



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
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
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

At 1:30 p.m. the Sergeant-at-Arms, carrying the mace and followed by the Speaker, the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and a Clerk assistant of the Legislative Assembly entered the Chamber.

The Sergeant-at-Arms returned to the north doors and met Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor with the mace.

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Cam Steel):
Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, accompanied by the lead aide-de-camp, the officer escort, the Premier and the Chief Justice, entered the Chamber and took her seat on the throne.

The Sergeant-at-Arms made obeisance with the mace and retired to the side of the Chamber.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Anita R. Neville (Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba): Please be seated.

Reasons to Hope

We begin by honouring the sacredness and importance of these lands and waters and of the ancestors that once walked where we are standing today. We recognize the Anishinewuk, the Cree, the Dene, the Dakota, the Métis, the Inuit and the Anishinaabe nations who paved the way to what is now known as Manitoba, home to all treaty people.

Hope lives here.

At a time when politics divides people, in Manitoba we are coming together to accomplish the big things we can't do alone.

And there is reason to hope: In health care, we have hired 870 net new workers and we are making it easier for you to see a doctor with new clinics. There is reason to hope: Families are starting to feel relief because of the action we've taken to lower costs and create more good jobs. There is reason to hope: Today, every Manitoba child has food at school to focus on learning—in Waverley, in West St. Paul, in The Pas, in Morden, in Brandon and across the province. Our children now have a better chance of graduating high school, finding a job and building a good life.

We have stood together in challenging times, mourning women and children whose lives were cut short by violence. We have seen the heroism of ordinary people shine in dark times.

* (13:40)

We honour all the heroes who responded to the unspeakable tragedies in Carman and McCreary. The firefighters and emergency responders who helped northern families during wildfires.

We came together in Dauphin to mark the anniversary of the tragic Carberry bus crash and give thanks for all who responded in the moment and in the days that followed.

Manitobans witnessed courage and leadership in the young voices of Cambria Harris and Jordan Myran as we stood together and kept our promise to search the landfill.

And we watched Jim Parks and George Couture and other Second World War veterans from Manitoba, look out at the beach they crossed on D-Day 80 years ago as young soldiers. We commemorated our veterans, whose sense of responsibility led them to fight for the freedom and democracy we enjoy today in Canada.

The challenges we face today in our province are not unique: a health-care system in need of repair, family budgets under stress, the humanitarian crisis of addiction and homelessness that weighs on all our hearts. Yet how we respond to these challenges is what sets us apart.

Our great nation has never been perfect, but here in Manitoba, we are giving people reason to hope with a plan that makes your life better.

We Are Making Progress on Health Care

For years, front-line health-care workers' jobs were cut and their voices ignored. That's changing now with a new approach that's starting to show signs of success. We are hiring a record number of doctors and we're retaining doctors in our province at a higher rate than we have in years.

We are listening to nurses and implementing their solutions with better work-life balance, more peer-to-peer mentorship and steps to keep them safe at work including hiring 105 institutional safety officers.

Manitoba's health-care support workers were the lowest paid in Canada under the previous government, but now they have a fair deal. Most importantly, they can be proud that their province values their work and understands it is their caring hands that holds up our health-care system.

We will bring more internationally educated health-care workers to the bedside by expediting the nursing re-entry program, creating more opportunities in rural and northern communities and opening new pathways for international medical graduates.

To the health-care workers who have put their trust in us, thank you. To the young people thinking about a career in health care, come and be part of this positive change. Here in Manitoba, you will find a government that will listen to you and a job offer the day you graduate.

We will continue to staff up our health-care system after years of cuts. Our government took action immediately so you could see a family doctor or nurse practitioner sooner, opening new clinics in Winnipeg and Brandon where you can book same-day online appointments with extended hours.

We are working hard to bring ER wait times down. We have opened 201 new fully staffed beds in Winnipeg, Selkirk, Brandon and Dauphin since April. We will open another 102 in the next year.

We will unveil a new ER wait-time strategy, working with leaders in every hospital across the province. We are working with our dedicated allied health professionals to continue the practice of seven-day-a-week discharge to get patients home sooner and lower wait times.

We are improving Health Links-Info Santé to limit unnecessary referrals to ERs by directing people to fast and accessible care at our new minor injury and illness clinics. Now, better health care is just a phone call away.

Instead of closing ERs, we're building them and reopening them, like the Carberry ER this summer. Nothing compares to the stress of taking your child to the ER. We will improve this experience by partnering with the Children's Hospital Foundation to renovate the children's ER with more space and comfort for families.

We are moving forward on the design of the Victoria general and Eriksdale ERs, giving families in south Winnipeg and the Interlake region the chance to shape the future of their health care.

We will reduce times by adding 800 new hip and knee surgeries at the Selkirk hospital. This investment will cut wait times and give seniors the freedom to enjoy retirement and chase after their grandkids.

Northern families shouldn't have to miss school or work for health care. We will bring a new mobile MRI to Thompson, The Pas and northern First Nations to lower wait times and keep families close to home.

Every Manitoban should have dignity and respect as they grow old.

We put the dignity of seniors first by creating a new seniors advocate office to 'prect'—to protect you and your loved ones. And we will work with Manitoba seniors to help stand up this new office.

In Lac du Bonnet, work will begin before the end of the year on our government's first new personal-care home.

We believe all seniors should age with pride. That's why we will support the Place of Pride campus, providing seniors' housing and community services for the 2SLGBTQ+ community in downtown Winnipeg.

Health starts with your health card. This December, you can apply for a new, plastic health card illuminated by the winning design: northern lights.

Delivering on our commitment to make health care better isn't easy but it's worthwhile. It's the foundation for building a good life in Canada. It's the certainty that, no matter what happens, your family can get the care you need without going into debt.

In Manitoba, we will always protect public health care and work to make it better for you.

We Are Lowering Your Bills

The impact of inflation and rising costs has hit Manitobans hard.

Your government knows that you are struggling to pay for the life you earned: groceries, car payments, saving for retirement or your child's education. It feels like it's never been this difficult.

That's why we took right-action right away to lower costs.

We cut the gas tax, saving you 14 cents a litre every time you fill up. And we cut inflation, driving our inflation rate down to the lowest in the country.

We gave working families the power to negotiate higher pay, a better pension and more benefits by making it easier to join a union. And we put working

people back in charge, bringing in new legislation so no one can take your job when you are fighting for respect and fair pay.

We put more money in the pockets of renters and seniors on fixed incomes. And we are freezing Crown land rents for the second year in a row.

This spring, our new homeowners affordability tax credit will give homeowners up to \$1,500 in relief. And our new tax credit for rental housing construction will create more affordable housing.

Because of these actions, Manitoba remains one of the few places in Canada where the dream of home ownership is within reach, and we'll keep it that way.

Our next step to lower costs for you is to freeze hydro rates for one year starting in 2025.

We will make life more affordable for renters by strengthening protections with new laws. And we will support good landlords who work with us to end chronic homelessness.

If Manitoba families are forced to tighten their belts just to put food on the table, it's time to tighten the rules. We will stop anti-competitive contracts that make groceries more expensive.

* (13:50)

We Are Growing the Economy with Good Jobs

A good job is about more than a paycheck; it's the dignity that comes with providing for your family and giving back to your community.

One of the best ways to grow our economy is to help more Manitobans join the workforce and join the middle class. We will improve safety training for workers to protect them from dangerous chemicals like asbestos by 'strengthening'—strengthening The Workplace Safety and Health Act.

And we're reconvening the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health, bringing together employers, workers and health and safety experts to ensure that Manitoba's laws keep up to date with the realities of today's workplace and ensure workers are safe no matter where they work.

Manitoba's post-secondary institutions help people join the workforce with university and college degrees and apprenticeships in the skilled trades. They are at the heart of our democracy, and they prepare people for the real world. We need them now more than ever.

Guided by the Premier's Business and Jobs Council, we will release a new economic development strategy

outlining the next phase of economic growth in Manitoba with a new focus on productivity.

We are leaning into our strengths with new investments in agriculture, aerospace and manufacturing, and supporting our small businesses.

We are putting Manitoba producers first, opening two new Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation offices next year. And we are investing in sustainable aviation fuel in Portage la Prairie.

We will compete in the new economy with a made in Canada stamp by helping grow—homegrown success stories like New Flyer Industries, who set up an all-Canadian build facility with hundreds of new jobs.

And we're continuing to lead in the film industry, attracting big production companies with our best-in-class film tax credits.

We're attracting new investment with industry-friendly policies. We will end the antiquated practice of first-come, first-served connections to our power grid and speed up home and business hookups to stand up housing and new businesses faster at lower costs.

For the first time, we are marketing Manitoba's strategic advantage as a place where companies can meet their environmental, social and governance standards, benefit them—from our skilled workforce and partner with us to unlock economic growth.

Our new strategy, Securing our Critical Mineral Future, positions our province to help Canada meet its NATO spending targets, help the United States meet its security needs and attract new investment to Manitoba.

This summer, for the first time in two decades, Manitoba minerals were shipped out of the Port of Churchill. We will continue this partnership with the federal government, investing in Canada's only deep-water Arctic port. These investments are critical to protecting Arctic sovereignty.

We will build on the success of our historic agreement to protect jobs and treaty rights while growing the forestry sector in the Swan River region, with a new Department of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures. And we will launch a new Indigenous loan guarantee program to help big energy projects get off the ground.

In Manitoba, we are proud to welcome more people into the workforce on their journey to citizenship. We extended post-graduate work permits, and

this year, we'll bring in a record number of new workers through the Provincial Nominee Program.

We are growing the economy and creating Manitoba jobs by moving forward with a big—with big infrastructure projects. We are moving forward with the channels project in the Interlake to protect all communities from flooding. And we are resetting the relationship with the Indigenous nations in the region whose communities have not been listened to for years.

We have begun work on the initial design and consultations on the first phase of twinning the Trans-Canada Highway east so we can start to make progress on this important project.

We will continue to make progress on upgrades to the North End Water Pollution Control Centre, one of the largest infrastructure projects in generations, so we can build more affordable housing and protect Lake Winnipeg.

As we grow the economy, we will take a balanced approach to the books so we can provide the services that Manitobans expect while keeping your cost of living low. We're delivering results for Manitobans. For the last year, Manitoba has had the lowest inflation and the lowest unemployment of any province in Canada.

We Are Making Our Downtowns and Neighbourhoods Safer

For years, under the previous government, crime increased and there had been no co-ordinated response to keep people safe. Our new public safety strategy provides the direction and leadership that has been missing to make our communities safer with tougher responses to crime and more proactive steps to prevent it.

We've added more police presence to our streets, hiring more mental health workers so police can focus on violent crime and people in crisis get the help they need.

We'll stop violent crime by building on our successful retail crime and violent crime initiative and by giving municipalities and First Nations more control over their public safety.

We're making it easier for women and their children to escape intimate partner violence by making it easier to move to safety. We're supporting non-profit organizations that help Manitobans fleeing gender-based violence. And we're working with the justice system to better recognize signs of coercive

control like social isolation, emotional manipulation and financial restrictions. With a new strategy to empower Indigenous women, we are uplifting all women, making our province a safer place for women, girls and gender-diverse people to thrive with more opportunities for themselves and their families.

There should be no chronic homelessness in a rich country like Canada. We're moving forward quickly by bringing organizations, governments and Indigenous nations together to move people from tents to housing with our new plan to end chronic homelessness over the next seven years.

As the addictions crisis gets worse, we're bringing the hammer down on drug trafficking with new legislation to crack down on drug dealers and the sale of weapons. And we're establishing a new general investigative unit in Swan River to go after drug trafficking. At the same time, we're helping Manitobans who are ready to turn their lives around with more education and rehabilitation in correctional facilities. And community consultations are under way for a new Dauphin Centre for Justice.

Changing the trajectory of Winnipeg's downtown for the better takes vision and collaboration. We're proud to work in partnership with a Manitoba company to bring economic reconciliation, health care and addiction services, child care, affordable housing and affordable groceries to the heart of our capital.

And we're not stopping there. Our new vision for downtown Winnipeg includes Manitoba's agricultural sector. The new Global Agriculture Technology Exchange campus will bring visitors to Manitoba and Manitoba's grains to the world at a time when we need to diversify and expand our markets.

We Are Giving Kids the Freedom to Be Kids

In Manitoba, we're making it easier for kids just to be kids.

* (14:00)

Our universal 'smeal'—school meal program and school cellphone ban are helping kids focus on learning. Policies like these, we can all agree on. Now we'll put in the work to ensure that they can't be taken away.

We're building schools owned by the people on your street, not Bay Street. And we're keeping schools and community centres open in the evenings and weekends to give kids more opportunities to play.

The 630 educators we hired this year are helping kids learn with more attention from their teachers and smaller class sizes.

We want our kids to have the best education, so we're bringing science curriculums up to date, establishing clear outcomes for literacy instruction, and including a dedicated unit on financial literacy in grade 9 to prepare students for the—for life after school.

We're working together to build the Manitoba we all hope for.

Our anti-Islamophobia working group will teach the next generation to better understand and respect each other.

We'll improve career pathways so high school students gain employment skills and are motivated to pursue post-secondary opportunities.

Nous avons encore du travail à faire pour améliorer l'éducation en français au Manitoba. Guidés par le Bureau de l'éducation française qui a été rétabli ainsi que par le sous-ministre adjoint, nous continuerons à former et à embaucher des enseignants et des éducateurs pour promouvoir le français dans notre province.

Translation

We still have work to do to improve French-language education in Manitoba. Guided by the re-established Bureau de l'éducation française and the assistant deputy minister, we will continue to train and hire teachers and educators to promote French in our province.

English

For the youngest learners and their families, we are opening a—3,500 new child-care spaces at schools, universities and hospitals with a \$10-a-day child care starting in December.

We know that quality programs rely on early learning and child-care professionals, so we are delivering on our commitment for a workforce recruitment and retention strategy.

Our Holocaust education curriculum will make sure Manitobans learn the truth about the Holocaust and never forget the importance of rejecting anti-Semitism in all its forms.

Speaking about the harms of residential schools, the late Murray Sinclair, who left us just a few weeks

ago, has said: Education is what got us here and education is what will get us out. End of quote.

Sinclair was a great Canadian, a great Manitoban, a great Anishinaabe. We will strive to carry out the work he has started in our schools.

In the very places where language was once silenced, today with the help of elders and language speakers, we are bringing Indigenous languages back to the classroom.

Manitobans may be surprised to know that, in 2024, not all First Nations people can vote in school board elections. We're going to change this so everyone has the right to cast a ballot.

We Are Protecting our Environment

We know Manitobans care about the environment and will make climate-friendly choices when they can afford to. That's what our new affordable energy plan is all about. We're helping you save energy while you save money with rebates and incentives for home retrofits, geothermal heating systems and electric vehicles.

The cornerstone of our plan is building the next generation of clean energy with 600 new megawatts of wind, in partnership with First Nations and the Métis.

We're working with industry and home builders to improve our building energy efficiency codes and investing in grid refurbishments to meet our energy needs while keeping Manitoba Hydro rates low.

In our first year, we moved to protect 7 per cent of Manitoba. We are continuing this important work, making progress on our goal to protect 30 per cent of Manitoba by 2030.

You should trust the lakes your children swim in, the air they breathe and the parks they play in are safe. We will take steps to modernize The Environment Act to make big polluters pay for breaking environmental laws and strive for the highest standards in water protection.

The health of Lake Winnipeg matters to all of us. In the spirit of one Manitoba, we will establish a Lake Winnipeg stakeholder working group with producers, environmental experts, Indigenous nations and industry representatives to ensure the sustainability of our lake.

We Are Protecting Freedom and Democracy

One of our society's most important freedoms is freedom of the press. It holds the powerful to account, including government. In an age of so much misinformation and polarization, we can't afford to let journalism disappear.

At the same time, we can't allow this issue to become politicized. So we are establishing an all-party committee to explore the future of local journalism, including rural and cultural media, such as Filipino, Punjabi and Chinese language publications.

Your freedom of speech and your ability to participate in a fair public process must also be protected. We'll bring in legislation to protect this civil liberty and defend Manitobans from straight-strategic lawsuits against public participation.

Rural Manitobans want a government that listens to them and respects their autonomy. Our government will give municipalities the freedom to choose participation in regional planning groups, so they can decide what's best for their community.

When taxpayer dollars are misspent, you need to know the truth. In the coming weeks, we'll release the terms of reference for the inquiry into the Winnipeg Police Service headquarters construction project.

The world is changing. Governments everywhere are learning the benefits and the dangers of rapidly advancing technology like artificial intelligence. While our new AI strategy will benefit all Manitobans, we will also introduce legislation to protect our elections and democracy from third-party and foreign interference.

We Will Leave No One Behind

Over the last few years, Canadians have learned a lot about the truth of our shared history.

So many communities across our province know what it is like to flee oppression and violence. Mennonites and Ukrainians, to name but a few, have all found a welcome home here in Manitoba. We will revive the multicultural secretariat and nous améliorerons nos services en français enfin de mieux soutenir nos diverses communautés. *[and we will improve our French-language services to better support our diverse communities.]*

Today, things are changing in a good way. That same prairie spirit that gets us out of bed to push our neighbour's car after a heavy snowfall, or help the

nearby farm down on its luck, is fueling a new desire to learn and walk together on the path of reconciliation.

To honour our past and give hope for our future, your government will commission a new statue on the front lawn of the Legislative Building. A mother and child bison will stand in front of the people's building as a symbol of all Manitobans.

It will also serve as a reminder of the sacred bonds of family that were harmed by the residential school era.

Here at the people's building, Canadians will gather to honour who we are and how far we've come, and commit to a better future where no one is left behind and every child matters.

* (14:10)

The Statue of Queen Victoria carried great historical, cultural and emotional significance to Manitobans. We will convene a group of Manitoba's cultural institutions and museums, along with history and heritage experts, to determine the best way to display and honour this historic monument.

As we honour the past and commit to teaching future generations of Manitobans about who we are as a people, our government will establish a new honour for veterans and other Manitoba heroes, and we will introduce a no-new program in our schools to send Manitoba high school students to the historic battlefields of the world wars.

We Are Moving Forward as One Manitoba

As a province, we face the same challenges as many of our neighbours. But instead of letting those challenges divide us, we are united in hope.

Every day, we measure our government's success by how much Manitobans are free to pursue a good life; the opportunity of a good job to support your family; knowing if you work hard, you can afford to own a home; health care that's there when your family needs it at the best of times, like the birth of a child, and at the hardest moments, like a cancer diagnosis.

It's these everyday ambitions that help us find meaning in ourselves and the world around us. That is what Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor calls the affirmation of an ordinary life: the belief that all Manitobans are equal and deserve the same opportunities and the same liberties. That is what gives us hope.

For we have one future. We are one people. We are one Manitoba.

Thank you.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor rose from the throne and retired from the Chamber escorted by the Sergeant-at-Arms carrying the mace and followed by the lead aide-de-camp, the officer escort, the Premier, the Chief Justice and the Provincial Court judges.

Prior to their exiting the Chamber, God Save the King was sung; and O Canada was sung in Anishinaabemowin and in English.

* (14:20)

The Speaker proceeded to the throne.

The Sergeant-at-Arms approached the Speaker, made obeisance with the mace, then placed the mace on the table.

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

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

Please be seated.

The honourable First Minister—oh, one minute.

Before we get to that, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members for their agreeing in advance to allow the choir from the Giinawind Riverbend Community School Abinoojiiyag Nagamog into the Chamber to sing the national anthem in Anishinaabeg, and we thank you for your co-operation.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Let me say how extraordinarily proud I am of those kids to sing our national anthem in their first language, Anishinaabemowin.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 1—An Act respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 1, An Act respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office; Loi sur la prestation des serments d'entrée en fonction, be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): On a matter of privilege.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Schuler: I rise today on a matter of privilege.

There are two criteria that such matter must meet, and I am confident that both of these have been met.

First, the matter of privilege must be presented at the first available time, and secondly, must be a violation of these privileges at a face value of prima facie.

Specifically, I rise to address serious issues in the way in which our space and materials in this, the people's building, are managed.

On the first matter, the specifics that I rise on today occurred while this House was not sitting. So this is the very first available time that I could rise.

On the second, I remind members of the government that every member in this Chamber was sent to represent their constituents, and all members have rights related to access to this Legislature. As Bosc and Gagnon write in the third edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, quote: The rights and powers of the House as a collective may be categorized as follows: the exclusive right to regulate its own internal affairs, including its debates, proceedings and facilities. Unquote.

Since September 23, myself and several colleagues have been without office space, as we were relocated into space scheduled to be renovated, but once that space was ready, things changed yet again. By last Wednesday, all furniture and files had been removed and moved into these new offices, and then

it was all moved out by government, and we're back waiting.

What is unacceptable is that much of this communication was not coming from an officer of this House, or an official, but rather from the NDP caucus director. I have reviewed Hansard and have not found any reference to this Legislature, or any committee of this Legislature, ceding power authority to the office of the NDP caucus director. Office space within this building is not a privilege; it is the right of every member of this Assembly.

On February 17, 1999, Speaker Parent ruled immediately that picketers preventing MPs from accessing their offices on sitting days was a *prima facie* case of contempt of the House and a valid member privilege. To reiterate: as a *prima facie* breach of privilege, there is precedent that preventing a member's access to their office meets this test.

If preventing a member from accessing their office is a breach of a member's privilege, then these acts that have prevented myself and my colleagues from even having office space must meet that same standard. This has impacted my ability to properly participate in this House and to fully and properly represent the citizens of Springfield-Ritchot.

As to specific privilege, as a member of this Legislature, this is equally as clear as a violation. Without access to notes, files and research, as well as communications from constituents and concerned Manitobans, the completion of our duties in this House are interfered with.

There is no nuance here. Documents and files were removed from opposition office spaces, and rather than being returned to the affected MLA or given to our caucus offices, it was instead moved.

There is a precedence dealing with issues like this. In January of 1988, members of the House of Commons participating in a computerized pilot project saw those devices removed by House of Commons staff without consent. Speaker Fraser was clear in his response: This policy statement is to include not only the procedures and practices to be followed by House staff in relation to their access and to the maintenance of computer hardware and software in members' offices, but also the whole question of the safety and security of computerized data stored in members' offices. This is an issue of vital importance and one which is to be addressed immediately. Unquote.

Confidentiality is both physical and digital records—is an issue of vital importance. Even in

April of 1991, when independent Member of Parliament had his office and all of its contents moved without his consent, Speaker Fraser went out of his way to express how important it was that legal counsel oversaw the moving of these files and could attest to their security and confidentiality.

We have no such reassurance, and it has been reported that staff from the NDP caucus were present to oversee this removal of confidential files. I need to 'reiterate': Manitobans have entrusted us as legislators to keep their details confidential when they reach out. Many feel retribution within the government system.

These actions have undermined the ability to perform the functions as a representative in this Chamber for opposition members. What guarantee can we offer constituents that this government will not just order someone to open up an MLA's office door and remove the contents of the office, including confidential materials?

It could be more clear: the test of 'tleness'—it could not be more clear, the test of timeliness is met because this is very first opportunity after MLAs' files were taken that I could bring this to the attention of the Legislature. The *prima facie* test is met because members expect to have access to their files to assist them in their duties.

Even more concerning, this has directly undermined the idea that communications with an elected official are privileged and confidential. Individuals reach out to their elected representatives in confidence, and through the actions of individuals, at their direction of this government, that confidence has been eroded. In fact, this is such a serious issue, the PC caucus has advised the Winnipeg Police Service of the seizure and removal of confidential files from opposition offices allegedly including members of the NDP caucus.

Seeing as this House has sole authority over its own affairs and we have not delegated that authority to the NDP caucus director, I suggest that we send this to the appropriate body to get to the bottom of what went wrong and establish firm rules protecting opposition confidentiality files and the allocation of office space.

Therefore I move, seconded by the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé), that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice for a review.

* (14:30)

The Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that remarks at this time by all honourable members must be strictly limited to relevant comments about whether the alleged matter of privilege has been brought forward at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I just want to state in—similar to our Premier, how incredibly proud I am as a member of this Legislative Assembly to hear the next generation of Manitobans come into a space where they've never been allowed to come until today—until just a little while ago—to sing O Canada in Anishinaabemowin. That was a transformative moment in our history.

And in that moment, the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) chose to get up on a erroneous, fictitious matter of privilege in front of all of these Manitobans, which I would submit to the House really does show why members opposite were voted out in the last election.

While our government, in our Throne Speech, is making life more affordable, fixing—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the honourable Government House Leader to keep her comments strictly related to the matter of privilege.

MLA Fontaine: And fixing health care in our Throne Speech and bringing all Manitobans together on a path forward for opportunities for all of us, members opposite brought forward a fictitious matter of privilege.

It's not a matter of privilege, Honourable Speaker. It's not the earliest opportunity. And while members opposite are more concerned with their office space, we're more concerned with getting forward in governing in a good way for all Manitobans.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): On additional information, Honourable Speaker, I'd like to join with the opposition on this matter of privilege.

This, in fact, happened to me as well. I've been out of my office for about two months, and over the break, there was a storage room where I was able to keep my materials including confidential, sensitive constituency-based materials in that room. Somebody had entered that room without my knowledge or consent and packed up that material without my knowledge and consent and moved it to another room in the Legislature. I was shocked that that happened in this day and age and that it was so flippantly and callously handled.

It's inappropriate. We have a duty and responsibility of confidentiality with our constituents, and I hope, Honourable Speaker, you take this matter seriously. There's a real issue of privilege here that needs to be addressed.

The Speaker: I thank all members for their comments. A matter of privilege is, in fact, a very serious concern, and I'm going to take this matter under advisement to consult with all the authorities and will return to the House with a ruling.

* * *

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Kinew: I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), that the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: Before putting the question to the House, I would like to inform everyone in attendance that refreshments will be served in room 254 at the south end of the building after the House has adjourned.

It has been moved by the honourable First Minister and seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance that this House do now adjourn.

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

This House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

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