employees: myself as a driver, of course, and estimator in the evenings, and we had one fellow working for us part-time when it got busy.

And we grew our company to the point where we had to get out of the house and into an office in a building, because we needed a warehouse, because now we're offering storage. So we rented a small warehouse and moved the—moved our office in there and happy to continue to grow our business and, actually, ended up hiring more staff and put another truck on the road.

And fast-forwarding ahead about 15 years, Honourable Deputy Speaker, we were at a point where we ended up purchasing a warehouse in Winnipeg—a matter of fact, on Spruce in the Weston industrial park. And I always said to customers that, oh, I'm looking for your office; I said, you remember the old Garbage Hill just north of—or just south of—pardon me, north of Polo Park. Well, we're just behind that on Spruce Street; you can't miss us. Come by and see our new office and warehouse.

And we ended up growing our business from there to expanding to Brandon, Manitoba, where we

ended up getting involved in the local market in Brandon doing store deliveries for The Brick, United Furniture and a number of other large companies in Brandon.

And also had the privilege of moving our brave men and women within Shilo and throughout Brandon and throughout this great country of ours, moving them across not only in Manitoba, but, again, east, west, coast to coast to coast.

And, certainly, we continued to grow and ended up at—when we sold our company in 2010, we were looking at—we had a staff and a payroll of well over a million dollars, 150 staff full-time, several trucks and tractor-trailers.

And, again, it's a great story. We're proud of that story. I'm a little biased, of course, because we started in our—one bedroom of our home and grew it to where it was. But it can't be done, Honourable Deputy Speaker, without a great team of support, and that starts with your family, No. 1.

And, again, the backbone of a small business is family, and I think the member had mentioned it earlier that family is so important. Having my family members involved in our business—my mom and dad worked for us for a number of years after their early retirement and came in and helped us continue to grow. It went so far as to having my in-laws join us, as well, as we grew our company.

And my—actually, my father-in-law and my dad were the head of our packing division, which would go into your home and offer a white-glove service and pack all your dishes and artwork and all that good stuff that you value, that you've invested in over years and decades in your family. Of course, pictures and portraits and all the things that were important to family that you worked hard for as well. And that's what my dad and my father-in-law were running at the time.

So you can see that family is a major part and a major backbone of business.

* (10:40)

Continuing on with what government can do to support business. Well, we know that setting the right environment in Winnipeg and in Manitoba is important. Being competitive when it comes to corporate tax laws to ensure that we're not pricing ourselves out of the market and actually turning business away from Manitoba.

Instead of them flying down and landing at Richardson International Airport, they fly over. And

for many years, again, we were a flyover. We weren't a flyover, and we aren't, and we're concerned that we will be again, of course, under the leadership of the new government, but we know a good opposition will help support our small businesses as we go forward to ensure that, again, business is welcome here in Manitoba, and business will continue to be welcome and thrive under a good solid foundation, which, of course, our former PC government helped provide that foundation as well.

A couple of things that—when we talk about the tax issues and concerns that small businesses have, again, red tape is important, too, as well, and I'll talk a little bit more about that. But to grow our business, we need that tax environment that allows us to have free—I guess, basically, cash flow, to reinvest into our company, but not only into the infrastructure of our company—especially being in a trucking industry where your equipment wears down and you need to replace it—but you need invested people.

And that's where we at times—quite honestly, we struggle because we grew so fast, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that, you know, we were learning—we were accountants, we were lawyers, we were employers, we were almost everything. And we kept learning those trades and ended up being, you know, a jack of many, but, you know, we didn't do a lot of them very well. But certainly that's where you bring in the support you need—the other HR issues.

We brought in a controller. We brought in a human resources assistant. We brought in folks, like, that would help back up our company and help ensure that our employees—our staff, our labourers—were—their concerns and their families were looked after.

At the end of the day, we knew—my wife and I both knew—that if we didn't do our job, they wouldn't be able to put food on their table and go home every night and feed their kids and their families, Honourable Deputy Speaker. So we took that responsibility very seriously and ensuring that we, as a family-owned business, ensured that they were part of our family. We brought them into our family, and they understand that.

As far as I'm concerned, I think Manitoba small businesses is not recognized as a month, but to be recognized every single day, 365 days a year, Honourable Deputy Speaker. I know the member had mentioned that 90 per cent of businesses are the backbone—pardon me—95 per cent of business are backbone of Manitoba. Well, she's absolutely right. We understand that. Certainly, I understand that. And

I know a number of my colleagues on both sides of the House understand the importance of small business.

Again, I can't say enough about our staff, though, Honourable Deputy Speaker. That's where, eventually what happens is when you get to a certain point as a small business, and you're teetering on small-medium and then maybe a bit into the larger sector, that's where your staff now end up evolving on their own, and they actually become your competition.

We had a couple of young fellas that came to work for us, and they were so good at their job that within a couple of years, they actually went on their own and started their own company. So, that's how small businesses grow and thrive.

You have a good foundation where young Manitobans, men and women, come into your organization. We help them as they help us grow our business, and then eventually they go out on their own, and they become your competition. Which is good, because it's friendly competition, and competition makes businesses, particularly small businesses, that have to work hard each and every single day to ensure that they're putting money into that till to help feed their families and their employees' families.

It's so important that we have that culture set, and that's something that we took very, very seriously. And, again, with the help of our parents, it was a much easier road, but sometimes challenging, too, as well. Working with family can be a challenge. But I can tell you, there's no better partner to have in your business than to have a family member.

Again, certainly, what the member is—and I apologize for that—we appreciate what the member is bringing forward today; however, again, the environment has to be set right. Government needs to ensure that they're sending out not mixed signals but good, solid messages to business in Manitoba saying, yes, we're here for you. We've got your back and we're going to help you grow.

And some of things that have concerned us is, is the apprenticeship ratios that the current government are looking at changing from two-to-one to one-to-one. Well, I look at a plumber, an electrician, and I say to that plumber, electrician, roofer that's starting to grow his or her business, as we did in a spare bedroom of our home, and they say, well, look, I can't get an apprentice now because I had two of them ready to go, but now I have to stop because the new government

has said, no, we're concerned that the two-to-one ratio is going to create safety risks.

Well, I argue that safety's No. 1—hundred per cent, we agree with that. Again, being a small-business owner, moving pianos every single day and the risk that goes along with moving even a fridge, stove, range, you name it, even vehicles we were putting into our trailers—the risk is very high. So we have to make sure that we're well trained.

And I think that Manitoba small businesses have the ability, have the knowledge and have the capability to train and get their future employees, and the future-future owner of a company that he or she wants to build or operate and continue to grow, so we go from 100 truck-and-ladders to 500 truck-and-ladders running throughout this great province.

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

And before I recognize the next speaker, I would just ask all members to be a little more diligent in making sure that their papers and whatnot aren't scraping across the microphones.

And I would remind the member from Red River North that I'm actually the Speaker, not the Deputy.

The honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler)—*[interjection]*

Oh, the honourable member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton).

Mr. Wharton: Deputy Speaker—Honourable Speaker—

The Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows. *[interjection]*

Order, please.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I hope you had a good long weekend. I did. I attended a very great festival in Burrows, which is called R-T-D, Raunak Teeyan Di. It was a festival that showed women leadership and it's a cultural festival that the Punjabi community celebrates every year.

And I saw so many small businesses having their stalls there and, you know, interacting with the attendees and offering their services. And the interesting thing about that was that most of the businesses that displayed there were owned by women, which is great.

And myself and my colleague, the member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan), we were two of maybe seven men attending that event. It was all women. And I saw our community daughters and sisters and, you

know, mothers celebrating together. And it felt so good.

And at the same time, I was thinking about standing up today and speaking something, and at the same time I was attending that event. And I saw so many women entrepreneurs there, some of them, they are operating out of their basements or their homes. And I shared that we are debating a bill that would recognize the month of May as small businesses month. That means we value small businesses. We value women leadership. We value small-business leaders.

And I want to take a moment to welcome all business leaders to the gallery and to be here with us today. It's very important.

And the businesses that displayed there, they were not limited to just selling jewellery or beadwork or dresses. I saw some business leaders in financial services, immigration services, real estate and there were some food stalls. We enjoyed the tasty food there as well.

* (10:50)

And if I relate today, our colleague, member for Seine River (MLA Cross), bringing forward this bill as a woman colleague of us. And I thank you so much for your leadership. This was long due, and we appreciate that.

And I'm pretty sure all elected members who are debating the bill or listening here and, in fact, all Manitobans would appreciate this initiative and very soon we would be celebrating the month of May as small businesses appreciation month. And I also request, once again, everybody here for the unanimous support for this bill, and looking forward to see it happen.

I want to appreciate all MLAs who go in their constituencies, go to a small business, maybe buy a cup of coffee or a small item and click a picture and post on their social media. This is how we support them; this is how we respect them. This is how we recognize them, and many of us are doing that.

And I think we should continue—do that. I want to share another example of small business celebration in Manitoba, in the northern part of Winnipeg. A couple of years ago, young women started establishing Sakhi Bazaar. It's a small bazaar for one day and they bring together all women entrepreneurs and celebrate the diversity and their business success. So I salute those.

This weekend, I decided to put a stall in my own constituency office to distribute some free seeds. And my staff said, on your way, can you stop at Tim Hortons and bring some coffee and doughnuts. And I stopped at my home and thought, why not to go to Manohar bakery, which is my neighbouring business.

So we went to a small business and bought some stuff and treats for the people who were coming to my office to get some free seeds. So this is how we, you know, respect the diversity. When we talk about small businesses, we are not just talking about business. We're actually talking about the cultural diversity and the value they bring to the table.

As we said, 95 per cent of Manitoba's businesses are small businesses, right? And 66, which is two thirds of a dollar spent at a small business in Canada is—that stays in local provincial economy. So I think this is something good that we should, you know, recognize and appreciate.

There are so many small businesses in Burrows. I want to take a moment to recognize a few of them. I know I can't name them all, but a few of them that I have visited and I know. I want to say a few names, for example: Punjab Grocery store, Coast to Coast Mortgage, Flying Pizza, India Spice House, Gill's Supermarket, A Class Takeout and Tiffin, Brampton Cash and Carry, Swagat Sweets and Restaurant, Kabalen Restaurant, Amar Bakery, Phuong for Hair, Choice Travel.

When I talk about Choice Travel and their owner, actually, he's a writer. So, when you go to a small business and you ask for a, hey, can I see the business owner, and you make friends with them. But I'm sure when you go to a Superstore you never ask for, where is the owner and how is the family doing, because we don't know who the owner is, right?

Divine Mortgage, Growing Pathways Immigration, G&G hair salon, Twin's Hair Salon, Kalkat tax services, Reet taxation, Kusina Express, Style India, and when I say these names, automatically it reflects the diversity that they bring to our community.

Focused Insurance & Financial is my neighbour. Allure Laser Hair Treatment. Johnny's pizza, which has been here for, I think, six decades. Young's Market. Sugar Blooms Cakes; many of you must have tasted their treats. VC Cuevas Bakery. Ardaas Jewellers, a new business in my constituency.

Punjab sweets, Pizza Depot, Manohar bakery. Punjabi Chaap Corner; they say—they sell veggie meat,

right? Sharmaji restaurant, Bright Sky Immigration and so on.

So I want to say thank you to all those businesses who are contributing to our—and not to just our economy, but also to the cultural diversity.

And we, as elected representatives and as NDP government, we always—we have supported and we would continue to support small businesses. And also at the federal level, I would say, you know, NDP also supports small businesses and stands against the corporate greed.

I want to take a moment to remind everybody and myself that sometimes this Chamber goes toxic. That's what happened last week. One of the colleagues opposite, they made a comment which was very unfortunate about NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, that he can't even go to his country. I don't know which country my friend from other side of the aisle was talking about, but let's talk about this country, Canada, which is Jagmeet Singh's country, which is my country, which is country of all of us. And this is a great country that respects diversity.

And then the member goes about going back. Okay. Everybody, all of us, have to go back somewhere, but I'm not talking about going back to London or going back to Amritsar or going back to Lahore or going back to Manilla. All of us are going back to the dirt. Going back to the dirt dirty is a dirty thing. Let's be clean and create an environment where we stand as an example—lead by example for the next generation to be like us, that spread positive vibes in this Chamber and beyond.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Before recognizing the next speaker, I'd like to introduce some guests in the gallery.

We have seated in the public gallery from Collège Louis-Riel, 25 grade 9 students under the direction of Ernest Touwa, and they are guests of the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle).

Welcome.

* * *

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I'd like to take this opportunity to speak to this resolution—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order. Honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot has the floor.

Mr. Schuler: Lot of excitement this morning. Lots of individuals wish to speak, and I'm sure people in the gallery will appreciate the fact that there are many that wish to speak to this resolution, even on the NDP benches, which is great to see.

So I do want to point out to the House that not just did I start my career in business, but I'm actually an entrepreneur. I started four businesses, and it was quite the challenge. The resolution does speak about the challenges of being in business, and it is true. Out of the four that I started, three made it to the point where I could sell them and others took them over.

And one, which I think was probably one of my best ideas, didn't work, because it ended up opening up right in the middle of the flood of the century in 1997 and tourism basically collapsed in Manitoba. So we did the right thing and pulled the plug on it, because it was geared towards US tourists. And the highway between Canada and the US, the main highway, Highway 75, was closed.

And I spoke to my suppliers. They agreed to take everything back on 80 cents on the dollar. And so that was one of those that didn't quite make it, and you learn an awful lot from the businesses that don't succeed. You learn more from the days where things are tough on your business, probably, than when you have the successful days. You learn a lot from the tough moments and the tough days.

Opened up a catalogue sale business, which is still running. The current owner has just done a magnificent job. She has just done—taken it beyond where I had initially taken the business and—

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have eight minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 16—Better Access to Health Care in the North

The Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. Time for private members' resolutions.

The resolution before us this morning is the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for The Pas. The title of the resolution is Better Access to Health Care in the North.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): I move, seconded by the member for Thompson (MLA Redhead),

WHEREAS after years of cuts to the Northern Health Region by the previous Provincial Government, northern families have been waiting far too long for a government that responds to their healthcare needs; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is restoring the doctor recruitment fund to ensure that physicians feel properly supported to work and stay in northern communities; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is investing \$16.1 million in ongoing funding for emergency ground support, including funding a 24/7 ambulance in Thompson, with the paramedics to support it; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has allocated \$1.6 million in funding to expand the nurse float pool to northern Manitoba so that nurses can work at multiple healthcare facilities throughout Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is supporting training local people for jobs in northern communities by including a \$3.6-million capital investment in the University College of the North's campuses in Flin Flon and Swan River for the training of licensed practical nurses; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is improving the gap in MRI services for northern communities by investing in a multi-year plan to install MRI services in the North, beginning with a \$1-million investment for a mobile MRI in 2024/25; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is expanding the Sexual Assault Nurse/Intimate Partner Violence Program to northern Manitoba and returning birth services to the North with support for on-reserve births in communities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to affirm the immense contribution of communities in northern Manitoba and the efforts of the provincial government to ensure everyone in Manitoba has access to health care in their community.

Motion presented.

Ms. Lathlin: After years of closure and cuts under the previous PC government, we are bringing health-care workers and health-care resources back to the North.

That starts with our commitment in Budget 2024 to hire 1,000 health-care workers over the next year;

100 doctors, 210 nurses, 90 paramedics and 600 health-care aides, many of whom will staff hospitals and clinics across the North.

Our team knows that we need to treat doctors across the province with respect and that we need to properly pay them for their service.

That's why with Budget 2024, we are restoring the Rural Doctor Recruitment Fund so that more doctors make the choice to move to northern Manitoba and our rural communities.

We also know that nurses in the North deserve more support from the public health-care system. That is why our government is investing \$1.6 million in funding to expand the nurse float pool to northern Manitoba so that patients across the North can get the support they need when they need it.

Manitoba and the North don't just need more health-care workers but they also need more access to diagnostic testing. The northern regional health authority is the only region with MRI services. For years, under the previous PC government, rural Manitoba were forced to travel many hours south for many tests that could have been done in their communities—10-minute doctor's appointments.

Our government is changing that by investing in a multi-year plan to install MRI service in the North, beginning with a \$1-million investment for a mobile MRI in 2024-2025. Then, we will ensure a second permanent MRI installed in the Thompson General Hospital.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Health-care services extend far beyond hospital walls. Our government is putting the resources and the effort to ensure that northern Manitobans have quality, impactful health care, no matter where they live.

With Budget 2024, we are expanding innovating health-care delivery with nurse practitioners through QDoc so that folks have a quick way to see virtual health professionals when they need it. This system will help complement our in-person team of doctors, nurses and medical professionals.

We are training and creating positive—oh, positions for advanced care paramedics to work in rural and northern Manitoba. Our government knows that the northern paramedics have a very different job than urban paramedics. Hospitals are often away—further away for northern Manitobans, meaning that patients require more than a basic triage.

In turn, northern paramedics need more resources, training and support, so they can provide the very best care for northern Manitoba. Northern Manitobans, especially Indigenous Manitobans living in the North, have too often been forced to receive care far away from their communities. That needs to change.

We've started that work by returning birthing services to the North with supports for on-reserve births in communities. When we provide care in communities, it increases access expecting parents—access to social supports and to resources that would not be otherwise available in a hospital setting.

Northern Manitobans can also take advantage of the doubling of the fertile tax credit—fertility tax credit and the prenatal benefit so more people can raise healthier families and their kids can see their 18th birthday.

Our government is committed to make a real impact on the sexual violence where predominantly impacts women and gender-diverse folks, but can affect anyone. That is why with Budget 2024, we are expanding the sexual assault nurse and intimate partner violence program to northern Manitoba.

We also know that addictions care in health—is health care, and that folks in the North who are struggling with addictions deserve access to service. That's why we are investing in new initiatives in drug testing in Winnipeg and northern Manitoba to reduce infections and to save lives.

We are also expanding integrated youth services to rural and northern Manitoba to support access to a range of mental health and substance use services for youth, where they need them. Together, we will strengthen our communities across northern Manitoba.

Our government knows that a strong, public patient transportation system is what Manitobans want and is what Manitobans really need. It is at this critical transfer point we either, between the scene of an accident or a health-care facility or between facilities that patients are not—are at most risk. For northern Manitobans, transfer distances are often longer for those who live in southern Manitoba. A trip from many locations in northern Manitoba to Winnipeg's Health Sciences Centre can take several hours.

That is why our government is investing in \$22 million in the expansion and improvement of the medical transportation services across the province and especially in the North. We are also ensuring that no matter where you are, medical services can get to you with a \$4.6-million investment for a helicopter

medevac service for patient transportation in northern Manitoba.

We are also investing \$16.1 million in ongoing funding for emergency ground transport, including funding two 24-7 ambulances in Brandon, Thompson and the paramedics to support them. This funding will also help strengthen interprovincial patient transport so that no one's life is put at risk while moving across jurisdictional lines. Under the previous PC government, all Manitoba saw were cuts and rampant privatization, including the privatization of Lifeflight, resulting in slower transport time and diminished service and putting lives at risk.

In the long term, the only way we can sustain good, quality health care for northern Manitoba is by expanding the post-secondary educational opportunities in the North so that more northern Manitobans become doctors, nurses and health-care aides. For example, the Margaret Barbour collegiate institution, MBCI, a high school in The Pas, have a partnership with UCN college, University College of the North, where grade 12 students who are wanting to join us in becoming health-care aides will be able to do so by applying and 10—I believe a large number of credits will go towards their high-school credit system in order to graduate.

So there is a good partnership that is working together to ensure that we have health-care aides to go into and help our elders at the personal-care homes and to provide important services for home care for people with disabilities and our elders—a great initiative that we should see more of.

* (11:10)

And speaking of UCN, instead—speaking of UCN, our government is making a \$3.6-million capital investment in the University College of the North's campuses in Flin Flon, Swan River, for the training of licensed practical nurses.

UCN graduates are more attuned to the unique challenges and opportunities that are found in northern regional health settings. Having more health-care workers, who have an intuitive understanding of how health care in northern Manitoba works, will improve patient care, especially with Indigenous people.

Under the previous PC government, UCN was forced to increase its college tuition by 10.25 per cent and university course tuition by 6.6 per cent, making it more unaffordable for students in the North to go to school, learn health-care skills and join the health-care system.

The cuts occurred in 2018 and 2019, meaning that all PC–UCN had more affordable—that many have—that more could have entered the school in the late 2010s, and more could have graduated over the year to help us combat the unique challenges that we have to access health care. And they were also responsible for cutting The Pas primary health-care clinic in 2016, which was a huge disappointment, which could've housed many specialists.

Ekosi.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'm just—wonder if the member could elaborate on why the NDP fired the surgical and diagnostic task force before making sure that short-term surgical capacity, including in the North, was not impacted.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Thank you for that question.

The task force was seen as one of our changes in changing the cultural dimension of our health-care system. We've always thought it was too top-heavy, and we understand that this initiative is important, too, as well, to northern Manitoba. But still, with that task force in place, we were still seeing long, long waiting lists for—especially for folks in northern Manitoba.

Ekosi.

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): I want to thank my colleague for bringing this resolution forward. I know she's a phenomenal representative for northern Manitobans and passionate about advancing equitable access to health care.

Our government believes that Manitobans should have access to health-care services close to home, no matter where they live in the province, whether that's in Winnipeg or Brandon or The Pas.

So my question to my colleague is: How are we ensuring that northern Manitobans have health care closer to home?

Ms. Lathlin: I want to thank my fellow colleague for that important question.

It was with great news that our NDP government reinvested funds from the failed PC cuts, especially into northern services. We're bringing back MRI services to remote areas in Manitoba, both mobile and a permanent one in Thompson. This is just the start as we staff up hospitals and medical facilities across the North. Having access to health care closer to home not only means people can see a doctor quicker, but also can help families avoid costly trips away from home.

Ekosi.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): My question is: The surgical and diagnostic task force was specific—was a specific program that supported northern Manitobans to receive diagnostic and surgical care quicker, yet the NDP fired those top doctors and cancelled these programs without providing any options to replace them.

How much longer are northern Manitobans waiting to see their specialists and finally receiving surgery under the NDP?

Ms. Lathlin: Well, if you look at the title of the actual task force, it should always involve Manitoba. And I can tell you from listening to my constituents, this task force was basically useless. We were still having long wait times for northern Manitobans.

In fact, Lifeflight is becoming an issue where if there are patients are bumped off Lifeflight, well, they can't make it to their surgery, so what's the point?

So therefore, we have a bit more challenges than our southerners do. When it comes to getting ourselves to Winnipeg for these surgeries and having access, we should have more—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

MLA Devgan: So Manitobans voted for a new approach when it comes to health care, and they were done with years of the cuts and closures that impacted their families and particularly in northern Manitoba.

So how did—my question for my colleague is: How did the previous failed PC government break health care in northern Manitoba?

Ms. Lathlin: The PCs' agenda severely affected northern Manitoba than it did here, and their decisions had terrible consequences for northern Manitobans and their families.

They cut funding to northern ERs and cancelled plans for a primary health-care clinic in The Pas, forcing families, including myself, to travel to

Winnipeg for treatment to hospitals that were already overcrowded.

By—having the primary health-care clinic to be built in The Pas will reduce cost of transportation and also reduce stress from our families who have to take time off work, take time off school in order to access health care—

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): My question is for the member from The Pas-Kameesak. Northern Manitoba relies heavily on targeted recruitment programs to staff its health-care centres. Why did the Minister of Health fire health-care recruiters in the middle of a worldwide staffing crisis?

Ms. Lathlin: I'd like to correct the member. When we were—when the PC government were in power, they cut the doctor recruitment program, which could have really benefited communities in northern Manitoba.

And I'm looking forward to having that program back in because right now we're lacking these important health professionals. And I'm looking forward to working with our Health Minister to ensure that these positions are filled and we get the health-care services that we need.

Ekosi.

MLA Devgan: So our government is dedicated to rebuilding health care and making targeted investments for—to help Manitobans, including in northern Manitoba.

Budget 2024 puts us back to a path to balance while delivering on our health-care commitments.

So, I'll ask my colleague: What are we going to do to fix health care in our province and help northern Manitobans in the process?

Ms. Lathlin: Thank you for that very important question.

And I'm all on board when it comes to fixing health care. That's probably the No. 1 question that we get at our constituency office. And with this team, I'm on board to rebuild health care in Manitoba. And thanks to Budget 2024, that means we're expanding the nurse float pool—that includes northern Manitoba—adding more staffing and building more capacity.

We're hiring 1,000 more health-care workers, including 100 doctors. That's—just as importantly, we're

making targeted investments by opening a new health-care retention and recruitment office.

Ekosi.

* (11:20)

Mrs. Cook: The previous PC government had committed to funding the expansion of The Pas health clinic in 2023. No commitment to finishing this project has come from the NDP government.

At the time, the CEO of the Northern Health Region had said these upgrades were much anticipated and needed to serve the communities and those surrounding it.

Have the NDP abandoned this much-needed upgrade?

Ms. Lathlin: I understand the member has just joined us in a recent election, but in 2016, when the Pallister-Stefanson government took over, that was the first thing they cut, was this health-care clinic. And then, and in a desperate attempt to be re-elected, they announced this clinic, but with no real blueprints, if you will, behind it.

And I'm excited and—to work with the Minister of Health to ensure that these plans stay on board ahead of our time in government. But it was them who cut that clinic, which was strongly needed for diagnosed—for specialists to come in, especially when we're in a world of diabetics where I'm from.

Ekosi.

MLA Devgan: My colleague spoke a little bit about this and the damage that the PCs have done over the last seven and a half years, of course. Fixing that won't happen overnight. It will take time to rebuild what they broke, but we're ensuring that families have access to care as quickly as possible, and that is our top priority.

So maybe my colleague could tell us a little bit about what other ways our NDP government is bettering health care in northern Manitoba.

Ms. Lathlin: Thank you for that question.

Manitoba families, including mine, in northern Manitoba are going to benefit from our budget's health-care-related measures. We've made it easier for Manitobans to start and raise healthier families with our fertility and prenatal tax credits, which will help more kids reach their 18th birthday.

So with that, and my children and their children, I'm looking forward to these goals that are set for

northern Manitobans in order to improve life quality in northern Manitoba.

Ekosi.

The Deputy Speaker: And with that, the question period has expired.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is open to debate.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I do want to thank the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) for bringing this topic to the floor of the Legislature.

We don't know each other well. As she noted in her answers, I did just get here. But I worked in this building when her father was an MLA, Oscar Lathlin. And I know her roots are deep in the North, and I know she understands the unique challenges faced by northern Manitobans, because she has lived them. And she has my respect.

And that being said, though, we do disagree on some of the clauses put forward in this resolution. And I will respectfully disagree and put those—my comments on the record today.

I alluded to this in one of my questions during the question period just now, but one of the first things the NDP government did when they took office within weeks of being sworn in was disband and fire the surgical and diagnostic task force, which was led by some of the best doctors in the country. That task force provided over 80,000 surgeries and diagnostic tests to Manitobans, procedures that would not otherwise have happened. And those were also for northern Manitobans.

In addition to that, the NDP then allowed many of the contracts that the task force had signed with private and public providers of those procedures to simply lapse at the end of the fiscal year, and it's troubling that it wasn't until they were called out publicly here in the Legislature and by the media that the minister acted to re-sign some of those contracts.

Many of those providers who were providing things like cataract surgery and MRIs to Manitobans from all across the province were left in limbo and left wondering if their contracts would be extended and if they'd be able to continue providing service to Manitobans.

Now, the cancellation of the task force has had immediate downstream effects on Manitoba patients. We are now beginning to see the evidence of that in increasing wait times. We're seeing wait times going

up for hip and knee surgeries, for cataracts, for cardiac care and for MRIs.

And what troubles me about this, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is that the NDP also tried to eliminate wait times data from the website immediately after being sworn in, which tells me that they knew that wait times were going to go up, and it was an attempt to hide that information from Manitobans, and again, much like with the RFSA contracts under the task force, it wasn't until being called out publicly in the media and here in the Legislature that the wait-times data was put back up on the website.

And then it remained stagnant, so Manitobans from across the province had no idea what wait times were for many of these procedures for months until being called out again, publicly, that the wait times were then updated. Now we're seeing those wait times beginning to go up, and that should be concerning for Manitobans, no matter where they live.

In addition, I'd say the biggest and, frankly, most surprising thing to me is that the NDP has yet to come forward with an achievable plan to fill all of these positions. The member talked about the targets that were put forward in the budget, but without a plan to achieve them, targets are just numbers.

And in fact we've seen what I would say are a few steps backwards in terms of staffing of our health-care system. I've been contacted personally by—for example, by health-care workers in the Philippines who were recruited to come and work here.

And the Minister of Health doesn't like it when I talk about this, but they had their job offers rescinded. They were doing all of the work they needed to do to come here and work as nurses or health-care aides here in Manitoba, and Shared Health ripped the rug out from under them. The NDP ripped up their job offers and these health-care workers tried other avenues.

They said, well, if I can't come here as a nurse, can I come to Manitoba as a health-care aide and work here and work toward becoming a nurse? And the NDP still said no, and that doesn't make any sense. There are dozens of Filipino health-care workers now here in Manitoba working in communities across the province doing great work and filling those positions.

And, for reasons I don't fully understand, the NDP decided that wasn't good enough. We've also seen, in Budget 2024, taxation hikes that are going to directly impact health-care workers. When you think about the fact that many northern health-care workers receive

additional pay, stipends to reflect the challenges of living up north, the increased cost of living, they're now going to be paying higher taxes under the NDP with changes to the basic personal exemption once somebody is earning \$200,000 a year, which is going to directly impact some of our health-care workers, specifically doctors.

And that's shocking to me that the NDP would want to increase taxes on doctors when we so desperately need them working here in Manitoba. The cost of housing is going up, thanks to property tax hikes; \$148 million more in property taxes, making Manitoba one of the least attractive provinces for health-care workers in the country. That's the exact opposite of what we need.

And we're starting to see health-care workers speaking up. Just this last weekend, we saw news coverage of the MNU contract which was not ratified by HSC nurses. And I think it was Darlene Jackson herself who said, we haven't seen the promised culture change; we don't feel heard.

So what the NDP has proposed in the first seven or eight months of their government is not working. It is not doing what they promised it would do. And the fact of the matter is that new beds don't staff themselves. Without a tangible plan to fill all of these positions, none of these promises are going to come to fruition.

You know, we talk about paramedics. Over the last couple of weeks I've raised here in the Legislature issues related to paramedics, specifically a group of paramedic graduates who have been offered positions now in northern communities in The Pas and Flin Flon.

But what's troubling is that Shared Health refused to meet these graduates in the middle. These are people who would have to move to take these positions or, at the very least, rent property in those communities to support living there while they're working there.

* (11:30)

And Shared Health refused to come to the table and meet them in the middle when they made simple requests—things like, hey, you know, this graduate colleague of mine and I are going to rent a place together. Can you put us on a similar shift so that we can carpool?

And Shared Health said, no, forget it. You're on your own; take the position or don't. Which is such a

shame when there is a shortage of health-care professionals working in those communities, that Shared Health wouldn't take the extra step.

Meanwhile, other provinces are actively recruiting our graduates. They are taking steps to take Manitoba graduates across health-care disciplines and entice them to move to places like Alberta. And they're treating these graduates like gold. They're giving them what they need. And here in Manitoba, the government is just throwing hurdles in their way, making it impossible for them to work here in Manitoba.

And we shouldn't forget either, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that the last time the NDP were in government, they had a shocking disregard for rural health care. They focused their efforts on the city of Winnipeg, and that led to the closure—the permanent closure—of 16 rural emergency rooms. That doesn't bode well for health care in Manitoba under the new NDP government.

And I do want to put, before my time comes to an end, just a couple of words on the record about the previous PC government's initiatives in health care and in rural Manitoba, because that shouldn't get lost in the discussion here.

In 2023, there was \$154 million committed to improved health care for communities across northern Manitoba and \$39 million for the new health clinic in The Pas, an expansion that the new NDP government has been silent on.

In 2019, there was a \$5.2-million expansion of dialysis in Thompson—of course, much needed. And more broadly, there was a \$400-million health human resources action plan that actually included tangible, achievable steps to increasing staff in the health-care system. This included the addition of over 400 nursing seats and 80 physician seats to the Manitoba education system, which will bear fruit for generations to come. Those are long-term investments that will benefit Manitobans from across the province.

And with that, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I will conclude my comments.

Thank you very much.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Before we kick this off, I just want to acknowledge the number of young people that are here in the gallery with us today. I want to say, you know, welcome to the people's building. This is your building. And, you know, we

are staring at the future of Manitoba in each and every one of you. So thank you for being here.

No, and, you know, on this side of the House, we have an opportunity in government where our government caucus looks like Manitoba. And because you can see it, you can be it. So please do. You know, whether you're planning on entering the health-care sector, whether you're planning on becoming educators yourself, just like many on this side, whether you want to be a politician, make sure that you seize the opportunities in front of you because, truly, we need every single one of you here in Manitoba leading the charge.

And, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I, you know, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about how disappointed I am in the tone being struck by the opposition, not only in their questions but in, you know, the first speaker that they had put up.

Just to remind the opposition, I will read the therefore be it resolved clause once more because, you know, our colleague, the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) did such an incredible job of painting a clear picture, but they still seem not to get it.

The clause goes, therefore be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to affirm the immense contributions of communities in northern Manitoba—something that should not be a partisan issue, something that should be easy to get on board with. And frankly, unlike, you know, how members opposite were confused and seemed to have reservations when supporting local and small business, you would think that, you know, this morning they would change their tune and get on board and do away with their reservations when it comes to health-care services.

So that being said, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I also want to put some words on the record honouring our colleague for The Pas-Kameesak. Ekosi, if I said that correctly. Ekosani.

Thank you so much to the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak for all of the labour and the energy and the expertise that she has devoted to the job that she does here in the Legislature. In 2015, she became the first First Nations woman ever elected here in Manitoba and that is—being here in the Chamber alongside her leadership is not something that any of us should take for granted.

Not only is she here with us right now but she demonstrates in the introduction of this resolution, in

the work previous to extend paid leave when it comes to folks who are faced with the trauma of miscarriage, to enhance the quality of sexual assault care for folks in the North and, again, continuing today with this resolution.

And, again, you know, I am so deeply disappointed by what has become of the discussion around this resolution because it really is an opportunity for all sides to get on board with supporting our northern Manitobans.

And so, since there is a lot of misinformation that was put on the record just moments ago, I feel the need to correct the record. And, you know, there are a number of words that are favourites of those opposite, things like—or, words like cuts, words like closures, words like cancellations. So I ought to remind members opposite of some of their own. Clearly, you know, they have trouble, Honourable Deputy Speaker, shaking old habits, which is why they continue to talk about cuts. They continue to talk about closures and they forget about what they did only months ago.

Three emergency rooms in Winnipeg, the Victoria general hospital, Seven Oaks hospital, Concordia Hospital, closed. Misericordia Urgent Care Centre, closed. QuickCare clinics—Portage Avenue, Vermillion Road, Jefferson and Dakota, closed. Primary community clinics on Corydon, St. Boniface Family Medical Centre, closed. The Mature Women's Centre, closed. 'Obsentrics' in Flin Flon, closed. Lifelight, closed.

Not only that, Honourable Speaker, they did double down on the corner of the city in Winnipeg that I represent. They closed CancerCare locations in Concordia. They closed the community IV clinic at the Transcona ACCESS Centre and they cancelled Park Manor, the project that was originally scheduled to take place in Transcona.

And so since members opposite continue to say things like targets are just numbers, clearly that's what they believed when they promised thousands of new personal-care-home beds and only deleted them upon leaving government.

So, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I am not here to focus on the past. I'm here to remind Manitobans that we have a future that we are charting for this province that we ought to be proud of.

So, when it comes to northern health care, things like transportation services, the health human resources of our province, things like education for this next generation are critical in ensuring that no matter

where a Manitoban lives, no matter who they are, no matter what they do, they are all deserving of health-care services in their community and close to home.

So when it comes to transportation services, our government knows that a strong, public patient transport system is what Manitobans want and what Manitobans need. It is these critical transfer points between either the scene of the accident to a health-care facility or between facilities that patients are most at risk, and it's something that we take far too—take for granted far too often here in the city.

And I know that our colleagues from the North can certainly appreciate that our government and Budget 2024 has committed to investing \$22 million in the expansion and improvement of medical transportation services across the province and especially in the North.

Again, no matter where you are, medical services ought to get to you and that's why we're also investing \$4.6 million for a helicopter medevac service for patient transportation in northern Manitoba and \$16.1 million in ongoing funding for emergency ground support, including funding for two 24-7 ambulances in Brandon and Thompson and the paramedics to support them.

* (11:40)

We also know that nurses in the North deserve more support for the public health-care system. That is why our government is investing \$1.6 million in funding to expand the nurse float pool to northern Manitoba so that patients across the North can get the support that they need when they need it.

Manitobans in the North don't just need more health-care workers but they also need more access to diagnostic testing and that's why we're doing incredible work on ensuring that MRI services are accessible as well.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, with the time that I have remaining, I, once again, want to point to the young people that are in the gallery and emphasize how important it is that we offer as many educational opportunities, training opportunities to this next generation so that all of the dreams that they have for themselves, you know, wherever they see themselves in the future, they're able to achieve it, as they will be well supported and are well supported by this government in those endeavours.

And so in the long term, the only way that we can sustain good, quality health care for northern

Manitobans is by expanding post-secondary educational opportunities in the North, so that more northern Manitobans become doctors, become nurses, become health-care aides and other health-care workers.

Investing in education for northern Manitobans will increase the retention rates of northern health-care workers and reduce our reliance on incentives designed to bring health-care workers into communities that they have no connection to.

That's why our government is making a \$3.6-million capital investment in the University College of the North campuses in Flin Flon and Swan River for the training of licensed practical nurses.

So once more, now that you can see it, you can be it, whether you see yourself in health care, whether you see yourself in education, whether you see yourself here in this Chamber being heckled by folks across the aisle while you fight for change in health care, you can do it. And we will be here with you every step of the way.

So, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I once again urge all members of the House to get behind this resolution because clearly, it is not one that requires a partisan approach. We are simply asking all members of this House to affirm the communities in the North as well as the work that this government is doing to invest in a better future for all of Manitoba, but not forgetting northern Manitoba, the way it has been done in previous.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: Before we continue debate, I'll just direct all members' attention to the public gallery.

We have with us 25 students from Collège Louis-Riel from the constituency of St. Boniface.

* * *

The Deputy Speaker: And with that, the honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I'm happy to rise today to speak to about the resolution being brought forward by the member from The Pas-Kameesak.

To bring better health care to the North—that is something that we are all—as legislators, it's important to all of us. I've had the opportunity to work with her

and appreciate her passion for community and her constituents that she represents in the North. And I value her opinions and her heart and her honesty when she speaks. So, thank you for that, yes.

As legislators, I believe it's important for all of us to have our constituents first. The heart of our job is to protect and to serve them. And I believe that her heart is in the right place when she brings things forward for her community. I believe that bringing better health care to the entire province includes the North. It—vital—it's vital for the folks of our great province of Manitoba. We, as the Province and as legislators, both government and opposition, should be making this a priority for our communities and the people we serve.

I want to encourage the NDP government to work on improving our health care across the province including the North, the south rural areas and urban city areas. I believe that the PC government made huge strides in improving our health-care system. I believe, now, that the NDP government is in power, that they have an obligation and a duty to continue that good work that we started.

But I am concerned that we have been—they have been quick to cut, change and get rid of programs and strategic plans that were working to—and improving the health-care system.

I would like to ask, why would they fire the surgical and diagnostic task force being made—before making sure short-term capacity at home, including the North, was not impacted in their decisions?

It's disappointing how things went so quickly, and it did make a big difference for those in the North. Folks were impacted across our entire province with this decision. It affected many in the northern part of our province that were waiting for surgeries.

Northern communities benefited, just like the rest of the province, from the surgical task force. The backlog from COVID surgeries was quickly diminished after the task force started. And alleviating the backlog in the province helped others to come forward in the province to get surgeries quicker, and that's important.

The surgical and diagnostic task force has—had specific programs that supported northern Manitobans to receive diagnostic and surgical care quicker. Yet the NDP fired those top doctors and cancelled these programs without providing any options to replace them. How much longer are northern constituents

waiting to see the specialists and finally receive surgery under the NDP?

Northern Manitoba relies heavily on targeted recruitment programs, also, to staff its health-care centres. Why did the Minister of Health fire health-care recruiters in the middle of a worldwide staffing crisis?

I believe these are ways that we can make a bigger impact right now by reversing these decisions that have been made recently to improve health care in the North. I can only hope that the member from The Pas-Kameesak was consulted when they fired the recruitment programs.

Nurses in Winnipeg are rightfully concerned about the NDP government's failure to keep them safe on the job. Many nurses and health-care professionals fly north to work for—work in the northern communities. What is the NDP government doing to ensure the safety of patients and health-care workers in the north health region?

I have a friend who is an RN who flies up north to work in the hospitals there. She really enjoys her time there. She says that people are wonderful to work with and that the patients are very grateful and very appreciative of her being there.

But she does have concerns when she walks to and from where she's staying to the hospitals and to the places that she's giving care to. Safety is a big concern for people that work up north.

I believe more health-care workers would be willing to go up north to work and live permanently with their families if living situations were conducive to having their family live there and safety would be addressed if necessary. But yet, I don't see that in any plan.

I also know that many patients are flown both to Winnipeg and also coming to southern Manitoba for health care, for MRI appointments, and I believe that that is a result because we have been growing our health-care system across the province, so we're able to do that.

I believe it's important that we make sure all of those services, both in Winnipeg and surrounding areas, are there and available so that those that are coming from the North, and we can—they can function so well that they can continue to provide what they need for those that are travelling.

Ideally, it would be great if there would—travelling wouldn't have to happen, and that is why

I believe that we need to continue with the recruitment plan and all the different things that the PCs started last year—in the last seven years.

We need to work together.

Can the member please explain—I would love to know what the member would think about why wait times are up from cataracts, hip surgeries, MRIs for months in a row now in this, like, present government.

* (11:50)

Doctors in rural and northern communities are often compensated due-hired to remote, sorry—or due to the remote postings. Why are the NDP not putting—or, putting at tax hike on—directly on doctors?

I would like to see the NDP directly address the issue specifically for northern doctors. Let's make a plan to attract and keep doctors in the North. I think a plan for that would be one of our most important things right now.

Our PC government committed to funding the expansion of The Pas health clinic in 2023. No commitment to finishing this project has come from the current government. At a time—at the time, the CEO of the Northern Health Region said these upgrades were much anticipated and needed to serve the communities of those—and those surrounding it. I would like to see what the NDP has done for this and has this been abandoned. I would like to see this plan continue and it will only help and benefit the work of the member from the North, for her communities.

Also, for addictions in northern Manitoba, there needs to be a priority of treatment and recovery and education be at the forefront. More needs to be invested in RAAM clinics, not just invested in injection sites. Let's talk about what we have done for recovery. I think that is important to bring that forward.

And I appreciate the member from The Pas-Kameesak bringing that forward, because that, I believe, is a very important issue and a very important part of health care in the North. So, thank you for talking about the need for help with addictions treatments, but we need to do more. We need to have a better plan. We need to educate, and we need to have more recovery for that, specifically.

If you were asked—if you asked a mother or a family member, brother or sister if they would choose injection sites or actual recovery, they would also say treatment and recovery would be what their best interest would be for their families. And I believe that

we can do more and I believe the NDP government can do more when it comes to the youth in northern communities, as well as adults struggling with addictions.

I just want to put a few things on the record here about what the Conservatives did in 2023: \$154 million in improved health care for communities across northern Manitoba. In 2023, \$39 million for a new health-care—health clinic in Le Pas. In 2021, \$2.8 million and donation of building conversion to the Polaris Centre in Thompson, Manitoba to a sobering centre. In 2019, \$5.2 million for an expansion to the dialysis in Thompson. These are all important things that we have done.

Thank you very much for letting me share these words.

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): C'est un honneur de prendre la parole ce matin pour parler des meilleurs accès aux soins de santé dans le Nord.

Alors, comme on le sait, les Manitobains, peu importe où ils vivent dans notre province, méritent des soins de santé près de chez eux. Pendant les sept ans du gouvernement Stefanson, qui a causé le chaos dans notre système de santé, poussant les travailleurs à partir et créant un manque de services de santé pour les familles du Nord, on le sait — le Manitoba est maintenant de retour sur la bonne voie, grâce à notre gouvernement.

Le Budget 2024 construit les soins de santé dans notre province, y compris dans le Nord en réalisant des investissements ciblés et intelligents. L'objectif, alors, est simple. Par conséquent, il est résolu que l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba soit encouragée à affirmer les immenses contributions des communautés du Nord du Manitoba et les efforts du gouvernement provincial pour garantir à tous les Manitobains l'accès aux soins de santé dans leur communauté.

Donc, après des années de fermetures et de coupures sous le gouvernement conservateur, nous ramenons les travailleurs de la santé et les ressources de santé dans le Nord.

Cela commence par notre engagement dans le Budget 2024 : embaucher 1 000 travailleurs de la santé au cours de l'année prochaine, dont 100 médecins, 210 infirmiers/infirmières, 90 paramédicaux et 600 aides-soignantes dont beaucoup travailleront dans les hôpitaux et les cliniques du Nord.

Notre équipe sait que nous devons traiter les médecins de toute la province avec respect et les rémunérer correctement pour leurs services. C'est pourquoi, avec le Budget 2024, nous rétablissons le Fonds de recrutement des médecins ruraux, afin que davantage de médecins choisissent de s'installer dans les communautés du Nord et des régions rurales.

Nous savons également que les infirmiers du Nord méritent un soutien accru du système de santé publique. C'est pourquoi notre gouvernement investit 1,6 million de dollars pour étendre le bassin de remplacement des infirmiers dans le Nord du Manitoba, afin que les patients du Nord puissent bénéficier du soutien dont ils ont besoin quand ils en ont besoin.

Les Manitobains du Nord et non seulement – ont non seulement besoin de plus de travailleurs de la santé, mais ils ont également besoin de plus d'accès aux tests diagnostiques. L'autorité régionale de la santé du Nord est la seule région à ne pas offrir de services d'IRM. Pendant des années, sous le gouvernement Pallister-Stefanson, les Manitobains ruraux étaient contraints de voyager pendant de nombreuses heures vers le sud pour de nombreux tests qui pourraient être réalisés dans leurs communautés.

Notre gouvernement change la donne en investissant dans un plan pluriannuel pour installer des services d'IRM dans le Nord, en commençant par un investissement de 1 million de dollars pour un IRM mobile en 2024-2025. Ensuite, nous verrons à ce qu'une deuxième machine IRM permanente soit installée à l'hôpital général de Thompson.

L'honorable Député Président, les services de santé s'étendent bien au-delà des murs de l'hôpitaux. Notre gouvernement met des ressources et les efforts nécessaires pour garantir aux Manitobains du Nord des soins de santé de qualité, peu importe où ils vivent.

Alors, tout ça pour dire, M. l'honorable Président, que nous avons besoin de plus de services au Nord, et j'espère que la Chambre soit d'accord que nous votions en faveur de cette motion.

Merci.

Translation

It is an honour to rise this morning to speak about better access to health care in the North.

As we know, Manitobans deserve health care close to home, no matter where they live in our province. The seven years of the Stefanson government caused chaos in our health-care system, driving workers out and

creating a lack of health-care services for northern families. Manitoba is now back on track, thanks to our government.

Budget 2024 builds health care in our province, including the North, by making smart, targeted investments. The goal is simple, so be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be encouraged to affirm the immense contributions of Manitoba's northern communities and the efforts of the provincial government to ensure that all Manitobans have access to health care in their communities.

After years of closures and cuts under the Conservative government, we are bringing health-care workers and resources back to the North.

This starts with our Budget 2024 commitment to hire 1,000 health-care workers over the next year, including 100 doctors, 210 nurses, 90 paramedics and 600 health-care aides, many of whom will work in northern hospitals and clinics.

Our team knows that we must treat doctors across the province with respect and compensate them appropriately for their services. That is why, with Budget 2024, we are reinstating the Rural Physician Recruitment Fund, so that more doctors will choose to settle in northern and rural communities.

We also know that northern nurses deserve greater support from the public health-care system. That is the reason our government is investing \$1.6 million to expand the nurse replacement pool in northern Manitoba, so that northern patients can get the support they need, when they need it.

Northern Manitobans not only need more health-care workers, they also need more access to diagnostic tests. The Northern Regional Health Authority is the only region without MRI services. For years, under the Pallister-Stefanson government, rural Manitobans were forced to travel many hours south for many tests that could be performed in their communities.

Our government is changing that by investing in a multi-year plan to bring MRI services to the North, starting with a \$1-million investment for a mobile MRI in 2024-2025. Afterwards, we will ensure that a second permanent MRI machine is installed at Thompson General Hospital.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, health services extend far beyond the walls of hospitals. Our government is putting the necessary resources and effort into

ensuring that Northern Manitobans receive quality health care, no matter where they live.

All that to say, Honourable Speaker, that we need more services in the North, and I hope the House will agree to vote in favour of this motion.

Thank you.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Resolution 16, Better Access to Health Care in the North. I can support the idea behind this resolution and would like to thank the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) for bringing it forward before this House.

I think that health care is important across our province, and that you shouldn't need to compromise your health to live in the community that you've been able to call home. Health care is crucial to the development of our Manitoba communities and the retention of population for many rural communities. This challenge is similar whether it be remote northern communities or remote rural communities.

I have lived my entire life in the southern rural community that I am so proud to represent in this

Legislature. Prior to being the MLA, I was a member of the local municipal council and a board member of the Southern Health region. It was during this time on municipal council that I was able to get directly involved with the health-care challenges that we have in rural, remote communities across our province.

During this time, we unfortunately had an NDP government, and I was able to see first-hand how this was affecting our health-care delivery in rural Manitoba. Very similar to northern Manitoba, we were faced with the challenges of health-care professional recruitment and retention and how that affects services being delivered and accessed.

I realize that areas of the North are further from Winnipeg than those of southeast Manitoba but still have a great distance—but we still have a great distance from accessing the care with very little government support—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have eight minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 p.m., this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

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