

Fifth Session – Forty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLEIN, Kevin E., Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice, Hon.	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James, Hon.	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Morden-Winkler	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

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

Good morning, everybody. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement.

I'm advising the House that I have received a letter from the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) indicating that the government caucus has identified Bill 237, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act, as their first selected bill for this session.

In accordance with the Government House Leader's letter, Bill 237 will be called for debate this morning as follows: debate at second reading will resume at 10:40 a.m.; question put on the second reading motion at 10:55 a.m.

* * *

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Acting Government House Leader): For private members' business this morning, the following bills will be called in this order: resume second reading on debate, Bill 239, The Residential

Tenancies Amendment Act (Application Fees and Deposits) with debate from 10 to 10:20; begin second reading debate on Bill 229, The Farmers' Markets Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended) from 10:20 to 10:40; and then resume second reading on—second debate—reading debate on Bill 237, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider debate on second reading of Bill 239, second reading of Bill 229 and debate on second reading of Bill 237.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 239—The Residential Tenancies
Amendment Act
(Application Fees and Deposits)**

Madam Speaker: I will now call debate on second reading of Bill 239, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Application Fees and Deposits), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala), who has three minutes remaining.

Is there leave to allow this to stand in the member for St. James' name?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): It is my honour to rise in the House to put a few comments on Bill 239, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Application Fees and Deposits). Madam Speaker, when my friend, the MLA from St. James spoke earlier, we were discussing, like, actually, the question to the member from Rossmere was, who are these people that are renting apartment blocks where we are trying to protect, who are those people?

And the member actually mentioned that these are the people on low income: seniors and people with—living with disabilities. Those are the, like, few examples he has given that those are the people are renting these apartment blocks.

Then the follow-up question was on why the PC government is taxing those renters who are on low income. Tax—renters tax credit used to be \$700; now it's reduced to \$525. So this is the second year where

the renters pretty much, you can, one way or another way—we call it tax on the renters, which is \$175.

So this PC government is not helping those renters. Those are people are on low income, newcomers, students and people, you know, the seniors. So this is—their, I guess, record, on how they are not helping the people who need the help now.

Madam Speaker, the housing cost and less support means families and seniors living below the poverty line will have to make difficult decisions between housing, food and medication. Unfortunately, this government has done nothing to help ease the burden for renters in Manitoba. They entered their freeze to eviction and rent increase in the middle of the pandemic. And also, Madam Speaker, we were—saw that even this fiscal year, the above-guideline rent, and there was 343 applications, and out of 343, 100 per cent got approved.

The average rent has gone up around 10 per cent. So, that's—this is the record that PCs actually have—that they are not helping the renters. The landlords can apply above-guideline rent increases, for reasons such as small as operating expenses, which is simply ongoing maintenance. Like even if they have changed the, say, door, or a toilet in the suite, and they can apply above-guideline rent on those ones. And all of those above line guide are approved. So, this is not really helping the renters where the PCs claim they are helping the renters.

Far too many renters are seeing their rent increase. Some are as high as 30 per cent. So, this is again, I even—during the committee, I asked the minister to see if he can provide us the highest rent increase, and the minister actually didn't really answer it, and he went around it.

He said that, you know, it's a good way to measure it is through average rent increase. So, Madam, with this I will like to say, the PCs are not helping the people who really need the help. These are the people on low income, these are the people living with disabilities, these are the people with—newcomers, and these are the people, let's say students.

With this, I'll probably give the floor to someone else to put a few comments on this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to debate this bill?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 239, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Application Fees and Deposits).

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

* (10:10)

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 229—The Farmers' Markets Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

Madam Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 229, The Farmers' Markets Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I move, seconded by the member for—honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere) that the Bill 229, The Farmers' Markets Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wishart: It's my pleasure to bring this forward, to create a week recognizing the value of farmers' markets in the last week of July.

I think we all know in this House how important farmers' markets have become here in Manitoba for a combination of reasons, not the least of which, of course, is the nutritional value. You're getting really good food direct from the producer in most cases.

But it also has a lot of other additional benefits, mostly in the area of education. The consumer has an opportunity to learn a lot more about the production and the nature of many of these products, and, in some ways, it's an opportunity to introduce new products to consumers that they haven't been exposed to before. There's a lot of different vegetables out there, in particular, that we aren't really all that familiar with, that are—have a lot of value and a lot of—and interesting flavours.

But it also provides the producer with an opportunity to connect to the consumer a little better, so that they understand what the consumer is looking for. If you're going to be successful in producing any particular commodity, you certainly need to understand

your market, and you need to understand your consumer, and this is a great opportunity to work in regards to that.

There are many farmers' markets across the province, and there's also a direct farm marketing group that operates across the province that tried some connections between individual producers that don't necessarily attend the farmers' markets and consumers across the province, leading to, in some cases, direct delivery at various times of the year for different products.

Some are seasonal; some are more available year-round, and that's been a positive as well, provided producers with a market opportunity, but it has also provided consumers with really high-quality product that they can get, based on what their particular demands are and what they want, and so it doesn't have to go through the same level of retail. But it certainly has to go through inspected facilities.

This has created a lot of opportunities over the years for various people, some that has led them into larger-scale production, and I hope that we will begin to see more of that in the future. There's been changes around Peak of the Market, which will provide, I think, great opportunities for people that are growing vegetables to differentiate themselves in the marketplace and market more directly to consumers, some of it through farmers' markets, some of it through the use of Peak of the Market.

And, of course, I have the honour of representing the constituency at Portage la Prairie, where we have a lot of different vegetable crops already being produced and more potential all the time. And I like to say we go from asparagus to zucchini, A to Z, across the whole scale of vegetable crops that are produced in that area. And it's been a significant industry, and though it's very labour-intensive, it is certainly high value and attracts a lot of people as entrants to the industry. This is their opportunity. You don't need a lot of acreage; you just need a lot of management skills to get into that end of things.

So, I'm pleased to bring this bill forward. I encourage the—all members in this House to support this. I expect that there's very few of us that haven't attended a farmers' market at one time or the other. They're enjoyable. People like to go and visit and look at the produce. St. Norbert is the one in Winnipeg that is most well known because it's available virtually year-round and has during summer months a large number of vendors with a wide variety of products, some of which are value-added in terms of baking or

pickling, and that sort of thing in the marketplace. Providing people with great opportunities and a lot of new products; stuff that we don't normally see. So, this is a great opportunity and I suspect everyone in the House is happy to support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Thank you to member for bringing this bill forward.

And my question is, if this bill passes, how will farmers' markets week help advocate for small family farms or young farmers just starting out?

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Thank the member for the question.

It is a great opportunity for new entrants to the market. You get to learn more about your customer, as we just talked about and also get exposed to this. And there is a revenue stream on that as well that helps everybody get started. It is probably one of the better ways for small farmers to get going.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I just ask the member to explain why the last week in July and why this would be the optimum week to celebrate farmers' markets?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question.

Of course, the member knows that by that particular point in time, the presence in the marketplace in terms of new products is probably about at its peak. It's a little unpredictable when we get the best options out there. But it's an opportunity to get a wider range and exposure. Having a week of recognition always focuses more attention on it, particularly if the media pick up on it and that helps everyone understand and know what's going on out there.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Second debate.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further—oh, pardon me. Are there any further members wishing to speak in debate?

Debate

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Farmers' markets are an amazing way to support local farmers and producers by purchasing fresh local and in-season products. And farmers' markets have a number of benefits for our community. They bring people together. They offer a chance for shoppers to directly meet the people growing and producing their food.

And it's something that folks particularly in urban centres don't always have that opportunity to do. They help educate people on what is in season, what food can be produced locally, which allows shoppers to be more intentional about their purchases. And they support local businesses, often small scale and family run, helping the local community. Farmers' markets make our communities healthier.

And thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me that opportunity to rise because I did want to take this opportunity to make sure everyone in the Legislature knows that we have two farmers' markets operating in the Wolseley constituency. The West Broadway market is open for business on Wednesdays from 3 to 6 throughout the summer season. And the Wolseley Farmers' Market that takes place near—on the grounds of the Robert A. Steen Community Centre, runs Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3 to 6:30 p.m.

These are very exciting, integral parts of our community throughout the summer months, and I invite everybody to the Wolseley constituency to shop and chat with our local makers and the farmers that bring their produce there.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I think probably a fair number of people know there has been for the last number of years a farmers' market in River Heights. It struggled a bit during COVID and hopefully it will come back. But that's the ups and downs of the life of farmers' markets, I guess.

* (10:20)

The farmers' market which started in St. Norbert has grown to be a really extensive market and provides an incredible variety of products, and I think that's to be celebrated that it is doing as well as it is and continues to do extremely well.

I think that one of the questions or one of the issues, if we've got a week to celebrate farmers' markets, it's an opportunity to think about how we can better promote farmers' markets, that having a list of farmers' markets in Manitoba on the website, where they are located, easy to find, what sort of—you know, what the hours are, obviously, and the days, and something about the vendors who are going to be there because I think if people can look on line and see something about the products and the vendors, then that will be enticing for people to come and realize what there are, and how some farmers' markets specialize in certain products, in certain areas, crops that are—products that are grown locally.

And so I think that—I would hope that the member will give some consideration and if—you know, if this passes and we get to third reading, that maybe the member can talk a little bit about plans for how to promote better farmers' markets and make sure more people are aware of them where they are, the kind of products that are available, because, you know, very often they're really high quality products which are fresh from the field, and they're also at a reasonably good price most of the time. So, I think that there's a lot to be said for—and a lot can be done to actually make people even more aware than they are currently of farmers' markets and the products that are being sold.

So, I'm certainly supportive of this bill. I think that the promotion for farmers' markets should start earlier in July, so that by the time it's at a peak that it's really going full bore.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity and I hope that we can see this bill move forward.

Madam Speaker: Any further debate?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before this House is second reading of Bill 229, The Farmers' Markets Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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

I would also ask now, is there a will of the House to call it 10:40, given that the time was identified in the selected bill to begin at 10:40.

So, is there willingness of the House to call it 10:40? *[Agreed]*

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

(Continued)

**Bill 237—The Advanced Education
Administration Amendment Act**

Madam Speaker: The hour being 10:40 then, we will move on to debate on second reading of Bill 237, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

The honourable member for Fort Garry, who has nine minutes remaining.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): It's obviously an honour to rise today and put a few words on the House on this bill.

I—post-secondary education is extremely important to me and especially so because I have a university in my riding. And my riding is home to many professors, students and support staff, and certainly, central to the economy of the riding of Fort Garry and of south Winnipeg in particular.

And certainly, where our economy is going: our economy is going to be based on research and high-tech jobs and having a skilled, educated, nimble work force, and universities are the centre of that and of critical thinking.

And, you know, it's a shame this government has been basically taxing students by raising tuition year after year, after year. And putting the burden of public education onto Manitoba families for something that we all benefit, that actually builds our economy. And, at the same time, they have gone to war with professors and faculty. They certainly haven't shown any sort of respect to them, so much so that our institutions are some of the lowest paid in the country.

And, of course, what happens then is faculty leave. But, you know, excellent faculty leaving is problematic, because it means that cutting-edge research isn't happening in Manitoba. New products aren't being developed; new jobs aren't being created.

But the other issue here is, they're also taking their research grants with them and their gifted students with them, and they're going to other provinces who are basically eating our lunch. And so, unfortunately, this government hasn't really shown a commitment to post-secondary education or building our economy generally.

I mean, when they took office, Manitoba had the second fastest growing economy in Canada. We've now fallen to the seventh, and there's only a couple

other even more extreme right-wing governments in Manitoba that have done even worse.

But that brings me back to this bill, and, you know, and very excited for Providence College. Every university starts somewhere and starts small. So, University of Manitoba actually started off as an agricultural college. And, in fact, its campus is where the former—Memorial Park grounds are. People don't realize that used to be the campus of the University of Manitoba Agricultural College. Obviously, it outgrew that space and moved to south Winnipeg, to the Fort Garry campus.

And it expanded and expanded and expanded, and eventually became the premier post-secondary education institution in Manitoba. I think there's over 30,000 students; it's a national research university, the only one we have in the province. But they start somewhere.

And Providence College also started somewhere, and you're seeing that they, too, are on that path to growth. And, going through a bit of their history is, I think, illustrative. This university college and theological seminary was chartered by the Province of Manitoba and it was founded in 1925 as simply a bible training school.

And the founder, Reverend H.I. *[phonetic]* Turner, had the dream of training Christian workers for the service in voluntary or official positions in the church, Sunday school or the mission field at home or abroad.

And in 1929, they formally changed their name to the Winnipeg Bible Institute. And then, of course, you know, they grew from there, and by 1948 they received a provincial charter to grant theological degrees. And the name was changed once again from the Winnipeg Bible Institute of college of theology.

And, you know, more years, more students, more faculty, more growth. They started in 1948 and then went to 1964, granting full degree status. And they renamed the institution again to the Winnipeg Bible College. And then they were in Winnipeg during those early years. Their campus was slated for destruction, so they founded a new home at St. Joseph's College, a Roman Catholic high school in Otterburne.

And the college moved in the fall of 1970 and it has been there today, and it's been expanding their campus. And in 1972, they changed again; they grew again. The institution added a seminary in order to meet what they saw was a lack of services for evangelical graduate ministry training in Canada.

And, again, this is a dynamic institution that keeps growing and changing. And to more accurately represent the college's theological roots and broad academic programming, it changed its name again to Providence College and Theological Seminary in 1991.

And, of course, you know, they went through that sort of transition and then by 2011, the Manitoba Legislature passed Bill 301. It allowed the name to be changed to Providence University College and Theological Seminary to sort of reflect the growing and changing aspects of the school. And, in fact, their latest change in 2016, they added a school of business in the Providence campus.

* (10:30)

So, from what started as very specific services to a religion, or several religions, in Biblical studies, they've now expanded to non-religious-based studies. It's my understanding they have an aviation program, and of course you heard the 2016 business administration–business school that they created. They offer courses in communications and media studies.

They also have attracted a lot of international students, which, again, I'm very supportive of, because that seems to be the route to immigration in Manitoba, and how we can, sort of, advantage our province through some fine newcomers who have strong academic backgrounds that help our community or add to the skills of our community. So, they've created an English as an additional language program there, which I think is very useful.

They also have an English department, and they've branched out to sciences. They offer courses in biology, health sciences, and of course they have humanities and intercultural studies, and interdisciplinary arts programs.

And they have a number of pre-professional programs as well. And again, you can see that sort of evolution, just like U of M, you know, the agricultural college to, you know, now you can pretty much take every sort of professional degree there.

So, they have social science, sociology, and they also train how to teach other languages to—for other teachers, which is obviously very, you know, necessary and important.

And so, they're going to have a wide range of programs there, and this bill is sort of the next evolution on their development. And I certainly understand why this is necessary, and why they're pursuing

it, and we certainly—am excited for their future and wish them all the best.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, having visited Providence college a number of times, I have certainly been impressed with the effort that they have made to work with many who are new immigrants, to help them get going and starting and do well here in Manitoba.

They have built up, gradually, over many years, and I think it is timely that this bill is coming forward, and we're certainly ready to support it and to support Providence University College.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak in debate?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 237, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

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

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Acting Government House Leader): Call for a recorded vote.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

Oh, oh sorry.

All those in favour of the motion—can the member please revert back to the question? Is she asking to revert to putting back to the question?

Ms. Squires: Leave to revert back to the question on Bill 237.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, I'd ask for leave to call it 11 o'clock.

Madam Speaker: The hour being 11—is there leave to call it 11 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 11 o'clock, we will recess for noon at 11:35.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 15—Committing to Balancing Future Budgets While Keeping Life Affordable for Manitoba Families

Madam Speaker: So, we will move now to the private members' resolutions.

The resolution before us this morning is the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Brandon West. And the resolution this morning is Committing to Balancing Future Budgets While Keeping Life Affordable for Manitoba Families.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Madam Speaker, I believe I have to ask leave, but can I leave to bring forward this resolution?

Madam Speaker: The member is asking for leave to bring the motion forward himself. Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I'd like to ask leave for a brief recess.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for a brief recess?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Point of Order

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I'd like to raise a point of order.

This morning, there has been quite a bit of legislation that has been debated and we've allowed numerous speakers on each resolution and there was a desire to see those proceed. We all lived through that. And now that there is a request to have leave, to have a five minute recess, I don't think was uncalled for seeing as we have sped the time up considerably.

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Again, we're not going to—we've already had that vote.

Madam Speaker, respectfully, it's not our fault on this side of the House if members opposite can't get themselves organized all morning. They are government. They should have themselves organized and

ready to go to bring forward their resolutions, but they're not. So, unfortunately, we stand by our vote.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that there is no point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: And we will now move into the private member's resolution on Committing to Balancing Future Budgets While Keeping Life Affordable for Manitoba Families.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the MLA for Brandon West,

WHEREAS this Provincial Government balanced the budget in 2019 before the pandemic after years of NDP mismanagement; and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented pressure on Manitoba's finances; and

WHEREAS in contrast, the NDP ran massive deficits during good economic times; and

WHEREAS this Provincial Government has provided historic help to Manitobans through record tax relief; and

WHEREAS the previous NDP Provincial Government raised taxes 14 times on Manitobans, causing families undue financial hardship; and

WHEREAS Manitobans expect a government who is fiscally responsible, and one that makes life more affordable; and

WHEREAS the NDP have a hidden agenda to raise taxes and the Provincial Sales Tax on Manitobans and cancel the school tax rebate; and

WHEREAS Manitobans save \$5,500 in taxes compared to the dark days of the NDP.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to affirm its commitment to balancing the budget by 2027 without raising taxes on Manitobans.

Seconded by the MLA for Brandon East.

* (10:40)

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson)—[interjection] Order.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to affirm its commitment to balancing the budget by 2027 without raising taxes on Manitobans.

Mr. Helwer: I am going to call on your memory a little bit, Madam Speaker, if you don't mind, going back to a time in the early part of my career, and probably early part of your career, but middle part of your career as well, where we spoke in the Chamber here about things that the NDP government had done at the doors.

And if you recall prior to the 2011 election, the NDP had gone to the doors, and they had assured Manitobans that they would not raise the PST. And at that time when we're in the Legislature after the election, we had several discussions about Premier Selinger and the NDP candidates knocking on Manitobans' doors and lying to Manitobans about increasing the PST.

And there was—if you go back into Hansard—*[interjection]*—I know we have members opposite complaining about this.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

If you go back into Hansard, the Speaker at the time did look at that and it was a proven fact, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, the premier—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order.

Mr. Helwer: —at the time, Premier Selinger—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order.

Mr. Helwer: —and the NDP at the door—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order. Order.

I was not in the Chair at the time. I don't believe that the word lying is—should be used in the Chamber, so I would just like to reference all the members—*[interjection]* I can see. I'm just telling—I'm responding to you.

Anyways, the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer).

Mr. Helwer: I remember—remind the members opposite, you were here with me, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, at that time in the Manitoba Legislature. The Speaker ruled that the premier at the time—Premier Selinger—the NDP had gone and knocked on doors in Manitoba prior to the 2011 election and we accused them and it was found, proven that they lied to Manitobans about increasing the PST at that time. *[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order. Order.

I'm not a hundred per cent sure on this; I know the word lying is not to be used, but if it was ruled on by a different Speaker, I on—I do not know. I would like to caution all members on the use of the word lying. It does agitate everybody in this Chamber, so, please.

Mr. Helwer: The opposition doesn't like history. They know. They can go back.

I can read you sections from Hansard, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. You know that the NDP, they promised that anything under expended is going to be moved on to the next year in infrastructure. We know that's not possible. They know that's not possible. At that time under GAAP and under PSAP, unspent funds are returned to treasury and the NDP continues to run a deficit.

This is from Hansard, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker: Yet another lie. Manitobans have been paying more; much, much more and getting much, much less under this minister. Recently, the member from Seine River said projects were prioritized depending on who spoke to the premier, Mr. Selinger—who the premier likes. Is that how the five-year plan works? Changes every day.

Will the minister just admit that the infrastructure plan changes every day depending on who the premier likes? Manitobans are paying more; much, much more under this NDP and getting less. They lied about the PST increase; each and every one of them at the door prior to the last election.

An Honourable Member: On a point of order.

Point of Order

MLA Fontaine: Acting Deputy Speaker, this is wholly unacceptable that the member repeatedly uses a word in his diatribe of nonsense in respect of—you've just ruled on it twice. And it is—as the member said last week to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor), that using the word that is in question right now is a long-held practice in these Legislative Assembly walls not to use that word. And here we are, not even four minutes into his diatribe—has used that word three times.

Acting Deputy Speaker, I will remind the House that you just ruled on using that word two times. I suspect, I hope that you're going to be ruling on that for a third time. I would ask the member to, you know, stand up in his place, apologize for disrespecting the Chamber and disrespecting what is a long-held practice of not using that word in the House.

I know that the member is anxious to get out of this Chamber and get on with his life and get away from all of the members that he, you know, is so anxious to get away with them because he wants to, kind of, go on. We understand that. But in his last few times speaking in the House, perhaps he could just adhere to the rules and the practices and the procedures of the House and stop accusing folks on this side of the Chamber of that word that—I'm not going to disrespect the House here.

So, I would ask him to rein himself up—rein himself in, don't get so emotional; it's his last times in the House, and to just respect the Chamber.

Miigwech.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member for Brandon West, on the same point of order?

Mr. Helwer: On the same point of order, Mr. Deputy—Acting Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I was reading from Hansard. So that text is from Hansard exactly as I read it. And it was entered into Hansard. The Speaker at the time accepted that question. It was a question asked at that time of Minister Ashton. That is the dialogue that was happening in the Legislature at this time.

Member opposite may not have been here, but many members were. And they—each and every one of them went to those doors, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I read that from Hansard. That is the history of this Chamber. That is the history of the NDP opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I will have to refer this and talk to the staff here because I know that years ago, when I first became an MLA, I did use the word lie in context with things that were happening—not necessarily calling a member a liar, so I don't know what the ruling would be on this. I'll have to refer to the clerks. *[interjection]*

Okay, after a little bit of consultation, here, I did rule twice about using the word lying. I may have ruled inaccurately on that, but I would ask the member, since I did rule that way, if the word lying—it does create a problem with decorum in the Chamber. Some people get upset with it. So—I mean, I advise the member not to use that word. So I would ask him to please not use that word.

* (10:50)

An Honourable Member: In Hansard.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Yes, and like I said, I did rule on it twice when I advised the member not to use—it might have been my mistake to—I didn't have it in the quite proper context, but I would ask the member to refrain from using that word. *[interjection]*

As I had ruled on it, it is—when the word is used again, then it's, I guess, going against the Chair. So, my apologies, but please do not use that word again.

Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Helwer: Again, pure evidence that the NDP doesn't like to revisit history, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. They don't like to be reminded of what they did in the past. We know, given the chance, as sure as spring is here in Manitoba, as sure as summer is coming, given the chance the NDP would raise taxes on each and every Manitoban. Not only the PST, as they—let's see, I can't use that word, but if we look back into Hansard, we know what they did. We know what they did at that time.

'Wey' will do it again, given the opportunity. They will go to the doors and they will tell people they're not going to raise the PST. But we know that they not only went to the doors and used that word, but they also looked at raising it more than 1 per cent.

They looked at raising it 2 per cent at that time, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, to pay for all their failed promises. And not only that, we know that they spoke to the federal government, the minister of Finance at the time, under the NDP, spoke to the federal government about introducing the harmonized sales tax in Manitoba, that Finance had looked throughout, and figured out, and found out from the federal government how that could be done in Manitoba under the NDP.

These are facts, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that the NDP did, and they failed to disclose to Manitobans. Other taxes that he brought in: the payroll tax. They tried to masquerade it as a health and education tax. None of that money went to health and education. It went to their failed promises again.

So, at that time, I was in business, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, and we saw the payroll tax coming in, and we knew the impact it would have on Manitoba businesses. The discussions amongst Manitoba businesses at that time were, what are the options? The government is going tax us on what we pay our staff. We pay our staff well, and they're going to take money away because we're paying them well.

So, what are the options? Well, companies could move to another jurisdiction that is more friendly, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, and some did. Companies could also look at changing their footprint, and many did with the help of their accountants. They changed the size of their company, broke their company up into smaller companies.

And then what happened, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker? The NDP went and changed the legislation. They brought in the affiliation rules so that the entire company was looked at for payroll tax, not just the pieces of it; changing the rules on the fly, and that's what we've seen from the NDP today.

The Leader of the Opposition has stood up in this Chamber and said he will put taxes on people that he doesn't like. He will put taxes on people because he doesn't like the way that they operate. That is not the way the tax system should work, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. That will be a chill, a severe chill, on business in Manitoba, and that's what we have the potential to see from the NDP opposite, as opposed to the measures that we have brought in, as government: moving to a planned, balanced budget; helping Manitobans in need; moving the minimal personal exemption, which the NDP ignored for many years, allowing that to take several thousand Manitobans off the tax roll, Manitobans who spend every dime of their hard-earned income.

The increases that the NDP are proposing opposite will damage those people the most, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. We have helped them. We have helped them with how they can keep more of their hard-earned money to spend how they deem fit, as opposed to what we see opposite.

They think that your hard-earned money belongs to the NDP, not to yourself. We believe it belongs to you. You earned it. You should decide how to spend it, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Thank you.

Questions

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

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I'm wondering, why is the government claiming they're on a path to a balanced budget in 2027 when their own budget document suggests there'll be a \$53-million deficit that year?

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, in government, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, we have found that there are paths that we can follow to get to a balanced budget. The member opposite doesn't know about balanced budgets, and they never did in their time in office.

But the path is clear there, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, on how we can help Manitobans keep more of their hard-earned money and get to a balanced budget.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): The member for Brandon West has seen the irresponsible announcements coming almost daily from the NDP on irresponsible spending.

Could he reflect on how high would the NDP have to raise the PST in order to cover the cost of this irresponsible spending spree?

Mr. Helwer: Great question from the member opposite.

And he was here with me, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, when we saw the members opposite and the premier of the time promising to Manitobans that they would not raise the PST. They said it was ridiculous, would not happen.

We know that that would happen again—not that they would raise it just 1 per cent, not just 2 per cent, as they looked at. They would have to raise it at least 3 per cent to pay for the promises that they are promising Manitobans.

Those failed promises saw them fail before, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. They will fail again, given the chance.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I was just wondering if the member could answer how many times the balanced budget law has been changed by the PC government and how much debt has been added to Manitoba's debt by this government.

Mr. Helwer: While the member of the NDP-Liberal coalition in Ottawa reflects on balanced budgets, they have nothing to stand on.

We in Manitoba have a plan for how we will get there, and we will enable Manitobans to keep they

hard-earned tax dollars and decide how they will spend them, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Wasyliw: Why has this government failed to support Manitobans during this affordability crisis?

Mr. Helwer: Wow, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Many times we've gone and helped Manitobans, as we see that—I talked about raising the minimum personal exemption. That is a big one, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

The tax back—tax rollback guarantee, expanding the child-care subsidy program, phase out of education property tax, residential renters' tax credit, rebate cheques to vehicle owners, indexing personal income tax, reducing the PST from 8 to 7 per cent, eliminating probate fees, eliminating PST on property insurance, purple—personal services, personal tax return preparation, wills preparation that the members opposite increased on Manitobans when they were in government—horrible things to do to Manitobans.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Schuler: The member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) reflected that, to pay for the irresponsible spending spree, the NDP would have to raise the PST to 10 per cent.

* (11:00)

Could the member for Brandon West perhaps reflect on what kind of impact a 10 per cent PST would have on the economy in Manitoba?

Mr. Helwer: Well, we know from recent forecasts that we could be going into a recession, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, and that will be a retraction in the economy, perhaps in Manitoba, in Canada, and that will have an impact on what people spend.

An irresponsible raising of the tax, like the members opposite have proposed, to 10 per cent, would have a devastating effect on the Manitoba economy, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, and on the people who need their money the most—those that we have raised minimal personal exemption for, that have been removed from the tax roll, they will—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired. The honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw)—oh, excuse me.

The honourable member for River Heights, on—*[interjection]* No, I'm just wondering what he—what he's—is he looking for asking a question?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) has already asked a question, I believe. *[interjection]* Oh, one each? Okay. Okay, so—okay.

The honourable member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Wasyliw: Yes, why has this government made life more expensive for Manitobans by raising hydro rates and approving above-'guiderine' rent increases?

Mr. Helwer: Well, when the member opposite, who is asking the question, was on the RTB, he approved above rental guidelines for many years. So he has no leg to stand on there, sadly, that—you know, they went and they increased rent on Manitobans when they could least afford it.

And Hydro, of course, and the PUB is a separate entity that—PUB rules on what Hydro can increase during the rental—their rate applications. We, as government, have no say in that other than limiting it, that it can be no more than 5 per cent, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker—does not mean it will be 5 per cent; it will be less, and the money that we have taken and given back to Manitoba on Hydro—on water rental rates, will help them keep the rates low for Manitobans for years to—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The member talks about changing the rules and plans on the fly. Well, the government in—early on in its mandate said it was going to balance the budget by 2022. Well, in 2022, it wasn't budget, so now we have a commitment to balance it: 2027.

So, my question is this, I mean, the budget has been healthier than it might have been, partly because there has been generous federal transfers. What will the member's plan—or the government's plan be if there was a PC government elected in Ottawa and it cut federal transfers to Manitoba in half? Would the member still be able to balance the budget?

Mr. Helwer: Well, I think the chances of a PC government being elected in Ottawa are slim, because there is no federal PC Party. I'm sure the member opposite knows it is the Conservative Party of Canada that has a chance of forming the government in Ottawa.

And what we saw under the Liberal Party was that transfers to Manitoba and transfers to provinces were cut precipitously. They balanced the budget—the federal budget—on the backs of the provinces, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and promises—provinces were forced to react to Prime Minister Chrétien and his finance minister when they took money away from all the provinces. That is what the history is of the Liberal government, and the Liberal-NDP government coalition in Ottawa—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Schuler: The member for Brandon West reflected that the NDP, to pay for their irresponsible spending spree, would have to raise the PST to 10 per cent.

Could he please reflect on that—what that would do to inflation in Manitoba, and in—particularly what would that 10 per cent increase the NDP would have to bring in, what impact would that have on the working middle class in Manitoba?

Mr. Helwer: The devastation that a 10 per cent provincial sales tax would have on the working portion of Manitoba, those who work—go to work every day, work hard for their income, pay their tax and they don't have many opportunities on what they can do with that money, the NDP raising it to 10 per cent would be devastating to that community, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

We know it would have impact on businesses. They would—their sales would decrease. They would not be paying as much income tax to the provincial government. So, provincial government revenues would decline, despite the NDP threatening to raise it to 10 per cent—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Wasyliw: Why is this government giving cheques to billionaires and taking money away from the education system that they cut funding for, for years?

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, our funding to both Health and Education is way in excess of what the NDP ever spent on those, especially in Education—an astounding increase to the Education budget this year that went to the school divisions in Manitoba for their increased expenses.

The member opposite can't seem to recall the promises that the NDP made prior to previous

elections where they were going to do away with hallway medicine for \$20 million. We know that didn't work out. We know that they couldn't get rid of hallway medicine. In fact, what they did is they just moved the stretchers from one spot to another so that they weren't counted, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

Time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Yes, where do you start, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker?

One of the characteristics of this dying, tired Pallister-Stefanson government is they love their performative politics. I guess it's a substitute for actually doing something to help the people of Manitoba. They want to engage in, quite frankly, this silly political theatre. And, unfortunately, all of us are duty bound to have to be witness to it.

And, you know, it begs the question of what job are they auditioning for? Because it certainly isn't for the government, right? Because a government doesn't act like this. A government is actually serious. A government actually brings serious issues to the floor of this Legislature. The government actually attempts to make the lives better for Manitobans.

And what are they doing? I mean, every week, these resolutions get more bizarre and silly to the point where this government is just a parody of itself, and nothing really in the public interest is getting done, here. And, quite frankly, I'd love to have the election tomorrow. Why wait?

And, you know, and I wonder, with a lot of these government MLAs who are, you know, rats off a sinking ship and—or getting out of here as quickly as they can—I'm sure their offices are already packed up. You know, does this—is this how you want to be remembered? Is this what you want to put in Hansard and have people look back at your contribution and your time in this Legislature that you bring this nonsense before us? And you spew this nonsense here. And that's how you want to spend your time. This is how you want to be remembered. This is your contribution.

There's only been, I think, six, seven hundred Manitobans who've had the privilege and honour to

stand in this Chamber and speak. And, obviously, you're one of them. And this is how you want to be remembered. That's just—it's sad, but I think it reflects how far this government has fallen.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they say the currency in politics is credibility. And this government is bankrupt. Absolutely bankrupt. That they've lost credibility a long time ago with Manitobans. And when they bring these type of resolutions, it just doubles down on that. And if anybody in Manitoba had a doubt that we need a change of government, I think when the member from Brandon West gives a speech like that, then I think all doubts are diminished and extinguished. And we all know that this government has to go.

* (11:10)

The idea that the PC Party is fiscally 'responsible' is absolutely bizarre and without fact. If you look at the history of Manitoba, it's the NDP party has been the fiscally responsible party in Manitoba.

If you count how many balanced budgets that have occurred in Manitoba, the majority—the vast overwhelming majority—is under an NDP administration. If you look at budget deficits and how many they have, the vast majority of them are on PC governments.

If we split up and break down the provincial debt by party, the overwhelming amount of our debt was racked up by a PC government. And we don't even have to go too far. The previous NDP government had 10 balanced budgets in a row. This government had seven years in office and they only managed it once—once. *[interjection]*

Well, all right. I see there's some contention on my own side about that. *[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order. Order.

Could we have a little less discussion in here? The member has the floor. I would appreciate listening to the member so I can hear everything that's going on. And I—if there's something to rule on, I can rule on it.

So, the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv).

Mr. Wasyliv: I will respect that there's a debate ongoing in our caucus about whether this government has even balanced the budget once, but I will give this government the benefit of the doubt that they technically did so on paper, even if it was playing accounting games; I will accept that.

So, giving them the benefit of the doubt, they've done one in seven years. This year, they had record—record revenue coming in, most from the federal Liberal Party, who've sent transfer payments. And this government could not have balanced that budget that one time, even if we, you know, leave aside the accounting games, without the help of the federal Liberal Party.

So, when we're talking about coalitions, it's more of a Liberal-PC coalition than anything else. And we see that with the PC-Liberal carbon tax, and we see that with their one claim to fame of balancing the budget for one year. Those parties are interchangeable. They think alike, they act alike, they support the same people and they use the tools of government to enrich their supporters, as opposed to the people of Manitoba.

But getting back to, you know, the long history of New Democratic Party slaying deficits and balancing budgets, it's not just here in Manitoba. You can go to Tommy Douglas—he came in the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan, made a mess of the finances as they do—and he not only got them back to a balanced budget, he paid off Saskatchewan's entire Liberal debt; all of it, every single penny.

And by the time they left office, they were posting surpluses year after year after year. So, this is very much in our wheelhouse, and this is who we are as a political movement; that we don't believe in debt.

Because why this PC government believes in debt, and why they like it so much, is because somebody owns that debt, and they make money off the backs of Manitobans by owning that debt, and it's usually a friend of theirs or a political donor.

So, they actually like borrowing money, and we saw that this year. Despite having record revenue, despite being in a position to actually balance the budget this year, they refused to do it and they borrowed money. They borrowed money to give tax cuts.

And who got those tax cuts? Billionaires from Toronto, billionaires from Kansas City; that's who got those tax cuts. Manitobans borrowed money to enrich out-of-province billionaires and we impoverished and cut our schools and hospitals to do it. Shame on you.

Conservative economists, those that absolutely have no time for the NDP, have come out and publicly said that that is fiscal madness, you never borrow money for a tax cut. Yet, that's what this government did, because that's what they do.

And if you look at the history of this government, or the Filmon government, all it's about is cutting taxes and shifting the tax burden away from the people who are successful in Manitoba's economy—the very wealthy—and putting it onto the backs of Manitobans who are less successful: poor and working-class Manitobans who can't avail themselves of high-priced accountants and tax lawyers and loopholes.

So this is a government that has spent seven years creating tax loopholes that almost exclusively have been the playground for the very rich, while at the same time impoverishing Manitobans and pushing the tax burden onto them.

This government likes to raise taxes and raises taxes all the time; we just don't call them that. When you raise tuition by 18 per cent, that's a tax on students, that's a tax on education. When you cut the rental tax credit, that is a tax on renters. You are raising and making their lives more expensive and less affordable. When you raise hydro rates 5 per cent, year after year after year, that is a tax on all Manitobans.

You know, I was campaigning in Fort Richmond yesterday and one of the things that people were concerned about was the cost of living. And it became very clear to them that this government had no answer for them. It is a party run by millionaires for millionaires. And in fairness to the millionaires, they're not feeling the pinch. They can pay 5 per cent more on their hydro. They won't even blink.

But to the good people of Fort Richmond, they cannot afford 5 per cent year-over-year increases to their hydro. Hydro is going to make—you know, made \$500 million last year. With this 5 per cent increase, it's going to raise to \$800 million. This is not the time to be raising taxes on Manitobans, yet that is what this government is doing.

And, instead of being a serious government, instead of being a government that actually cares for the well-being of Manitobans, bring to this House something that actually is a serious debate, not this silly, performative nonsense that we've been subjected to week after week.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I'd like to thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for bringing forward this resolution. It's important. Again, it affirms our government's commitment to balance the budget by 2027.

And it's interesting we had the spokesperson for the NDP get up and like his great friend, the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, he basically declared that budgets balance themselves. In fact, he went so far to say that this resolution—and this is a direct quote, you'll see it in Hansard—that this isn't serious, that balancing the budget by setting targets isn't serious.

In fact, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), the one who could never balance the budget when he was a school trustee and spent more money on private travel and all the rest of it, he went on to say that it was silly and it was nonsense to want to set a target for balancing the budget.

That is the NDP way of doing it. Now, the NDP did get themselves into a difficulty years ago, and that was under Greg Selinger. It was Greg Selinger's first term and there was a leadership debate. And he was asked then, the NDP premier, Gary [phonetic] Selinger was asked: Will you raise the PST to pay for all of your spending and for the fact that the Province is going so deep in debt?

And, basically, he said, that is ridiculous. That was his answer. In fact, he did the old famous: read my lips, no new taxes.

Well, it wasn't even within a year, he did win the election built on that mistruth. And he went out and they put out a budget their first year in which they broadened the PST to just about everything. Haircuts were included. They went after small, private industries, predominantly women who have these industries where all kinds of services are provided, and they raised the taxes on all of those services.

They broadened the PST, basically, on everything, including will preparation. I know the member for Fort Garry, he likes to get drunk drivers off the hook. He isn't as much a lawyer who produces wills and services of those kinds. But they actually added the PST to those kinds of services. That was a direct hit on the working middle class of this province. And it hurt.

But it wasn't yet a PST increase. That took to the next budget. First, they broadened the PST to apply to basically everything that you could buy or pay for. Then, the next year, they raised the PST. And I can remember sitting in this House and the then-Finance minister, Stan Struthers, announced it. And there was shock in the Chamber.

* (11:20)

What we didn't know at that time was not even the minister of Finance was really apprised that this was coming until it was too late to reverse it. It was basically done through the leadership team of the NDP, which I understand members on the front bench were part of, including the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). That decision was made and it was foisted upon Manitobans.

It was then first of all put out there that it was going to be used for splash pads. They were going to raise the PST to build splash pads and stuff like that. Well, that actually landed with a thud. That didn't fly.

Then they said they were going to use it for infrastructure. And they kept twisting in the wind. They brought in a new Finance minister. They got rid of the one they had. And they tried to improve on the communication side.

In the end, it wasn't lost on Manitobans. The reason why the PST was increased was to pay for the deficit spending of the NDP. It was a tax increase of epic proportion.

They had no mandate to do it. They had no mandate to broaden the PST. And they had no mandate to increase the PST, which by the way—we heard what the member from Brandon West had to say. If they're going to pay for all their irresponsible commitments, we would be seeing a 10 per cent PST, if they were given the opportunity to do so.

And they will deny it like they did the last time they were in office. They denied it then and said, ridiculous, read my lips, no new taxes, went to the doors. And then they raised it. But, again, it wasn't that they raised the PST. First, they had it apply to everything in the economy and then raised it.

Mr. Speaker, that is most unfortunate. And that's when you hear the member Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), and he talks about things being, and I'll quote him directly because I wrote it down. He said, this isn't serious; this debate is silly and it's nonsense. Because they don't want any light focused on the years of what they did to the economy in Manitoba.

That hurt our economy in Manitoba. And I can remember when, after the election, finally some sanity was brought in and we announced that we were going to eliminate that PST increase, that there was an upsurge in the economy. It paid for itself.

What happened with the NDP, and this is to the member for Fort Garry, that this is neither silly nor is it nonsense. It is serious. When you raise taxes on the

economy, it hurts the working middle class; it hurts the economy. What we heard from the member for Fort Garry was a revisionist history. Unfortunate they don't wish to hear the truth about what's going on.

Now our government, one of the—I think one of the benchmarks of this budget, which by the way, the member Fort Garry and all the NDP voted against. They voted against tax relief for those who need it the most.

First of all is the basic deduction. And if you go across the provinces, we lagged way behind as a province. So, what the NDP would rather do is that you earn more money as the working poor and then they tax you more that you actually go into higher tax brackets. And they actually take away more money than your pay increase rather than raising the basic deduction.

And what that means is, we would rather see more people off of the tax roll. So, this is the last time we're going to raise it to \$15,000, assuming the NDP are going to pass the budget or allow it to proceed and not stall it like they have in days past.

So, if that goes through, that means that the first \$15,000 that Manitobans earn is tax-free. And that means a lot. Now, who does that mean a lot for? It means people who are entering the economy—by and large, students. They earn \$15,000 or less. They pay no tax on it. What you earn—under \$15,000 and under—you keep. It's yours.

It also is a—new Canadians coming in, starting to work part-time. Perhaps they're still going to language upgrade courses or upgrading courses of some kind. And they're working part time up to \$15,000. That amount of money they get to keep. There's no tax on it. That is reasonable. That is what Manitobans want. And that helps those that need it the most.

And the NDP, if anything, speak disparaging about that. And, in fact, the member for Fort Garry calls that kind of stuff silly and nonsense, because he doesn't want to talk about actually giving tax relief to the working poor, those individuals who can afford to pay the taxes the least.

There are jurisdictions across this country that have far greater a basic deduction, and moving Manitoba to \$15,000 is a good step, I believe. It gets us back into the middle of the pack. We were languishing way down at the bottom.

In fact, we are making some other changes insofar as taxable income brackets so that individuals who are earning in the range of 30, 40, 50 thousand dollars and are supporting two or three children, especially when it comes to single parents, they will realize far less taxes and be able to take more money home.

We believe, fundamentally, that the best decisions for dollars earned are at the kitchen table, unlike the member Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) and the other members of the NDP, who believe the best place for your dollar, the decisions to be made on your dollar, are at the Cabinet table. And we don't agree with that. We believe it's the kitchen table that should have the money on it, and not the Cabinet table.

And that is a philosophical difference between a conservative and a socialist. The socialist wants to take all your money, and then they feel they're the best. And I would point out to Manitobans, the last time the NDP were in office, it was an unmitigated disaster.

Even their own government couldn't swallow it, and the Cabinet split; the government split; there were factions all over the place, and finally Canadians—Manitobans voted in a government that cleaned up all that, and I would say to the member for Fort Garry, none of that is silly. None of that is nonsense.

That is important to working men and women. They want to have more money on the kitchen table, and they don't particularly want the member for Fort Garry and the other members of the NDP putting all that money on the Cabinet table, and then trying to divide the spoils amongst themselves. It should be on the kitchen table of the working men and women of this province.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I'm grateful for the opportunity to put a few words on the record in regards to this resolution, especially following the PC MLA who just spoke.

And I think it's really interesting that the MLA who just spoke from the PC caucus, at the end of his remarks started to quote some very, at this point, notorious Brian Pallister remarks.

And I think that that's an important thing to highlight, because it speaks to what that member and his caucus, his values are rooted in, and what approach they continue to take. And that is the approach that was established by Brian Pallister. That is an approach that is incredibly callous, and shows a complete disregard for the realities of everyday Manitobans.

And so, I do think it's really important to point out the fact that that member stood up in this House in regards to a resolution that really and truly—I know my colleague, the MLA for Fort Garry has already stated, at this point in time, of all the resolutions you can bring forward, of all the concerns facing Manitobans, to bring this piece of paper forward today shows how completely out of touch this government is with what Manitobans are facing.

That member could have brought forward a resolution to address the fact that his government has allowed above-guideline rent increases to skyrocket throughout the years, making affordability for renters, which in my community of Union Station is disproportionately the majority of folks who live downtown. But he didn't do that.

That member could have brought forward, that minister could have brought forward a resolution that speaks to how this government is going to apologize for freezing the wages of allied health-care professionals and folks in our health-care system, for many years; how they failed to increase the minimum wage for working families, some of which work two and three jobs to put food on the table for their kids. But he didn't do that.

That member had an opportunity this morning to bring forward a resolution that would indicate to Manitobans that they recognize the ways in which, since 2016, their government has failed Manitobans. And I would say not only failed Manitobans, but have actively worked against the interests of Manitobans being able to live a healthy, balanced and affordable life in our province.

And as the MLA for Union Station, you know, when I'm in the neighbourhood, I see the impacts of this government's decision making every single day. I talk to community members who, you know, they rent, maybe they own a home. Last weekend I talked to a community member I've known for years who is unsheltered. And the realities are that this government continues to make decisions that are disadvantaging Manitobans across the board.

* (11:30)

And, you know, this morning we could have debated any number of these areas. We could have talked about, you know, what is it going to take and how are we going to make sure that kids in our schools, with all of the money that's been forwarded, that's been directed, rather, to Manitobans from the federal government by way of increased transfers—

how can we use those dollars to make sure that kids—a growing number of kids across our province—go to school and are fed, and can concentrate in their classrooms and engage with their peers in a healthier manner, because their stomachs aren't rumbling because they're hungry?

But instead, this minister stands up, brings his resolution forward and puts words on the record that, quite frankly at this stage of things, are embarrassing. Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, it is embarrassing that at this stage, after seven years of being in power, this government has no level of accountability whatsoever to reflect on their own governance.

You know, it's—every time a member opposite, including the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler)—you know, they'll bring up issues from 20, 30 years ago. And, you know, they've become legislative historians when they stand in their place.

And all of that is so obviously an attempt to distract Manitobans, maybe even distract their own selves from the reality that seven years of decision-making by this PC caucus has decimated some very important aspects of systems in Manitoba, the health-care system being one.

You know, when we talk about balancing future budgets, when we talk about keeping life affordable, we have to talk about health care, we have to talk about the fact that this government has cut health care to the bone in Manitoba, to the point where we are spending astronomical amounts of money to respond to people's growing health-care issues—health-care issues that, had we intervened earlier, taken a preventative approach to health care in our province, people wouldn't be as sick as they are, they wouldn't be reporting to urgent cares and emergency rooms as frequently as they are.

Folks would have healthier outcomes, which reduces the financial burden on our health-care system and allows for us to financially allocate resources in ways that benefits our economy overall.

But instead, you know, this minister, this government wants to distract Manitobans from the reality that their decisions have led to Manitobans having increased health-care issues, having poor health-care outcomes. That is financial irresponsibility, Acting Deputy Speaker.

This is a government that is not trying to fix the problems that they've created, or clean up the mess

that they've made. This is a government that isn't trying to convince Manitobans that they've genuinely changed their approach. This is a government that is tired, that is lazy, that is ill-equipped and unprepared to do the work necessary to move us in a better direction.

And so, the only thing that they're willing to do is to try to distract everybody from the fire that they've created in different—well, health care, housing, education, jobs, you know, even small businesses: the area that they purport to be the champions of. They've failed small businesses across Manitoba as well, and continue to.

So, during the time when Manitobans really need a government that is going to be accountable, that is going to reflect on their decision making honestly so that they can improve their approach moving forward; instead, Manitobans have a government that will do anything but that.

We are in a really important time in Manitoba's history where, yes, we have some pretty unique challenges; yes, we're seeing some increased pressures on folks across the province, maybe families who haven't experienced these kinds of pressures before.

But we have a really unique opportunity to do something specific to Manitoba, to do something really special here that makes a big difference in the lives of Manitobans of all income levels and all backgrounds and all experiences. And that's going to require a government that believes in the capacity of our province.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Point of Order

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): On a point of order, the honourable member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a lot of delay early on in this debate, and I wondered if we could extend the time of the debate from 11:35, which is now, to 11:45 so that the MLA for St. Boniface would have a chance to speak?

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): There has been a motion brought forward to extend the House sitting this morning from 11:35 to 11:45.

Is that the will of the House?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I hear a no.
The leave has been denied.

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The hour being—when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) will have three minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

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