

**First Session – Forty-Third Legislature**  
**of the**  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
**and**  
**PROCEEDINGS**  
**Official Report**  
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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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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SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
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WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Tuxedo	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, May 30, 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, 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 and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, 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.

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business.

**The Speaker:** The honourable deputy House leader, on House business.

**Mr. Jackson:** Is there leave to amend the agreement from May 21, 2024, to call second reading of Bill 217, The Men's Mental Health Awareness Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), after the question is put on bills 201, 202 and 211.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to amend the agreement from May 21, 2024, to call second reading of Bill 217, The Men's Mental Health Awareness Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), after the question is put on bills 201, 202 and 211?

Is there leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Speaker:** I heard a no. Leave has been denied.

**Mr. Jackson:** Honourable Speaker, I would requested a two-minute recess so the member from Riel can consult with the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine), as this was agreed to by staff in consideration, the fact that we granted leave to a fourth bill for them on Tuesday morning's business.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave for two-minute recess for that to take place? [*Agreed*]

We're now in recess. The bell will summon members back to the Chamber, one-minute bell.

*The House recessed at 10:04 a.m.*

*The House resumed at 10:06 a.m.*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The House is now back in session.

**Mr. Jackson:** I'll try this again.

Honourable Speaker, is there leave to amend the agreement from May 21, 2024, to call second reading of Bill 217, The Men's Mental Health Awareness Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), after the question is put on bills 201, 202 and 211.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to amend the agreement from May 21, 2024, to call second reading of Bill 217, The Men's Mental Health Awareness Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), after the question is put on bills 201, 202 and 211?

Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**The Speaker:** Oh, we will now—so as agreed by the House on May 21, 2024, this morning, the House shall consider concurrence and third reading of Bill 201, The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone); Bill 202, The Community Foundation Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); and Bill 211, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Manitoba Parks Licence Plates).

We will debate the—debate to proceed—with the debate to proceed as follows: (1) The bill sponsor may speak for up to five minutes; (2) a bill—a member from another recognized party may speak for up to five minutes; (3) the independent may—member may speak for up to five minutes; and (4) the Speaker shall then put the question.

### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

#### Bill 201—The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone)

**The Speaker:** Therefore, I will call concurrence and third reading of Bill 201, The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone).

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I move, seconded by the MLA for Riding Mountain, that Bill 201, The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les emblèmes du Manitoba (désignation de la pierre provinciale), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

#### *Motion presented.*

\* (10:10)

**Mr. Ewasko:** It's my pleasure to stand this morning and bring a few—put a few words on the record in regards to passing Bill 201, The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone) designation. It has gone and it is now going to go through third reading, and it's focusing on the designation of the dolomitic limestone also known as Tyndall stone as the official provincial stone of Manitoba.

This bill, which has been championed for decades in regards to really representing the great province of Manitoba and also the wonderful country of Canada, owners Keith and Donna Gillis need to be commended towards—for their advocacy and their steps that they've taken recognizing and celebrating the unique geological heritage of our province. As the owners of Gillis Quarries, Keith and Donna have played a pivotal role in the preservation and promotion of Tyndall stone with their expertise and dedication to the industry.

They have not only ensured the sustainable extraction of dolomitic limestone, but have also showcased its versatility and beauty in various construction projects. And their advocacy for the designation of Tyndall stone as the official provincial

stone is a testament to their commitment to promoting the natural resources of Manitoba.

Tyndall stone, with its distinct cream and beige hues, has been a hallmark of Manitoba's architectural landscape for decades. Quarried by Gillis Quarries, the natural limestone has been used in the construction of numerous prominent buildings, including this very Manitoba Legislative Building, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the Parliament Building in Ottawa, the Canadian embassy in Japan, and just recently I had the pleasure of attending the Humane Society right here in Winnipeg and there is Tyndall stone everywhere.

By designating Tyndall stone as the official provincial stone, Manitoba will be acknowledging the significant contributions of the Gillis family and the fact on the economic development that Tyndall stone has done to not only put Manitoba on the map, but the economic return for this great province of ours. Their company and the cultural heritage of the province continues to be celebrated on a daily basis, not only in Manitoba but all across the world.

When we talk about the Gillis family, it is truly a family in that it's comprised of the many employees, and they have been a large employer in the Lac du Bonnet constituency in the communities of Garson and Tyndall for decades.

The passing of this bill not only honours the legacy of dolomitic limestone and its importance to Manitoba, but also highlights true entrepreneurial spirit and innovation that is Manitoba-grown, Manitoba-owned and will remain Manitoba for decades more to come.

As stewards of this natural resource, they have demonstrated a deep appreciation for the geological treasures of the province and have worked tirelessly to ensure its recognition and preservation for future generations.

The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone) Manitoba, supported by all of us in this wonderful Chamber today, is a commendable initiative that underscores the value of Tyndall stone as the official provincial stone. Their dedication to promoting the beauty and versatility of dolomitic limestone is a testament to Manitoba's passion for Manitoba's natural heritage and their vision for a sustainable future.

With those few words, thank you, Honourable Speaker. It's truly an honour to see this bill passed and dolomitic limestone, Tyndall stone, become our great provincial recognized stone.

Thanks, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** I am very pleased to have yet another chance to stand up in the Chamber to speak about fossiliferous dolomitic limestone. So this bill, brought forward by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), recognizes the stone which is, again, geologically known as mottled and fossiliferous dolomitic limestone belonging to the Selkirk Member of the Ordovician Red River Formation and it's quarried near Garson and Tyndall.

And, ultimately, after that sort of verbose introduction, what this stone means to Manitoba is presented beautifully here in this building that we get to work in every single day, the people's building, the Legislative Building in Manitoba.

So, I'm really pleased to have the chance to stand and just talk about what this building and the stones that make up its foundation really mean. You know, we've seen a lot of different groups coming into the building over the last number of months, some really wonderful events that bring Manitobans together. And they get to experience the incredible architecture in the stone.

We just had an amazing Pride event here last week that was put on by the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham), and it was a really special afternoon. People were commenting on the beauty of the building. They were seeing the fossils in the wall, they were enjoying the space and they were celebrating Pride week with—this week with folks in the building, which was a first. It was wonderful.

Something else I think that is important to point out is that, you know, these stones are an important part of mining here in Manitoba. It's an important industry for our province. And dolomitic limestone, it continues to be an important part of that industry.

And something else that I'm sure the member from Lac du Bonnet would agree with is that, you know, unions have been a really important part of the mining strategy here in terms of safer practices for workers, better working hours.

And I'm sure—I know that some of the member in the other side have actually worked in the mining industry, so I'm sure that, at some points in the future, they'll stand up and talk about how wonderful and supportive unions have been in their careers as well, over their time here in the Legislative Building.

So again, I just want to thank the member from Lac du Bonnet for bringing this forward. I know there's some important families that have done

incredibly difficult work in mining this stone and bringing it forward for the world to see. As he mentioned, it's featured in buildings all over Canada, all over the world, really.

So I was fortunate enough to be in Ottawa recently, and I saw our incredible Parliament Building, and our stone, the fossiliferous dolomitic limestone, was on display there as well. It's a beautiful building that brings people in from all over the world.

So ultimately, I think I just want to say thank you to the families that brought this stone forward, that have done the good, hard work of furthering our mining industry here in Manitoba; to the unions that have played an important role in making sure that working environments are safe for the people that are mining this important stone. And I want to thank the member for bringing it forward and honouring Manitoba and fossiliferous dolomitic limestone.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 201, the Manitoba emblems amendment provincial stone.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

I declare the motion carried.

As per the previous—*[interjection]* The honourable deputy opposition House leader.

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader):** Is it the will of the House to call it unanimous?

**The Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call the vote unanimous? *[Agreed]*

The vote is hereby called unanimous.

#### **Bill 202—The Community Foundation Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)**

**The Speaker:** As previously agreed, we will now move to concurrence and third reading of Bill 202, The Community Foundation Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk), that Bill 202, The Community Foundation Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

\* (10:20)

**Mr. Jackson:** It's such a pleasure to rise here today, coming to the end of perhaps the first spring sitting of our session of this Legislature, as a new MLA, and to have my bill at this stage in my first term as an MLA is certainly humbling, and I do appreciate the support of both my colleagues on the PC side of this important bill, as well as our New Democratic colleagues on the opposite side of the Chamber.

Community foundations are an incredible part of our communities here in Manitoba. We are the leader of community foundations, not only here in the country of Canada, but across North America. We have more community foundations per capita than anywhere else on this continent.

That speaks to the framework that community foundations establish in our communities and the good work that they do. And it also speaks to the generosity of Manitobans, the generosity of our spirit: as a province, as a people and our willingness to give back and support our communities and those organizations in our communities that are most in need.

And so, I'm very humbled to have brought this bill forward. Community foundations are very important to me personally, but I also recognize their importance across the province: 57 of them across the province, The Winnipeg Foundation being the first in the country.

We know The Winnipeg Foundation is a leader and, in fact, that not just our smaller community foundations across the province, but also community foundations across the country look to Manitoba, look to The Winnipeg Foundation for leadership and to set the tone for how community foundations are going to proceed and evolve and grow across the country.

And so we hope that other provinces will see this bill come into effect and recognize that volunteers and staff at our—and donors at our community foundations need and deserve to be recognized with a day of their own in our yearly calendar.

We had a wonderful event here in the Rotunda, sponsored by engage—Endow Manitoba, The Winnipeg Foundation, Francofonds and the Brandon Area Community Foundation.

I so look forward to this bill being proclaimed and that we get to celebrate April 26 every year with all Manitobans and, certainly, all community foundations here in the Rotunda, in this building.

So I don't think I need to say any more than that. Just thank you to all the community foundations and their staff, volunteer boards and donors for their support of this bill.

And thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface):** Merci, merci. Bon matin. Merci.

Bon matin, l'Honorable Président, c'est un honneur et un plaisir de me lever en Chambre et d'être capable de m'exprimer dans une des deux langues officielles du Canada, un pays qui est libre, diverse. Et c'est intéressant qu'on parle des fondations communautaires du Manitoba ce matin, parce que l'histoire des fondations communautaires au Manitoba est liée à l'histoire du Canada, étant donné que le Manitoba est un leader quand ça vient à nos fondations communautaires.

On a parlé de la fondation Winnipeg qui était d'ailleurs la première fondation être fondée en 1921 — et la plus grande fondation d'ailleurs, au Canada. Moi-même, mon historique avec les fondations, c'est que j'ai eu la chance de siéger sur la fondation Francofonds pendant plusieurs années. On a vu comment les Manitobains et Manitobaines, plus particulièrement dans la communauté francophone et francophone-métisse, étaient très prêts à soutenir Francofonds. On a vu au cours des années comment le fonds de Francofonds s'est élevé de 8 millions à 16 millions, et maintenant bel et bien en train de diriger vers le seuil de 20 millions.

D'ailleurs ce que je trouve vraiment fantastique avec les fondations communautaires, surtout au niveau éducatif, en tant que éducateur, c'est que nos fondations sont là aussi pour appuyer nos apprenants. Ceux qui vont à l'université, des fois, sont à la recherche de bourses scolaires. Je sais que, dans mon cas, ma propre fille, Axelle Loiselle, a reçu une bourse scolaire universitaire d'ailleurs, pour aller à l'université de Winnipeg où elle étudie en biologie.

Alors c'est un grand plaisir pour moi d'avoir la chance ce matin m'adresser à la Chambre et de discuter du fait que, avoir une journée dédiée aux fondations ici au Manitoba — et d'ailleurs on a 57 c'est une bonne idée qu'on devrait appuyer.

J'aimerais ajouter que les fondations communautaires contribuent au bien-être de nombreux projets et initiatives ici au Manitoba. Nous sommes fiers de faire partie d'un gouvernement qui travaille à soutenir et à collaborer avec les fondations communautaires qui aident les Manitobains et les

Manitobaines. Il est donc approprié, comme je l'ai déjà mentionné – et d'après moi – de proclamer le 26 avril journée des fondations communautaires.

Les fondations communautaires sont des organisations à but non lucratif qui travaillent sans relâche pour améliorer la vie des individus et des familles à travers le Manitoba. Ces fondations répondent aux besoins locaux, soutiennent les initiatives caritatives et favorisent le développement communautaire grâce à des subventions, des bourses et des partenariats.

Au Manitoba, on l'a déjà dit, il existe 57 fondations communautaires – le plus grand nombre par habitant en Amérique du Nord. Il faut le dire : c'est vraiment incroyable, l'Honorable Président. Alors, 57 fondations communautaires au Manitoba, avec la Fondation de Winnipeg comme étant la plus vieille.

Les fondations sont plus font – les fondations sont plus que leur accès financier, elles pratiquent une approche collaborative pour renforcer les communautés en – et encourager la générosité individuelle et collective à travers la province.

Donc, en dépit de leur rôle crucial, les fondations communautaires opèrent souvent discrètement, il faut le dire, manquant de la reconnaissance qu'elles méritent vraiment. Sensibiliser les Manitobains et les Manitobaines à l'importance vitale de ces fondations est un excellent moyen de promouvoir les petites organisations et de célébrer ceux qui ont contribué à construire notre belle province du Manitoba. Les fondations communautaires sont une leçon sur le pouvoir de l'action collective.

Beaucoup de fondations communautaires ont émergé d'une préoccupation pour nos communautés diverses. Alors que tant de ces fondations sont devenus des piliers dans leur domaine, nous devons nous souvenir de leurs modestes débuts et que nous pourrions être partie prenante du changement que nous aimons voir dans nos communautés.

Je l'ai déjà dit, notre province a une longue histoire des fondations communautaires, et je trouve qu'il est absolument approprié que nous célébrions les fondations au Manitoba chaque année le 26 avril, avec une journée des fondations communautaires.

Merci, l'Honorable Président.

### **Translation**

*Good morning, Honourable Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure to rise in the House and be able to express myself in one of the two official languages of*

*Canada, a country that is free and diverse. It is interesting that we are talking about Manitoba's community foundations this morning, because the history of community foundations in Manitoba is linked to the history of Canada, since Manitoba is a leader when it comes to our community foundations.*

*We talked about The Winnipeg Foundation, which was the first foundation to be founded in 1921—and the largest foundation in Canada. My own history with foundations is that I was lucky enough to sit on the Francofonds foundation for several years. We saw how Manitobans, especially in the Francophone and Franco-Métis community, were very willing to support Francofonds. Over the years, the Francofonds fund grew from \$8 million to \$16 million, and is now well on its way to \$20 million.*

*As an educator, what I find truly amazing about community foundations, especially at the educational level, is that our foundations are also there to support our learners. Those who go to university are sometimes looking for scholarships. In my case, my own daughter, Axelle Loiselle, received a university scholarship to go to the University of Winnipeg, where she is studying biology.*

*So it is a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity this morning to address the House and discuss the fact that having a day dedicated to foundations here in Manitoba, and we do have 57 of them, is a good idea that we should support.*

*I would like to add that community foundations contribute to the well-being of many projects and initiatives here in Manitoba. We are proud to be part of a government that works to support and collaborate with community foundations that help Manitobans. So, as I mentioned earlier—and it is indeed in my opinion—it is fitting that we proclaim April 26 as community foundations day.*

*Community foundations are non-profit organizations that work tirelessly to improve the lives of individuals and families across Manitoba. They respond to local needs, support charitable initiatives and foster community development through grants, scholarships and partnerships.*

*As already mentioned, there are 57 community foundations in Manitoba—the highest number per capita in North America. That is truly astounding, Honourable Speaker. Fifty-seven community foundations in Manitoba, with The Winnipeg Foundation being the oldest.*

*Foundations represent more than just access to funding; they take a collaborative approach to strengthening communities and encouraging individual and collective generosity across the province.*

*Despite their crucial role, community foundations often operate discretely, lacking the recognition they truly deserve. Educating Manitobans about the vital importance of these foundations is an excellent way to promote small organizations and celebrate those who have helped build our beautiful province of Manitoba. Community foundations are a lesson in the power of collective action.*

*Many community foundations have grown out of specific concerns within our diverse communities. While so many of these foundations have become pillars in their field, we need to remember their humble beginnings and that we can be part of the change we love to see in our communities.*

*As I have mentioned before, our province has a long history of community foundations, and I think it is absolutely fitting for us to celebrate foundations in Manitoba on April 26 of each year, with a community foundations day.*

*Thank you, Honourable Speaker.*

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 202, The Community Foundation Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

I declare the motion carried.

The honourable opposition deputy House leader.

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader):** Is it the will of the House to call it unanimous?

**The Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call the vote unanimous? [*Agreed*]

The vote is reported as unanimous.

**Bill 211—The Drivers and Vehicles  
Amendment Act  
(Manitoba Parks Licence Plates)**

**The Speaker:** As previously agreed, we will now move to concurrence and third reading of Bill 211, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Manitoba Parks Licence Plates).

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** I move, seconded by the MLA for Swan River, that Bill 211, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Manitoba Parks Licence Plates), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

**Motion presented.**

\* (10:30)

**Mr. Nesbitt:** It gives me great pleasure to rise today for the third reading of Bill 211, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Manitoba Parks Licence Plates).

This amendment will permit an organization to apply to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to make a licence plate available that includes the words Manitoba Parks along with an associated graphic.

The intent is to develop a stunning plate that Manitoba motorists will be able to display on their vehicle no matter where they drive. This will, in turn, advertise our beautiful parks which will drive even more visitors to one or more of our 93 provincial parks.

The profits from the sale of licence plates will be directed to a charity that supports projects in provincial parks. We will work with The Winnipeg Foundation to ensure that the proceeds go into the Provincial Parks Endowment Fund, which annually invests over \$1 million in our parks.

Manitobans love their provincial parks. Hundreds of thousands of campsites are booked each year, in addition to the many cottages that border the lakes in our provincial parks. Plus, many Manitobans and out-of-province visitors stop to enjoy the trails in our parks, enjoy other amenities or just take in the breathtaking beauty of nature.

I want to recognize the seconder of this bill, my friend and a true lover of the outdoors, the MLA for Swan River, for his encouragement and support in the development of this piece of this legislation. Thank you also to my colleagues on both sides of this House for their comments in debate on Bill 211.

In closing, I encourage the House to pass this bill through third reading today.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia):** I rise today to speak about the beauty of our provincial parks. For anyone who has called Manitoba home, you'd know



that our provincial parks are just a treasure and something to really—for all Manitobans to enjoy.

I know for myself and my family, we certainly have enjoyed provincial parks and being outdoors, especially in the summer.

We do a lot of camping as a family and we've had the pleasure of camping in Birds Hill park, which is just a beautiful space for people to go and enjoy the trails, sitting around a campfire, and just really enjoying being, you know, with nature or with your family and friends. It's something that we really enjoy as a family.

Certainly as well, I think for me, one of the first times that I went camping was at Birds Hill Provincial Park and it was during Folk Festival, which is an amazing festival that I think all Manitobans know about.

Really, it's a wonderful place to be. It has such a great energy with just enjoying the outdoors and music and so that was my first time tent camping and I was, I think I was 20 years old.

And the reason I didn't tent or camp as a child is because I grew up on a farm, and so I felt like my family, we lived in the country, so there was no need to go camping, I think my parents thought.

And so that was a really unique experience for me. There was a thunderstorm that happened that night, my first night of tent camping, and it was pretty scary, but we made it through and enjoyed the rest of the weekend.

I'd also like to say the Whiteshell Provincial Park holds a really special place for my family and I. We had a seasonal site out in the provincial park there.

And it was such a beautiful space, you know, when our kids were younger to be able to have them play in the water and take hikes with them, enjoy the sunset and just really enjoy being outside in the summer. I think it's a great way for people to get out of the city and just be within nature.

Also, I've had the pleasure of skiing, cross-country skiing, in some of the provincial parks, which has been a delight. I'm not someone who usually likes the winter, and so it gets me out, and it's pretty nice to be out there in the quiet and just enjoying the trails that are there.

I think hiking is a really beautiful activity that I think my family and I like to take part in, just being out discovering nature and what's around. I think my children have really enjoyed being outdoor kids, and

a lot of it is to do with being in provincial parks when we've taken them to enjoy time and nature.

I think now as, you know, my children are 11 and 14, they're a bit older and it's really amazing to see the way they enjoy being outdoors in the summer. And I think it's really because they got to enjoy the outdoors as kids and just being able to go to my family farm, which is not in a provincial park so I won't speak about that.

But to wrap up, I just want to say that I think, on behalf of all Manitobans, our provincial parks are something to treasure and something to really be able to enjoy in the summers.

And I think the camping season is coming up, and I think—well, it's actually really already started; May long would've marked that for a lot of people to get out and start camping.

So I would like to say that I thank the member opposite for bringing this bill forward, and I think you for the opportunity to speak on this matter.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 211, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Manitoba Parks Licence Plates).

Is it the will—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

I declare the motion carried.

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader):** Is it the will of the House to call it unanimous?

**The Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call the vote unanimous? *[Agreed]*

The vote is unanimous.

## DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

### Bill 217—The Men's Mental Health Awareness Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

**The Speaker:** As previously agreed, we will now resume debate on second reading of Bill 217, The Men's Mental Health Awareness Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, who has seven minutes remaining.

**Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism):** Really happy to be continuing to speak on this important issue that was brought forward by the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé). A very poignant and strong speech on his part last week.

And last week, if you remember, I kind of give a brief history of my family, growing up with six siblings, five of us boys, on a dairy farm that was populated by up to the dozen men working, eating, us breaking bread together.

You can imagine what it was like growing up in that environment with all of us so close in age hanging around each other and what was defined for us by maybe society of what it was like to be—what it meant to be a man. And so I was—when the member opposite was speaking, I was identifying with a lot of the things that he was talking about, about how you had to man up, toughen up—not show how you were feeling in certain situations.

So I just wanted to bring that context here while I was speaking to remind people that this is an issue that can affect everyone, and we really don't know what someone's history is when we meet him for the first time. And I think what the member opposite was trying to share in his message is that sometimes it's nice to be sitting with someone who can say, I know what you're going through.

And when they say, I know what you're going through, what those people are really trying to do is to try to give you an opportunity to talk because we all know that sometimes when there are issues bothering us, being able to say something to someone is the first step in looking for help.

\* (10:40)

And whether that's in a locker room, whether that's out for a beer or whatever, having that opportunity to be able to converse and to be able to share your feelings is always the first step in feeling better.

And sometimes it's—well, all we need's a good listener, and no one really likes to just be talking to themselves all of the time. So I would say that men's mental health, as well as mental health for everyone, hinges on our ability to be able to talk about what it is that's bothering us, what's going right, what's going wrong and those types of things.

And mental health for all, the awareness of what is there for everyone, is really important. I was just about to share, before I was—my time ended last week,

that I had the opportunity to speak with Sheldon Kennedy. And he was talking about some of the work that his group is doing in the WHL. And the WHL, we've heard in the news in the past, where these locker rooms could be quite toxic with some behaviour that wasn't appropriate.

And what their team is doing is meeting with these individual organizations and going down to the player level and having the players talk to each other about what it means to have a good, open locker room; what it means to have a good culture.

And they're creating charters, rules, accountability, things that those players should be allowed to say. And when they see something, they're allowed to say something. And if it's—whether it's in their teammates' difficulties, whether it's in a way a coach has been treating someone or whether it's something they see outside of the rink, these players have that ability to talk to each other and kind of bring up issues.

I also was talking about the Good-Hearted Warriors in Brandon. That was initiated by a good friend of mine, Jason Gobeil and how he's helping Indigenous men connect with the land and connect with traditions, because he saw the gap in men's health.

I also wanted to maybe talk, a little bit out of pride, about my nephew who, Aiden Simard, who was a student at the University of British Columbia and started an initiative there called heads up. And heads up was a way for him to connect with the men in his environment, whether—is across Canada and the US, where they had a webinar where men were, during the pandemic, were able to connect and talk about what it meant to—for them to be able to talk to each other. And how he saw, as a up-and-coming doctor—he just got accepted to medical school last month and will be starting at UBC in the fall—about how that kept coming up in his discussions, was how men's mental health was something that was lacking.

And I think one of the big things, as a father for two sons, that I always tried to impart on them is find an interest. Find an interest, whether it's art, music, reading, acting, sports, fishing; find an interest in which you can be in an environment what—has open communication.

I know during the pandemic, one of the greatest things that my boys were able to do was to go out and cast a line, to ride their bikes down to the Assiniboine River in Brandon there, meet up with their buddies outside when they weren't allowed to go together and

play hockey or baseball. And just get together on the outdoors to just shoot the breeze, as you would say, as they would try to catch some fish. And it just really made them appreciate what it's like to be in, I guess, maybe even this is a term that I would use, a brotherhood where they were able to kind of share their feelings.

And whether they were feeling great, what kind of fish they caught, they would prepare, go to Cabela's. And actually, as the Minister for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, my big flex now is the fact that certificates for master anglers have my names on it. So when—so in November, my son's buddies took a picture of my—of his master angler signed by me, to my son, and that was my big flex.

But I think that's an example of what everybody needs to be able to do, is to kind of feel good about themselves, to kind of share common interests. And when we talk about finding those common activities and whether it's—anyone, where you can kind of get together and share a beer, I think that's a good thing and it's a step in the right direction.

You know, myself and my—the colleague from Brandon West, we have a beer that we have to have. And we've been talking about that for a while. And I think it's just about feeling good about ourselves and talking about our shared experience of being rookies in this House.

Thank you.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** I got to say, usually I'm not at a loss for words. Usually I'm not nervous when I get up and speak. Today, I'm nervous, but I'm looking forward to speaking on this topic of men's mental health awareness act.

This bill aims to establish a dedicated week each year to raise awareness. And I just want to say—put a couple words on record here that men's mental health is critical but often overlooked aspect of our overall health landscape. Traditionally, men have been socialized to be stoic, to man up and not show vulnerability. This cultural expectation can lead to serious mental health issues being ignored or untreated. Statistics show that men are less likely to seek health for mental health problems and are more likely to die by suicide. These stark facts underline the urgent need for focused attention on men's mental health.

There's issues that we run into in all aspects, and I want to stand here as a member of the Legislative Assembly and say I have mental health issues. And I want you all to know that I struggle sometimes with

mental health, and I'm glad that there's people that surround me that can help me work through this, including my family as well, too.

I look at it from the farming industry that I was part of for many years. Do More Ag has done a lot for mental health, but again, we need to speak up and I—it breaks my heart to think of what we dealt with here a few weeks ago. And I know the member from Waverley's not here, but him and I have talked about this extensively.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

You can't make reference to a member being present or not.

**MLA Bereza:** The—a few weeks ago, we lost a member of the Winnipeg fire department. It hit us all hard, and it hit me hard too, because there's a fire-fighter in my family as well, too. But we struggle at times, and I think we need to make sure that we have voices out there and that we speak up and talk to each other and try and help each other out there.

But as men, sometimes we think we're too proud and too big to stand up. And we're not. We all need help out there and we need to recognize that we need help out there at some times. When we see sports, and I'm glad to hear of the talk of an ex-NHL player that has been working on this, as well, too, because we've lost hockey players out there. We've lost football players out there. Because these guys are supposed to be tough. And tough means talking, too, and talking to each other out there about the mental health aspect that we live with out there.

It's not easy. This is not a gender issue. This is not a race issue. This is something that affects all men, all people, and we need to help people through this.

And by moving this bill and passing it forward, we're doing a job as a whole unified group here, to help men's mental health and to help those that are struggling out there. And I think if we can help one person or one group to see that and see what we're doing for mental health, we've done a great service for Manitoba.

I don't want to take up too much time on this, as others, I know, want to speak on this, but I want to thank the member from Dawson Trail for bringing this forward.

\* (10:50)

But anyways, thank you so much for your time. And I appreciate that, thank you.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 217, The Men's Mental Health Awareness Week Act.

I want to say thank you to my colleague, the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé), for creating this opportunity and bringing this bill forward so that we can talk about this important issue which impacts us all, irrespective of the gender, because this impacts the whole society.

And as the member in his speech mentioned that it's okay not to be okay. But what's not okay is to go through it alone. That's true. We have people around us. We trust some; not all. But if you have a few friends, family members, siblings, your offspring, you are lucky. You are lucky to have those trusted people around you where you can share what you're going through. And I think that's the best way to heal yourself.

On top of that, we have therapy. We have medical science and other tools that we can use to handle this situation and address this issue.

Our government is really prioritizing health, which includes mental health, and we have a minister dedicated, and she takes care of housing, addictions, homelessness and mental health. So we are taking this up. We are putting in resources and we hope that things get better.

When we talk about mental health and specifically men's mental health as my colleague mentioned, that there are some trends in this society, there are some perceptions and misperceptions in this society that tell us that because you are a man, you're not supposed to cry. You're strong.

But I want to say this: let's not say or trust or believe that men are stronger than other genders. We are all the same. And there is intragroup diversity in each group. So it's not about whether you are strong or weak, it's about what's the right thing to do.

Sometimes, some men think that, I'm a man, I shouldn't cry. Why? There are so many men who cry, and crying is a natural process that heals you automatically. You feel better after crying. And there are many, many other ways to address this issue.

One of my friends, she is an artist; she is a scientist and an artist at the same time. I was talking to her and I said, how come you got into this creative thing? And she goes, after I lost my dad, that's when I was looking for something that I can engage in and heal myself.

And she got into colours and art and painting. And she started growing further in that field and started creating art pieces and gifting people and sometimes selling and putting out exhibits. That's a great way of healing yourself.

Today, when I talk about this issue, I remember the days when we lost our wonderful colleague, Danielle Adams. I was lost. We used to sit there, not too far away from each other, a wonderful colleague. And I didn't know how to handle myself after that loss. I was laying on my couch and my colleague, now Minister for Health calls me: Hey, how are you doing? How can I help? It gave me some relief and I said: Thank you so much for picking up the phone and calling. And I'm sure that they called many of us because it's their field, health sciences.

I didn't feel better, much better, so what I did was I scrolled through my phone. I found a picture of Danielle Adams, hit print, and started making a sketch for my wonderful colleague. It took me four hours. I don't know about the product but the process was so much healing. I can still go back in time and feel how I handled myself.

So there are so many ways people address these issues, people handle their emotions, people address their mental health issues. Some people write. I write, sometimes I write. Again, there are natural ways. There is therapy. There are many ways, but there are many issues as well.

I have realized while living in this city, in this province, that there are some cultural communities where it's not easy to talk about mental health. There are some fears and stigmas and people hide themselves. People avoid the opportunities where they can share their feelings, what they are going through. And those circumstances and social, I would say norms or whatever you call them, tells them to go through it alone—which is not okay.

And various people have various ways to cope with this. And there are various reasons why you are going through mental health issues. It could be bullying. It could be financial pressure. It could be loss of a loved one and so on.

But I want to say and conclude here that anybody who is going through such a situation, you are not alone. Find a friend. Find a therapist and go talk about it. And today what we're doing is we are talking about it.

Thank you so much.

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** I am incredibly pleased, I am very pleased to be able to rise and speak on this incredibly important topic this morning.

I think its importance—we've heard from the member of Burrows, we've heard from the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza), a number of people, on just how personal this issue is to so many people and I think it's important that we have this conversation.

So honestly I'd written out this—these notes, and then last night I went out. My father's actually retiring after 39 years as a teacher. He was a music teacher for 39 years at the same school and last night was his last concert. So I was going out, so we're going to perform for him, we have a whole bunch of people from the community getting together to celebrate what he's done.

And I ended up getting together with some old friends of mine I hadn't seen in a little while. And the three of us, we got to sit down and actually chat about what's been going in their lives. And everybody at that table, all men, brought forward issues that they were having with their mental health.

And so I'm not necessarily bringing this up though because it is something that's completely out of left field—

\* (11:00)

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

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

## RESOLUTIONS

### **Res. 19—Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop the Assault on Affordability and Eliminate the Education Property Taxes for All Manitobans**

**The Speaker:** The hour now being 11 a.m., the time for private members' resolutions.

The resolution before us this morning is the resolution calling for the provincial government to stop the assault on affordability and eliminate the education property tax, brought forward by the honourable member for La Vérendrye.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** I move, seconded by the member for Lakeside (Mr. King),

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government abandoned plans to eliminate education property taxes and instead introduced a plan to increase taxes by \$148 million in 2024; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government is allowing school divisions to increase local property taxes by as much as 17%; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government has been adamant in its public-facing communications that 83% of homeowners will benefit from these property tax changes but has produced no evidence to support this claim; and*

*WHEREAS experts estimate that tens of thousands of Manitoba homeowners will actually pay more taxes under this new Provincial Government plan; and*

*WHEREAS removing property tax rebates for multi-family housing, such as apartment blocks, is directly increasing rent prices for tens of thousands of Manitobans; and*

*WHEREAS by removing property tax rebates for commercial properties, this Provincial Government is heavily taxing small businesses, who are still recovering from the pandemic; and*

*WHEREAS an education funding model that ties school funding to property tax assessments is not fair or equitable.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the provincial government's recent assault on affordability and urge the provincial government to affect a call for a return to the elimination of education property taxes.

### **Motion presented.**

**Mr. Narth:** Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this important resolution, the resolution titled, Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop the Assault on Affordability and Eliminate the Education Property Taxes for All Manitobans.

The provincial government abandoned plans to eliminate education property taxes and instead introduced a plan to increase taxes by \$148 million in 2024 and is allowing school divisions to increase local property taxes by as much as 17 per cent.

With many Manitobans finding it harder than ever to make ends meet and even more difficult for first-time homeowners to make home ownership a reality, now is not the time for the government to be imposing new taxes on home ownership.

The recently introduced NDP overhaul to the education property tax system will negatively impact many Manitobans, and not just those living in lavish

property but instead tens of thousands of middle class households as well.

In Manitoba, affordability is a top priority for all citizens. This is something that we hear when speaking to constituents across the province, and recently I've had the opportunity to hear this first-hand in some of the middle class neighbourhoods of Tuxedo where young homeowners with professional careers aren't able to afford the lifestyle that the generation before them was able to enjoy.

Although the message for Manitobans has been coming through loud and clear, it is also being seen in formal surveys. According to a Probe Research poll from this past April, the No. 1 most important issue that the majority of Manitobans list as their primary concern is housing affordability.

A major part of housing affordability is not just the cost of a down payment or the mortgage itself but the ability for someone to also continue paying taxes into the future without any certainty. This is a major concern when making that decision. Most aspects of home ownership can be planned for and budgeted, but the uncertainty of tax rates for school property tax are leaving many Manitobans reluctant on the cost of ownership into the future.

Statistics are showing that younger adults and those living in Winnipeg are much more likely to worry about how affordable it is to find a place to live. Along with that, nearly one in 10 are concerned about how rent increases and property taxes make housing less affordable.

This NDP government has announced a complete revamp to the progressive model rolled out by the previous PC government which would bring Manitoba in competitive line with the rest of Canada. The new system does away with saving for citizens and instead puts more money into the hands of government.

According to Budget 2024, the new education property tax system will be generating an additional \$148 million in taxation. This new tax structure sets the stage for Manitobans who own properties and houses of higher value paying more than \$1,500 in education tax. These people will shoulder the greater burden of the tax and put the onus on this population to pay for government expenses.

This structure directly punishes Manitobans for their ability to own larger homes and commercial properties, which are the same people that help to put food on the tables of thousands of other Manitobans.

We are directly punishing the small-business owners, farmers and professionals across our province.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) just recently acknowledged at a Chamber event that we are seeing the highest net loss of Manitobans to inter-provincial migration. We haven't seen this rate of Manitobans leaving the province since the late '70s and early '80s. People are becoming more desperate than ever to seek affordability and further opportunities.

Right here in Winnipeg, the average sale price for a detached home is more than \$418,000, according to the Winnipeg Real Estate Board. This number is up 8 per cent since the same time last year and reflects the housing crisis being experienced across the country. Placing the burden of school taxation on home ownership only further extrapolates the effects of a moving target when new homeowners are planning their budget.

One distinct failure of this new NDP plan is the inability for foresight, the capacity to think of the big picture for the long term. This plan is literally bringing Manitoba back in time and further out of reach to compete with our neighbouring provinces. It is disappointing that this government struggles to fundamentally grasp the economics of what this will do to the housing market that is already keeping more Manitobans excluded from than ever before.

This Premier has many times said that the economic horse is what pulls the social cart and that in order to grow Manitoba, we're going to need to grow the economy. I couldn't agree more, but the phrase, although being correct and appropriate—the appropriate action isn't following the education tax on property is a prime example. The economic horse is exactly who will be hit the hardest due to the fact that owners of commercial properties in Manitoba will be receiving—will not be receiving any education tax credits at all. This is not only on commercial businesses, but also expands to multi-family dwellings, which are exactly where most people are living while saving for the dream of home ownership.

Essentially, this NDP government's decision to force increased education property taxes will lead to increased rent prices. What is even worse is that there are developers who are so uncertain with how high education property taxes may go and whether they will be able to increase rent levels to the level needed to remain profitable, that some of the smaller developers have simply chosen to abandon their projects altogether.

What drives the uncertainty around investment with this model is that school divisions are able to raise taxes independently of each other, essentially making lice–life less affordable from one street to another. Examples of this are being seen right now. The Winnipeg School Division approved a 3.4 increase for the property education tax while Louis Riel School Division proposed a 7.5 per cent increase.

Although these single jump increases are concerning, they aren't the highest. In Morden, the Western School Division proposed a staggering 17 per cent increase, which would amount to an average tax increase of more than \$360.

\* (11:10)

Manitoba is the only province that still funds education through locally determined school taxes. The reason for that is because of how unfair and outdated this model is.

There are neighbourhoods and communities that can have an unfair disadvantage solely because of which school division they fall within. Using property taxes as a measurement for additional tax collection is unfair because the ability to pay has no bearing. When you make more money through your employment, you pay more income tax, but only because you were earning more money.

When it comes to property tax, it doesn't matter if you are a senior citizen collecting a fixed pension or a CEO in the top-earning category. The amount of property tax you pay depends wholly on the tax rate and how much the government deems your house to be worth.

We must recognize the reality that Manitobans are facing and ensure that us, as legislators, we do not make decisions that will negatively impact their financial stability. We need to look out for the well-being of all Manitobans and develop policy that will help those who need it, strengthen our economy and allow for people to live their most prosperous, successful and comfortable lives.

By increasing taxes and making decisions that will limit the supply of much-needed housing, this NDP government is taking steps in the wrong direction that will prove to hurt Manitobans at a time when they truly cannot afford it.

Thank you.

## Questions

**The 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 the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer may exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions. *[interjection]*

Order, please.

**MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia):** Our NDP team greatly respects educators and division leadership for putting kids' needs first. Our government wants to support you, not bully you like the PCs did. Where they tried to divide and play favourites, we're going to be a meaningful partner in children's education.

My question to the member opposite is: Can he tell us why his PC colleagues cut funding that went towards nutrition programs, all-day kindergarten and youth therapy?

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Our PC team continually invested in education across the province, invested in the construction of new schools, something that the previous NDP–*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Narth:**—government never did. We support communities and support the members of communities to support each other while the government helps to support them.

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** I want to thank my colleague for bringing this resolution forward.

Can you tell—can the colleague tell me who was consulted in drafting this resolution?

**Mr. Narth:** Thank you to my colleague from Selkirk for that great question.

This is one of the easiest answers. We have been able to consult Manitobans across the entire province. For the last eight years, we have been consulting all Manitobans who have demanded that an archaic form of taxation is not the way to fund our education. Instead, we are leaving money in the pockets of Manitobans, allowing them to further invest in their communities and our province.

**MLA Kennedy:** Honourable Speaker, the previous failed PC government worked every day under the direction of the Stefanson and Pallister governments to cut core funding to education by \$36 million. Because of them, school divisions had to cut programs, forcing them to do more with less.

My question for the member opposite is: Why does he and his caucus still prioritize cuts over kids?

**Mr. Narth:** Thank you for that question.

It allows me to share with the House that more than \$100 million was invested into Education, largest Education investment in recent history. We are not proposing cuts to Education; instead, we were the government who made the largest investments in Education, investing in the schools and the quality of education for all students across the province.

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** I know this government likes to make this comparison that we're not, you know—somehow farmers are happy about continuing to see their education property taxes go up while remaining stagnant on the level of the rebates that they're receiving.

Can the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) please outline what he's hearing from farmers about the education property tax?

**Mr. Narth:** Thank you for the member from Spruce Woods for that great question.

Definitely, farmers are showcasing the inequality that this archaic tax structure brings to Manitobans. With an ever-increasing farmland property value being seen across our province, the farmers are the ones that are, unfortunately, carrying substantial burden for taxation in rural Manitoba for schools. And we're hearing loud and clear that the system isn't fair to all Manitobans.

**MLA Kennedy:** Thanks to our NDP government's provincial budget, Manitoba families are enjoying the lowest inflation in Canada for three months in a row and can save up to \$5,000. Under the PCs, Manitobans were paying more in taxes, more for rent and more for gas every day.

My question to the member opposite is: Do they think that having the lowest inflation in Canada is a good thing or are they just that out of touch with Manitobans?

**Mr. Narth:** That question brings me great pleasure to answer, coming from an economics background. So the inflation pause that we're seeing is directly due to

some of the recognition that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has recently made that we're seeing the largest amount of Manitobans leave to neighbouring provinces. We have a stagnant economy when we do not invest back in the businesses and the people of our province.

So Manitobans are concerned. Businesses in Manitoba are concerned with the rate of increase of taxation that they foresee happening in the next term of our government.

**Mr. Perchotte:** Honourable Speaker, can the member please tell me how the newly introduced NDP education property tax plan will affect the middle class?

**Mr. Narth:** Thank you to the member for Selkirk for bringing up that great question. As outlined in some of the brief points made here today, the new NDP plan drastically hinders the middle class in Manitoba. We look at hard-working communities that are just trying to feed their families, save up to improve their respective situation, and we're seeing them giving up their dreams because of the increased taxation.

**MLA Kennedy:** Our NDP government believes that Manitobans work hard for their money, which is why we're working just as hard to help them save it. We're increasing the personal income tax brackets threshold and increasing the personal basic amount, unlike the previous failed PC government who raised taxes on workers five times when they were in power—five times.

My question to the member opposite is: Will he apologize to hard-working Manitobans today for failing them for the last seven years?

**Mr. Narth:** Although that being more of a statement than a question, I would strongly disagree with the question. It is our PC team that was putting more money into the pockets of Manitobans.

\* (11:20)

We were in—we were decreasing personal income tax to all Manitobans. We cut the school property tax for all Manitobans across the board. We were investing back into the communities which we call home and the Manitobans that strive to grow our province.

**Mr. Jackson:** Can the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) please outline what the impact of this NDP failed budget is going to be on renters across the province and their rent rates?

**Mr. Narth:** I'd be glad to answer that question.



It's quite simple. So investors who invest in building the apartments and multi-family dwellings across our province will now need to carry the entire burden of property taxes. That, in turn, is either going to have a decrease in investment in that sector or it's going to raise rent prices.

So that's on the backs of the government of today, whether those landlords will be able to raise rent prices. And if they aren't, they simply will exit the market.

**MLA Kennedy:** Our government inherited a financial mess from the previous failed PC government. Not only did they leave Manitobans a nearly \$2-billion deficit, but they did so while sending millions to out-of-province corporations.

My question for the member opposite is: Does he and his PC Party feel guilty for sending millions of dollars to wealthy and out-of-province corporations instead of funding children's education?

**Mr. Narth:** In Budget 2023, there was a projected deficit of \$548 million, but to—due to income generated from Hydro and then expansion in the economy, \$270-million surplus was seen.

Thanks to our PC initiatives to change the tax system and strengthen our economy, the Province saw an increase of \$836 million in higher than expected corporate and personal tax revenues.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The time for questions has expired.

### Debate

**The Speaker:** The floor is open for debate.

**MLA Mike Moyes (Riel):** Today, I stand before you to shed light on a matter of utmost importance: the vitality of funding education while ensuring life remains affordable in our beloved province of Manitoba.

Education stands as the cornerstone of progress, prosperity and societal advancement. It's the bedrock for which future generations build their dreams and shape the world around them. This is in addition to the importance our education system plays in ensuring our future economy remains strong. Education truly is an investment in our kids, in our future and in our province.

In Manitoba, we've been fortunate to have a rich legacy of valuing education. While there's always more work to do, our education system is one of the

best in the world. I would like to take a few moments right now to lift up and honour all those people who work in our education system in Manitoba. The teachers, educational assistants, administrators, lunch supervisors, custodians, secretaries, clinicians: you all play an integral role in the development of our kids in ensuring their needs are met, both in terms of basic needs and academic needs.

Yet as we chart our course in the future, we must be vigilant in safeguarding this legacy. The importance of funding education cannot be overstated. It's an investment in our collective future, one that yield dividends far beyond the balance sheets of today.

That's why our government invested an increase of \$104.2 million in Budget 2024. This includes investments for smaller class sizes to ensure more one-on-one time for students with their teacher.

It also includes money to bring in the first universally accessible nutrition program in our province's history. This is going to ensure that kids across our province have food in their belly and can focus on learning rather than how hungry they are.

First and foremost, funding education is an investment in human capital. Our children are our most precious resource, and their education is the key to unlocking their full potential. By providing adequate funding to our schools, we empower educators to inspire, innovate and instill a love of learning in the hearts and minds of our youth. Every dollar spent on education is a down payment on a brighter, more prosperous future for Manitoba.

Moreover, funding education is essential for fostering a vibrant and competitive economy. In today's knowledge-driven global marketplace, the provinces and countries that excel in education are the ones that thrive.

By equipping our students with the skills, knowledge and tools they need to succeed, we position Manitoba as a hub of innovation and opportunity. From the bustling streets of Winnipeg to the quiet and rural communities, education is the great equalizer, offering a pathway to success for all Manitobans, regardless of background or circumstance.

However, as we champion the importance of funding education, we must also confront the harsh reality of affordability. Manitobans elected our government to rebuild our health care and lower costs for them and their families. That is why we brought in a \$1,500 homeowners affordability tax credit that's

going to make things better for 83.9 per cent of homeowners in Manitoba.

In fact, we are saving as much as \$5,000 with our affordability package. That includes 21 different ways for Manitobans to save. We are working each and every day to put money in the pockets of everyday Manitobans rather—and I emphasize that dramatically—rather than sending cheques to massive corporations such as Cadillac Fairview, the owners of Polo Park shopping centre, who received a \$1-million cheque last year from the former failed PC government. That is shameful. Further—a further cheque of \$325,000 went to Loblaws—not necessarily a local shop.

And this doesn't make any sense. Not only did they send cheques to billionaires, they also left Manitobans with a nearly \$2-billion deficit. And over their time in office, the seven and a half years, they cut core education funding by \$36 million.

That is the PC record in education. That is why this resolution is a bunch of malarkey.

Sending money out of province while at the same time underfunding education is why Manitobans showed them the door. The only time that the PCs showed any amount of money to education was when they were about to be shown the door because an election was right around the corner. *[interjection]* Oh, man. It's shocking the amount of mental gymnastics that you have to do in order to understand the PC government's record on education as well as their rhetoric. It is shocking.

Now, I would just like to conclude my remarks here by just suggesting that the importance of funding education and keeping it affordable in Manitoba cannot be overstated. It is a moral imperative. It's an economic necessity and it is strategically wise for our province's long-term success and prosperity.

As we look to the future, I would hope that every member in this Legislature would pledge to invest in our children, keep life more affordable and build a brighter tomorrow for all Manitobans.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** *[interjection]* All two of you. Right on.

Honourable Speaker, I'm very proud to rise today and put some words on the record on Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop the Assault on Affordability and Eliminate the Education Property Taxes for all Manitobans.

\* (11:30)

As a owner of a private business, things were finally going right. Things were heading in the right direction under the PC government. We actually seen affordability measures that mattered. We seen property tax decreases of 50 per cent on residential properties. We seen decreases on industrial, commercial properties, and we actually seen for the first time ever that employees took home more money on their paycheques without getting a raise.

And that was the first time ever in my collective memory, and I've been in private business over 35 years, that the government went out and gave citizens a raise. And the future was looking bright.

And I realize in business I often talk to people and there's—might be an issue or a problem and I say: hey, what's going on here? How come that's not getting done? And they, often, they come back and they say: well, that's how we always did it and we just continue to do it the same way.

And I believe that if something isn't working and you continue to do it the exact same way, you're going to have a problem. The problems will persist.

And the PC government took a different approach. They took a look at the taxation rate. They took a look at the taxation that was done on the education side and said we're the only province left in all of Canada that is putting taxation directly on the property owners for education and we need to stop that.

We need to phase ourselves out of that and have it come out of the government coffers to pay for education, to make sure that our education institutions are done correctly. We needed to invest and build more schools. We needed to move forward and have daycares built. We needed personal-care homes done. But it was going well. It was going very well. We had people investing in our economy. We had people investing in housing. We had developments happening.

And we have a shortage, a massive shortage, of housing developments happening in our areas. Throughout our entire province, there's a tremendous shortage of housing. And by taxing people more, the property owners that are not going to get any reduction in taxation, they're going to have a situation where the investment is not going to happen in this province. *[interjection]* Hammer time.

Anyway what we need to do is to make sure that we are moving forward to encourage investment in

our province, not to penalize the investors that are coming here to create homes that are desperately needed. We need to make sure that people who go to work have more money in their pockets.

And I've mentioned before that my children were able at a very young age, at 19 years old, to each one of them to purchase their own homes. They worked very hard as children when they first entered the workforce at 16, 17, 18, 19, saving money for their future. They were able to put money away. They had the—seized the opportunities that were coming forward to them.

But nowadays the children that are coming don't have those opportunities. The cost of housing is becoming unattainable for their—the next generation. And if we're looking at that now, what's going to happen for the generation after that? We're such in a steep decline of affordability. We need to turn the direction and make sure that we're focusing on having the dream of home ownership a reality.

And taxing people over and over and over again is something that is not going to make that attainable. When you go to the grocery store, you have taxation done on products that are there that you're not consuming as—for your meals. When you go to the—for fuel, you're paying tax there.

When you purchase an automobile, you're being taxed there. The PST follows that automobile over and over. You finally purchase a house and you have taxation there. And that taxation is done based on somebody from the government telling you what your home is worth.

There was a path moving forward to eliminate the education portion of that property tax, and the people that had that ability were very thankful for it. The people that I know, and myself included, said, finally, the government is getting this right. They're recognizing they can't keep coming back and reaching into the pocket of the same people over and over, and over and over.

When people have more discretionary income, it helps our economy grow. It helps our local businesses that hire the people in our communities. It helps put food on the table of people who couldn't afford it before. We have the PC government's increase in the personal deduction go up to \$15,000. That took something like 38,000 people off the poverty level.

And we need to keep moving on that. And I often say in this Chamber that we have an opportunity, through education and further opportunities, to

remove people out of poverty and give people an opportunity to be successful in life. And nothing is better than making that success on your own, to be proud of the opportunities you have taken.

And I had to work very hard for the opportunities that were in front of me, but I worked very, very hard. When people talk about long days of working 12 hours, I was just getting going after 12 hours. I was working 16, 17, 18 hour days, weekends, sacrificing time away from my family to build opportunities.

And every step of the way, I begrudged the government for what I felt was a tremendous overreach. They weren't beside me working those hours. Nobody was standing next to me dipping into my paycheque. I worked very hard for that money. And every time I would get my property tax bill, I'd say, what is going on here? Is there no control?

Now, I'm concerned what I have seen with the NDP government where they said to the school divisions, you can go charge whatever you want. And in Winkler, they seized that opportunity. They went there, they said, yes, we're going to be able to raise taxes, whatever we want.

Let's grab 17 per cent. And I would guess that some of the other divisions are looking around at each other, going, whoa, we missed an opportunity. How come we didn't try to grab more money? This might only happen for the next one, two, three, four years.

So I'm concerned that next year, when the tax rolls out, we're going to see the other school divisions follow suit and start filling their pockets. We need to invest in education, but we need to have fiscal responsibility and to make sure it's not happening on the backs of the hard-working men and women who make our society great.

More importantly, we have to make sure that we were doing this for the people of our future: our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. We need to look forward, beyond what we're doing today. We have to analyze that the effects that we have on a daily basis dramatically affect what's going to be happening down the line.

You need to sit back and take a look and say, we can't keep going after that same dollar. After a while, the people in this province are going to move away and look for opportunities for better family values, better family life, better cohabitation with the government. People don't mind paying a fair share of taxes; people get offended when they're feeling they're being burdened with the taxes.

And what we see here with this government and this \$1,500 rebate, which will only apply to some but not to all, is a tremendous overreach, once again.

So with those few words on the record, I'll give somebody else an opportunity to speak.

Thank you.

**MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond):** Honourable Speaker, I rise today to put some words on the record. As a former school trustee, I am proud to be part of the NDP team, to provide reliable and predictable funding to school divisions.

For seven and a half years, school divisions have been asking for reliable and predictable funding from the previous government so they could provide quality education that meets communities' needs.

\* (11:40)

Also as a parent and a mom of two young children, I often talk to other parents on the school field. They want their provincial government to be partners with their kids' educators. Our NDP government will be a reliable and consistent partner who will listen to school divisions, educators and parents.

The previous PC government cut core education funding by over \$36 million, leaving families and school divisions to fend for themselves. On top of cutting education and refusing to hire more teachers, the former PC government wasted \$1.5 million on consultants and advertising to promote their failed bill 64. Bill 64 was designed to centralize power rather than seeking local voices from locally elected school trustees and expert input.

Our NDP government will always be a listening government. Listening to front-line workers and experts in their field is critical. We are focused on bringing everyone to the table when it comes to child's education. Education is the key to our province's success. It is raising the next generation and the future of our great province.

Honourable Speaker, Budget 2024 increases the funding for K-to-12 schools by \$104.2 million. The funding will ensure students get more attention from their teachers, education assistants and clinicians.

We are also increasing operating funding among public schools by 3.4 per cent to make up for years of cuts to classrooms and to balance the needs of our growing population.

Honourable Speaker, since January 2024, I have been attending parent council meetings in Fort

Richmond schools and listening to parents directly. Parents want to see more resources put in classrooms to support their kids' education. They said, it's time that a Manitoba government made investments in our communities and in our future because the community succeeds when our children succeed.

Honourable Speaker, when I meet school trustees at various school events, they said they are glad to work with the provincial government to provide quality of education.

Budget 2024 provides investment into the universal school nutrition program so no child is left behind. It also provides investment towards smaller class sizes so every child gets the support and attention they need. When I'm out in my constituency, these investments were applauded by the community.

Honourable Speaker, in conclusion, I am proud to be part of the NDP team and committed to support education and making sure every kid is set up for success.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** I just want to put a couple of quick words on the record today here regarding this resolution brought forward by my colleague from La Vérendrye.

I think it's an important topic right now. We know affordability is still an increasing issue for the people of Manitoba. They have not seen a lot of help, I would say. In fact, they've seen their rents going up. They've seen property taxes increasing and, you know, not a lot of justification from this NDP government about why that is taking place.

We know that they're increasing property tax revenues by \$148 million. That's in the budget that we are debating right now in Estimates.

And so we know where that money is coming from. It comes from Manitobans. It comes from citizens in the public. It can't come from anywhere else when it's increased tax revenue into the Province's general coffers. So we have a concern with that, which is why we've raised this resolution today.

We know, because we've seen that the NDP have allowed property taxes to increase by as much as 17 per cent in some school divisions. And, you know, that happens to be in a school division that's represented by Progressive Conservative MLA, so maybe they don't care. They're happy for it to go up by that much in Progressive Conservative areas and less in NDP areas. I'm not sure.

But we know that it is going up by as much as 17 per cent in some areas of the province, which is wrong. That should not be allowed to be generated revenue for the Province on the backs of hard-working Manitoba property owners.

We understand and we heard it in comments earlier today—earlier just this morning, in fact, that they've come up with this 83—well, 83, 81, 84, 83.9—I think the member for Riel (MLA Moyes) got very specific today.

The figure seems to be changing. There is a figure but we don't know how they got there and we don't know why it keeps changing, either. So, you know, we were hoping, by bringing forward this resolution that a member from the opposite side might stand up and in their remarks give some, you know, evidence as to how they came up with that figure but, alas, no such luck so far today, but they still have an opportunity when I conclude my remarks, Honourable Speaker.

We know that this will result in tens of thousands of Manitoba homeowners actually paying more taxes under this new provincial government plan, and we also know that rent is going to increase for renters across the province, as my colleague from La Vérendrye so eloquently raised earlier.

If you're removing the rebate completely from those folks in our communities who are identifying a need and addressing it by building multi-unit residential complexes, they are getting that rebate right now, and so, are they—are this NDP government just imagine that these property owners are going to absorb that cost? I don't think so. They've got expenses to pay. They've got mortgages on those properties to pay. They've got utility bills to pay so they are going to, you know, address this increased cost from this NDP government by raising rents. And the renters in these buildings have nobody to thank except this Kinew government for those higher rent prices.

Something very interesting that the minister and his members have raised is that he continues to say that farmers like the education property tax. He referenced a meeting last night in—or yesterday in Estimates with—that he had a meeting with Keystone Agricultural Producers, that they were thrilled with this NDP government's budget and their plan, but that is absolutely false.

In fact, KAP's consistently called for the removal of the education property tax for years—for decades, in fact. Since their creation 30 years ago, every year they

have called for the education property tax model to be retired as a way of funding education in this province—every single year.

We were getting it done. This NDP is going back to the past, so I can't imagine that Keystone Agricultural Producers are very pleased about that. If the member has evidence to support that, I'd love for him to table some correspondence from Keystone Ag Producers saying, we're glad you're keeping the education property tax; we think this is the right way to go. I'd love to see that from KAP's executive director and their board chair.

So, we know that this is the wrong path forward. We know that they are increasing the load that Manitobans have to pay to fund their expensive election promises. We think that's the wrong direction for Manitobans and that's exactly why we've brought this resolution forward today.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** Well, I—thank you, Honourable Speaker—I don't have a lot of time today so I'll get right in. You know what is so disingenuous about this whole argument? It was never about affordability. This was always about the PCs defunding public education. This was always about them not supporting our Manitoba families and our students to make life affordable.

And I'd—just a bit of a history lesson: when this first came, you know, we had a millionaire premier from a millionaire party that was sort of by millionaires, for millionaires. And the premier at the time, he had this massive mansion. It had seven-, you know, car garage, and at the time, it was a 25 per cent rebate and he was able to get \$7,000 for that one property. And, of course, you know, that then doubled to \$14,000 for one property, where the average Manitobans would get three, four hundred dollars. So, you know, \$14,000 on one hand; \$400 on the other.

\* (11:50)

But, of course, that wasn't the premier's only property. He also had his country villa that he got another cheque from the good people of Manitoba. He had his hacienda in exotic places and, of course, he had his Lake of the Woods, you know, retreat.

So you can imagine that, you know, a man that needs four different mansions to sustain himself might not like paying into the Province of Manitoba's public education fund, especially if he wasn't using that service.

So that's the history of this program and why Manitobans have it. But there's a dark side to this because the money had to come from somewhere and so they borrowed money to pay for these mansion rebates.

And we're talking about big money. In the seven and a half years that the PCs were in government, they racked up over \$10 billion in public debt. That's a 40 per cent increase in the public debt. You will not find in the history of Manitoba a more fiscally irresponsible government than what we've just lived through.

And to put this in real terms because we want to talk about affordability here, when they took office in 2016 the interest on that debt was about \$900 million. It was now, when they left office, \$2.1 billion, right? That's a lot of teachers you can hire. That is a lot of nurses you can hire. That is a lot of roads that you can build. But instead of doing that, we are now saddling my three children with PC debt and PC interest charges.

So let's talk about affordability because the other thing that happened is at the same time that they were giving these mansion rebates, they were raising taxes on Manitobans who rented. And they did that significantly.

And of course 40 per cent of Manitobans rent, including in PC ridings. And they raised the rent on every single one of them and then turned around and said well, what?

You know, we have this mansion rebate. Things are more affordable. Well, they're not. And it just tells you, Honourable Speaker, who they came to this Chamber to represent, whose voice they're trying to elevate here.

Well, you know, we believe in a different approach. We believe that all Manitobans should be able to succeed, that this is a province that is affordable to all Manitobans and you don't need a seven-car garage mansion to get help from this government.

So it is mind-boggling how they could try to, you know, gaslight Manitobans into saying that they're concerned about affordability because we saw, over the course of their tenure, Hydro just skyrocket those costs. Tuition at our public sector universities went up, what, 18 per cent? That's a tax on students. That's a tax on middle-class families.

Families often come out of poverty by getting more education. And the former PC government did everything they could to stop that from happening, to slow that down, to preventing hard-working, ambitious Manitoba families from succeeding and they did that with their education tax increases at the post-secondary level.

And you would hear members from the PC Party. They would say things like: Well, you know, if your family can't afford to send you to university, you shouldn't go. And that's a direct quote from the previous MLA from La Vérendrye.

So, you know, when you have that kind of mentality, it is no wonder that Manitobans thought, you know, that their day was done and they needed a government in place that represented all Manitobans, not just, you know, the seven-car garage set, right? That every single Manitoban has the right to succeed and every single Manitoban has the right to have a government that sees them, that wants to hold them up.

I was very proud of our message in this past election about one Manitoba. I think that really captured who we are—

**The Speaker:** Order, please

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have four minutes remaining—the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) will have four minutes remaining.

## CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

*(Continued)*

### Bill 208—The Two-Spirit and Transgender Day of Visibility Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

**The Speaker:** The hour being 11:55 a.m., in accordance with rule 24(7), I am interrupting proceedings to proceed with the deferred division that was requested during last Thursday's private members' business on concurrence and third reading of Bill 208—that was requested last Tuesday's private members' business on concurrence and third reading of Bill 208, The Two-Spirit and Transgender Day act of—Day of Visibility Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

Accordingly, call in the members. And the bells will ring for five minutes, as previously agreed.

\* (12:00)

### Recorded Vote

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The five minutes provided for ringing of the division bells has expired. I am directing that the bells be turned off and the House proceed to the vote.

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 208, The Two-Spirit and Transgender Day of Visibility Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

All those in the Chamber in favour, please rise.

### Division

*A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:*

### Ayes

*Altomare, Asagwara, Balcaen, Bereza, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Cook, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Ewasko, Fontaine, Jackson, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Lagassé, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moyes, Naylor, Nesbitt, Oxenham, Pankratz, Perchotte, Piwniuk, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Simard, Smith, Wasyliv, Wiebe.*

### Nays

*Goertzen, Guenter, Narth, Schuler.*

**Clerk Assistant (Ms. Vanessa Gregg):** Yeas 40, Nays 4.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** The hour being past 12 o'clock, the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 30, 2024

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