



Second Session – Forty-Third 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-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

Monday, December 2, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

MATTER OF CONTEMPT

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Matter of contempt.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a matter of contempt.

Mr. Wasyliv: I rise today on a matter of contempt, and I will briefly lay out the facts.

This institution is governed by a respectful workplace policy. That policy covers all members of the Legislative Assembly, including the Premier (Mr. Kinew). One of the duties under that policy is that all members, including the Premier, must attend a respectful workplace training seminar. The Speaker has also made it clear that all members must attend a mandatory respectful workplace training seminar.

On January 19, 2024, the Manitoba NDP caucus held its respectful workplace training seminar, and the Premier was not present on that date. On an October 15, 2024, Executive Council Estimates Committee meeting, I asked the Premier the date upon which he attended and completed the mandatory

respectful workplace training seminar. He didn't know at the time, and despite having his phone with his calendar on it, he was unable to provide a response. He then took the matter under advisement.

Now, any minister, including the Premier, can take a matter under advisement but has 45 days to provide that information—that's rule 77(16) of our rules—and he must provide a written answer by tabling it in the House if we're in session. Now, the due date for that information was November 29, 2024. It's now 47 days.

Despite the Premier binding himself with a legal undertaking, that information has not been provided, and this is my first opportunity to raise this matter in the House. I will table the official notice from the Clerk's office of the matter under advisement, including the transcript of the exchange where the Premier bound himself by a legal undertaking.

Now, in relation, there's two matters here: it's both a matter of privilege and a matter of contempt. This matter—a breach of privilege is obviously punishable by this House and it deals with a disregard of or an attack on the rights and powers of the House and its members.

As opposition members, we're tasked with holding the government to account. We only have a few levers to formally be able to do that, and one of them is to ask questions in Estimates. We don't ask these questions on our own behalf; we're doing so on behalf of the Manitoba people. We ask the questions that they would expect us to ask in order to hold the government accountable in this democracy.

By refusing to answer questions after claiming the Premier would provide that information, it prevents an MLA from doing their job and holding the government to an account.

Now, in relation to contempt, any affront to the dignity and authority of this Legislature can be viewed as contempt. This includes disobedience of its legitimate commands of its officers and contempts of the House.

This Speaker has ordered mandatory respectful workplace training, including the Premier having to complete it. And the concern here is that it doesn't take very long to search a digital calendar for a date upon

which a member attended the mandatory respectful workplace. In fact, I found my date within about 20 seconds of searching.

Now, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) is required to keep meticulous detailed scheduled calendar, and also has a whole army of staff to do that searching; it certainly wouldn't take him 47 days to look into a calendar to find out when he had done this. And the fact that he was unable to do it in five minutes during the Estimates process, or 47 days of this Assembly, it leads me to the only possible inference that what really is going on here is that the Premier has not completed the mandatory respectful workplace seminar, and he's trying to avoid detection by this Legislature.

Now, the reality of that is he's showing contempt of this House and for all other members who do abide by its rules. He's showing contempt directly for the authority of the Speaker. This was the direction of the Speaker to complete the mandatory training. He's also showing contempt for Manitobans, a certain level of entitlement and a lack of respect for the rules of this building.

In 1999, the UK Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege issued a report listing various contempts of parliament scenarios, and they found that without reasonable excuse, the failure to answer a question or provide information or produce papers formerly required by the House or a committee falls under this category.

Now, under section 34 of The Legislative Assembly Act, the Legislature has the power to compel the production of documents it deems necessary for any of its proceedings or deliberations. Section 35(1) of the act also gives the Speaker the power to issue a warrant to compel the information, and section 39 also gives the power of Assembly as a court of record and possess all the rights and powers of a court under this section.

Section 40(2) of the Assembly act possesses all powers and jurisdiction by virtue of this section, and essentially what that means is the Legislature can govern its own processes, its own inquiries; it has the power to order production of documents for its functioning.

The Supreme Court has also weighed in on this: *House of Commons v. Vaid*, V-A-I-D, 2005, 1 Supreme Court Report 667, held that the Legislature has the right to regulate its own internal affairs, including its debates, agenda and proceedings as they relate to its legislative and deliberative functions.

So, under our rules—and I'll acknowledge that our rules allow for a 45-day period, but is silent as to a remedy as to what occurs when a minister has breached that order.

By virtue of The Legislative Assembly Act, by virtue of the Supreme Court, the Speaker has the power to impose a remedy despite it being silent within the rules, and to do otherwise, it would be nonsensical. Why have a rule to compel a minister to produce an answer or a document within 45 days and then have no consequence or remedy at all if that minister fails to do it?

Essentially, if that were to allow to stand, it would absolutely render the—meaningless the Estimates process. Ministers could simply stand up and take everything under advisement and then promptly ignore providing that information to the House.

* (13:40)

Obviously, that's not the intention. The intention and the purpose of the rule is for accountability and transparency. And inherent in that purpose, this Chamber, and through the authority of the Speaker, has that power. Now, most importantly, the Legislature has the right to compel these documents and we ask you to do so.

So, I move, seconded for the MLA for Spruce Woods, that this House censor the Premier for their disregard for the traditions and practices of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and their contempt for the people of Manitoba; and that this House order the Premier to produce the information contained in the notice of advisement within 24 hours of the Speaker's ruling.

The Speaker: So before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind members of the House that remarks made by—at this time by members are limited very strictly to relevant comments about whether the alleged matter of contempt has been raised at the earliest opportunity, and whether a prima facie case has been established.

I would also point out to members that the motion is in order and the motion—the honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): First off, let me just say this: I apologize to members that are in the gallery because the member opposite likes to hear himself talk in this Chamber and likes to take opportunities, when really, he should just be sitting down and letting folks get to the business of the

House. So, I apologize to folks in the gallery for listening to what is essentially a vendetta against the Premier (Mr. Kinew).

And so let me just share with the member, once and for all, several of us, including the Premier, took said training on February 29, 2024. And there were several of us that were in that meeting alongside the Premier. That should, hopefully, satisfy the member opposite and allow us to get on with the business of the day.

Miigwech.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I'd like to thank the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) for bringing this forward.

Our Progressive Conservative caucus shares the concern that matters taken under advisement by this government are not following the long-held rule and practice in this Chamber of being responded to within 45 days, which is the required rule. I don't need to relitigate that on behalf of the member for Fort Garry. He's made it very clear that this rule has been breached by the First Minister. And, in spite of the member for St. Johns' (MLA Fontaine) comments today providing a date, the breach was still broken with respect to this long-standing rule.

And why the Premier, with all the staff of the—his office and the provincial government as a whole could not make that deadline, not to mention, you know, provide the answer in the Committee of Supply process, where it's supposed to take place but, in fact, then couldn't find the answer in the additional 45 days to meet the deadline, is very unclear.

We feel that this warrants investigation by your office, Honourable Speaker, because we believe that these rules do matter and that it is disrespectful and, frankly, in contempt of the Legislative Assembly and your office and authority that this rule was not followed by the government.

There is not one set of rules for the First Minister, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), and another set of rules for the rest of his ministers and everybody else. He is required to follow the same rules as every other member of Executive Council with respect to the Committee of Supply process and, indeed, all the same rules as the rest of the other 56 members of this Assembly.

And so we support this call, Honourable Speaker. It's clear that it's in order. It's clear that it was at the first available opportunity, given the 45-day deadline.

It's clear that a breach was—clearly happened with respect to the deadline and this now being two days after the deadline.

And so we ask you to take this matter forward, Honourable Speaker, and investigate it as per the motion from the member for Fort Garry.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Recognizing that matters of contempt are very serious matters, I will take the matter under advisement and come back to the House with a ruling.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

Committee reports?

Tabling of reports?

Ministerial statements?

The honourable minister of—

An Honourable Member: Tabling of reports.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: Tabling of reports, sorry.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'm pleased to rise and table the Annual Report on Nutrition Programs for the year of 2023-2024.

The Speaker: No further tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Maya Turner

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Honourable speaking—Speaker, being the first isn't easy. Being the first requires courage and resilience. You must be determined and committed with tremendous work ethic. Being the first requires mastery of skill and a willingness to push boundaries. You must believe in yourself and have a readiness to go somewhere without precedent.

Today I stand to recognize University of Manitoba Bisons kicker Maya Turner who, by embodying all of these characteristics, became the first on more than one occasion.

Having grown up on soccer fields, Maya Turner's strength as a player who could kick long, hard and on target stood out. As a football fan, she recognized that not a lot of girls play football, but as her passion for soccer started to wane, she took a chance—a chance that would lead to a series of firsts.

In 2022, she made history by becoming the first woman to play and score in a pre-season match against the Saskatchewan Huskies.

In 2023, she made history again by being the first woman to play in a regular-season U Sports football game against the Regina Rams.

One can only imagine the pressure of this first, but Maya Turner proved any and all naysayers wrong by also becoming the first woman to score in a regular-season U Sports football game, finishing that crucial game with nine points, including the game-winning field goal.

It gets better.

Maya Turner was not done with being the first. This fall, Maya Turner became the first woman to earn Canada West all-star honours. She earned the title of best kicker after making 12 of 16 field goals and converting all 25 of her extra-point attempts in the regular season.

By kicking her way through barriers, Maya Turner has shown that it's not only possible for women to play in male-dominated spaces, but women can excel and lead in them as well.

On a very personal note, I want to thank Maya for giving my own daughter a role model to look up to. In a world filled with messages about how young women ought to look and behave, you are a beacon of light.

Let us celebrate Maya Turner for her historic accomplishments and the hope and inspiration she brings to young female athletes and females pursuing excellence in all spaces that weren't designed for them, to chase their dreams fearlessly and unapologetically.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Manitoba Bisons' kicker Maya Turner has etched her name in the records of Canadian football history by becoming the first woman ever to be named a Canada West all-star, and she did this all while inspiring countless young athletes, especially girls, to pursue their dreams in sports.

Maya's journey is a shining example of resilience, passion and breaking barriers.

Her remarkable season has been marked by a 75 per cent success rate on field goals, which comes as a follow-up to history when in 2022, she became the first woman not only to play but also to score in Canadian U football by bringing the Manitoba Bisons to a 27-24 victory.

This was an iconic moment showcasing her skill and determination. Maya's story reminds us of the greatness knows no boundaries, whether it's gender or past experiences.

Originally from Maple Grove, Minnesota, Turner began her university athletic career playing NCAA Division I soccer at Lolo [phonetic] University in Chicago.

* (13:50)

Her transition from NCAA soccer to excelling in football is a testament to her adaptability and unyielding love of sport. Turner has said she has always been interested in football, but did not get the—much opportunity to play.

Her humility and dedication are as admirable as her achievements, proving that success is not just about talent but also about hard work and the courage to step into uncharted territory. To quote Turner, it's really important for other girls to see that they can accomplish things like this.

As we applaud this fearless and talented young athlete, I also encourage young girls everywhere to follow in her footsteps: dream big, work hard and refuse to let barriers define you.

There's no doubt that Maya's story is just beginning, and her journey will continue to motivate athletes across generations. Turner once said there's still more to come. And we can all look forward to watching what you do next.

Indeed, her accomplishments inspire us all to aim high, challenge stereotypes and embrace opportunity to make history.

Thank you, Maya.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: Before moving on to members' statements, I have a statement for the House.

First off, I would—sure members are aware that there's been recent changes in staffing within the Chamber branch. On November 12, 2024, Rob Lockhart began his role as the first full-time Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms for the Legislative Assembly.

Rob has worked for the Chamber branch as a gallery attendant for the past two years. Prior to joining the Assembly, Rob enjoyed a 32-year career with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, with all of his RCMP service here in Manitoba.

Rob brings a wide range of experience and skills with him that are very well suited to the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms position, and we are very excited to have Rob join the team full-time.

Rob is joined today in the Speaker's Gallery by his wife Ruth, children Katelyn and Liam. Join me in congratulating Rob on his new position and welcoming him to the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today, visiting from Ontario, Monika Johnson, who is the mother of Andrea Norlock, one of the Clerk's office administrative assistants. She is a retired Via Rail worker of 43 years and is honoured to be able to sit and watch the session today for the very first time ever.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us Maya Turner, Carver Trapp, Jake Deneka, who are guests of the honourable member for Southdale (MLA Cable).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

Further, in the public gallery we have with us today a group of students from the University of Winnipeg Political Science Student Association. Visit was co-ordinated by co-presidents Alyssa Warga and Sage Toews. The group is visiting today to learn more about our intern program and to observe how well-behaved we are during House proceedings.

I may have ad-libbed that last little bit.

Accompanied by Professor Malcolm Bird, who is also the academic advisor for the Assembly's intern program, and Manitoba Legislative interns Silvia Ofori, Selam Beyene, Tawsha Bristol, Christina McKay, Madeline Blais, Sabrina Kruger.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

So I have one more group that are here with a group that was previously announced. We have, in addition to Maya Turner, DeShawn LeJour, Mya Miller, Carver Trapp, Jake Deneka and Michael O'Shea. And once again, they're guests of the honourable member for Southdale.

Okay, and that concludes today's introductions.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UMFA Union Certification Anniversary

MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond): Honourable Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge a significant milestone in the history of education in Manitoba: the 50th anniversary of the University of Manitoba Faculty Association's union certification.

As an alumna of a master's program of the University of Manitoba, I had the privilege of attending the anniversary event this November, and hearing directly from many distinguished members who are also residents of Fort Richmond about how their union has shaped not only their professional lives but also the success of the university as a whole.

For five decades, UMFA has played a vital role in ensuring the University of Manitoba remains a leader in research, teaching and innovation.

Through its advocacy and collective bargaining efforts, the association has fought for the rights of faculty members, promoting academic freedom and ensuring equity and fairness.

UMFA has also been a strong advocate for collegial governance, ensuring that faculty members have a voice in the decision-making processes. These efforts have been essential in maintaining the high standards of education that benefit students.

I am proud to have stood with UMFA members on the picket line during past strikes, advocating for better working conditions, fair treatment and a stronger commitment to the people who make this institution exceptional. These actions were not just about improving the lives of faculty members; they were about ensuring that the University of Manitoba could continue to attract and retain the talented individuals who make this university a leader in education and research.

I want to acknowledge the representatives from UMFA who join us today: Erik Thomson, Jenna Tichon, Orvie Dingwall, Tommy Kucera and Jieying Chen.

I invite my colleagues to join me in congratulating UMFA on 50 years of union certification.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Government's Fiscal Management Record

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize and uplift Manitobans in their time of need. They are struggling to make ends meet while the government flails and fails.

This government has drawn sharp criticism for its approach to managing public funds, particularly in its recent handling of program cuts and reallocated funding. This government has cut funding to vital programs like Building Sustainable Communities and Green Team, only to later repackage the funds under a new banner. This maneuver not only diminishes the programs' immediate effectiveness, but also appears as a thinly veiled attempt to misrepresent this money as a fresh investment rather than a restoration of what was taken away.

The cuts to BSC and Green Team are especially troubling because these programs are vital to supporting community infrastructure, sustainability and employment for youth. By abruptly halting their funding, the government has disrupted the momentum of projects and left communities scrambling to fill the gap. These cuts undermine the government's credibility as a party ostensibly committed to environmentally—sustainability and social equity.

Adding insult to injury, this government cut the PR 227 paving project to redirect funds toward some unnamed future vanity project of this Premier (Mr. Kinew). This decision not only jeopardizes the safety and usability of PR 227 for Manitobans who rely on it, but also showcases an alarming pattern of neglect and disrespect to our municipalities. Manitobans deserve transparency about where their tax dollars are going, and vague promises of future projects do little to inspire confidence.

The one Manitoba shell game fund appears to be less about fostering genuine economic growth and more about political optics. By framing recycled funding as new, this government insults the intelligence of Manitobans, who see through the facade.

* (14:00)

Leadership, accountability and commitment to meaningful investments—not this kind of fiscal sleight of hand; this strategy erodes trust and diverts attention from pressing need for consistent, transparent governance.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Aki Centre

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): Run by the Seven Oaks School Division and located in West St. Paul, the Aki Centre works to connect community with the land to foster ecological stewardship among students and visitors.

After the centre's founding in 2017, they soon began to survey the land to understand its history.

Years of farming and colonization had left the land in poor condition. However, growing on the land were 65 species of plants that were indigenous to our local ecosystem, the tall grass prairie.

Inspired by the words of Elder Dan, what we do to the land, we do to ourselves, the Aki Centre began working to restore the integrity of the 50 acres of land they reside on.

Through collaboration with two founding elders-in-residence and 5,000 visitors to the centre every year, they began working on the land to transform it into a healing landscape.

They work to create a relationship between students and land based on Indigenous teachings, and connect students with cultural programming through seasonally planned activities.

They also host a annual—a popular annual pumpkin smash every year for kids or adults looking for some cathartic exercise.

The Aki Centre is proud of how they work to provide for the community. They collect food waste from schools every week and, alongside students, grow vegetables, herbs and cultivate plants to grow in schoolyards.

They want to teach others how to do better in any way they can.

Today, I am honoured to have guests from the Aki Centre with us here in the gallery today. I ask that all my colleagues join me in celebrating their achievements and thank them for their work to advance land-based teachings in our province.

I also ask that their names be recorded in Hansard.

Derek Dabee, Sherri Denysuik, Tony Kreml, Ben Linnick, Alexandra Loepky, Heather Marks, Greg McFarlane, Jen McGowan, Alexis Nazeravich, Maria Santos, Jen West, Tiffany Winchar

Ports of Entry—Reduced Hours of Service

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are starting to see through this Premier. When the cameras are on, he talks about border security and pretends that it's an issue for him, but when it's time to do the work, he is absent and silent.

When the federal government announced that a dozen ports of entry throughout Manitoba would have reduced hours of service, including multiple in my constituency, this Premier had nothing to say.

The fact that this government was represented by a junior minister making vague statements showed everyone that this was no serious matter for the NDP.

It matters to my constituents though. Many of my far southeast constituents are dual citizens and work in the US. For many they are earning a living in the US and supporting the Manitoba economy back at home. These changes will add hours to their daily commute.

The effects are seen further. Many border communities on either side rely on cross-border trade. For those that ship goods across the border, these reductions can have massive impacts. These new hours will not only have convenience impact for Manitobans but also have economic influence.

This Premier (Mr. Kinew) talks when the cameras are on, but behind closed doors, he failed to advocate for Manitobans. He failed to impress upon Ottawa the fact that our economy is heavily reliant on north-south trade and unreasonable barriers to this hurts Manitoba families.

What's worse, he clearly didn't care until President-elect Trump threatened tariffs, then suddenly the news cameras were pointed at him. Manitobans need a statesman who fights for them, not a showman trying to build a national profile so he can replace either component of the failed Singh-Trudeau alliance.

Manitobans deserve better, and this Premier needs to commit today to picking up the phone and demanding—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): I seek leave for the member to continue his statement.

The Speaker: Does the member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

World AIDS Day

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière): I rise today to recognize World AIDS Day. This day was first recognized in 1988, and became the first ever international day for global health. It is a day to remember the people we've lost to HIV and AIDS and continue to advocate for better care

This year's theme is Take the rights path: My health, my right! It underlines the importance of accessible

care and empowering those affected by HIV and AIDS to live vibrant and fulfilling lives.

I'm proud of the important steps our government has made in prioritizing care for Manitobans, including free access to PrEP, post-exposure prophylaxis and antiretroviral therapy. These important initiatives bolster both prevention and treatment for Manitobans.

Our government is also looking to the future of treatment through the establishment of the Dr. Dick Smith HIV/AIDS epidemiology research fellowship. We celebrate the many advocates, doctors, researchers, nurses and community health workers who are investing their time and energy to improve care for Manitobans living with HIV/AIDS.

We're fortunate to partner—we're fortunate to have partners like Nine Circles Community Health Centre, the Manitoba Harm Reduction Network, Ka Ni Kanichihk, Sunshine House and many, many others across the province, committed to person-centred culturally safe initiatives that improve access to HIV prevention and intervention.

Community organizations have always been at the forefront of meeting community health needs. They've been central in sharing the importance of getting tested and reducing stigma through campaigns like U equals U: undetectable equals untransmittable.

We all have a role to play in addressing stigma, challenging stereotypes and supporting those affected by HIV in our communities. To the many Manitobans, families and communities impacted by HIV and AIDS, we see you, you are worthy and you are loved.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Education System Federal Funding

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Welcome to the gallery, Maya and, of course, all our guests that are joining us this afternoon and the hundreds watching virtually.

Manitoba has a long history of welcoming newcomers. Newcomers to our province often require assistance, especially in terms of enhancing their English-language skills; skills, I might add, that are essential to their economic success, which then in turn adds to our economic success rate here in Manitoba.

The enhanced English skills for an employment, which serves newcomers, is shutting down in the next few months. As shared by their executive director, I quote: They help hundreds, if not thousands, of people.

The Kinew government has benefitted from a year-over-year increase of—\$900-million increase in federal transfers, which is 24 per cent, Honourable Speaker. The Kinew government likes to tell Manitobans about their great federal relationship.

So, Honourable Speaker, I ask the Premier today: When was he made aware of these cuts and is he going to share some of that \$900 million with these programs?

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, the members opposite come here day after day and complain about the federal government. We work with them when appropriate. We stand up for Manitoba when that's the appropriate court of—course of action.

But when we're talking about standing up for Manitobans, I would say this to those on the opposition benches: Say their names. Say their names. Mercedes Myran, Morgan Harris.

These are two of our fellow Manitobans who were killed by a serial killer. Today, our government, working with the community and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, began stage 4 of searching the Prairie Green landfill for their remains. This is an important step towards justice and healing for the families of Morgan and Mercedes.

Importantly, the members opposite chose to make this an issue in the election campaign last year. I would like them, instead of engaging in the procedural delays that we see here each and every day, to come forward and state their position.

Do they support the search of the Prairie Green landfill and advancing the healing of the families of Mercedes and Morgan?

The Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, it's once again shameful that the Premier of Manitoba is again dodging and denying and just refusing to answer any questions here.

This is not the first time the Kinew government has failed teachers and students, Honourable Speaker. When 93 education assistants were unceremoniously fired by the Hanover School Division, this Premier refused to support them and the hundreds of students they work with.

The Premier was asked in this very House if he would, and I quote, take some action today and step in

to make sure that these staff are still in the classroom. End quote.

* (14:10)

His response, I quote: No, actually, not at all, he said. The same Premier who has almost \$1 billion more in federal transfers to allocate.

Government is all about choices, Honourable Speaker.

Why has this Premier chosen to abandon these educators and students only weeks before Christmas?

Mr. Kinew: The member opposite is raising issues around funding from the federal government. Do you know what we secured from the federal government: \$20 million to search the Prairie Green landfill.

And today, we entered the most important part of that search: stage 4. I was on site this morning. I watched the first truck move down that mountain, move down the hill into the search facility. On this important day—this is a national news story. Members opposite for all of last year wanted to talk about it. Why can't they talk about it now?

Each one of these PC MLAs was elected under ads saying that Manitobans should stand firm. I'll table them for the reminder of the members opposite. It said, in fact, at the top of this ad that this issue matters most to us, speaking in the voice of the PCs.

Well, if this matters so much to the members opposite, tell us today: Do they still believe Heather Stefanson's opposition to searching the landfill was correct? Or do they support us in moving ahead with the search along with the feds, along with the community and along with the families?

The Speaker: Time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, the Premier likes to say that hope lives here in Manitoba. Unfortunately, not for the hundreds of educators facing unemployment in the upcoming holidays or the students upgrading their English skills. Our economy relies on a strong education system for children right through to adulthood.

Instead of squabbling about jurisdiction with the feds, will the Premier step up? A student is a student, regardless of who delivers their education. The Premier has the funds to keep these programs going, Honourable Speaker.

Why is he failing these students and educators, especially this—during this time, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: We have a school food program in every single classroom in Manitoba because every child matters; we're working with the federal government to deliver that.

We're also working with the federal government to search the Prairie Green landfill. This issue was so important to the political campaign that saw each of these members sent to the opposition benches that Heather Stefanson chose to ask it first in the televised debate. Of all the issues in the world, of issues around education or health care or the economy—those didn't seem to matter to the PCs last year. They had to talk about their opposition to searching the Prairie Green landfill.

Over the course of getting to stage 4 and launching that today, we have systematically disproven every assertion that they made. It's being delivered on budget at a cost far less than they claimed in their ads. We moved asbestos carefully and without incident, and the material in the landfill is in a condition where we can identify what we're working with. The search for the humanitarian recovery of Morgan and Mercedes is moving forward in a good way.

Do the members opposite support this with the benefit of—

The Speaker: Time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Violent Crime Incident Justice System Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, last week, two individuals shopping at Polo Park were victims of another unprovoked stabbing right here in Manitoba. They suffered serious upper-body injuries.

The Premier acknowledges law enforcement for the quick response and arrest. However, he ignores the fact that his own Justice Minister released this individual back into the community to reoffend not once, but twice, Honourable Speaker.

Manitobans can draw a direct line from this minister's desk right to Polo Park stabbing.

Will the Premier advise why his hand-picked Justice Minister failed these two victims and other victims across Manitoba, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I thanked law enforcement immediately after these terrible incidents took place.

But on the subject of the victims of crime, say their names. Say their names: Mercedes Myran, Morgan Harris.

What we saw from the justice system earlier this year: we secured a conviction against the serial killer who robbed us of the love and company and affection of Morgan and Mercedes. We worked together across jurisdictions, respecting that judicial process, and then immediately moving forward with the search of the Prairie Green landfill.

The members opposite want to come in here and talk about public safety; I would say to them through the Chair: You have no credibility on public safety until you address your past positions on Prairie Green landfill.

The member from Brandon West opposed the search on September 20 of last year. In his own words, does he still believe that sentiment, or with the benefit of hindsight and with a capable government, has he reversed himself?

I pose the question to every single member opposite: Do you still believe that Manitobans—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, the Premier failed in his comments last week to even acknowledge the victims of these unprovoked stabbings. He failed to mention to Manitobans that it was his own Justice Minister that allowed this person to be in the community that day.

The Premier told Manitobans: If they only gave him a hundred days, he would personally fix bail. He didn't. The Premier told Manitobans that he would, quote, end violent crime. End quote. He hasn't. The Premier told Manitobans that he would ban knives and machetes, and we know, Honourable Speaker, he can't.

How many more Manitobans need to be violently and randomly assaulted before this Premier realizes that perhaps the MLA for Concordia was the wrong choice?

Mr. Kinew: I extend my empathy and compassion for all victims of violent crimes. That's the reason I am working with the families of Mercedes Myran and Morgan Harris to bring their loved ones home.

Say their names. It took the members opposite a week to say Donald Trump's name. How long before they can say Mercedes or Morgan? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: The victims of the worst crime in the history of Manitoba. Again, the members opposite are not able to say their names.

But you know what they do say? They had a caucus meeting this summer chaired by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) in which they asked: How long do we have to feel bad about those landfill ads? And the member for Steinbach tried to reassure them.

But I would say it is very clear that you will not be able to move forward until you address this issue. Do you support the search of the Prairie Green landfill, yes or no?

And do your leadership candidates, who are working with some of the people who were the spearhead of that terrible campaign last year, do you support this Prairie Green landfill?

Manitobans are coming together—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, Honourable Speaker, the Premier dodges the questions to hold him accountable to keeping communities safer in this province of ours. It's clear that the NDP don't care about making our communities safer.

The suspect in last week's double stabbing faces two charges of failed to comply with conditions of release order. So he is known to the minister.

Now we add to the mix two charges of assault and possession of a weapon. Still, this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) releases him to offend. The Premier stated that Manitobans lose faith in the justice system when individuals are released only to immediately reoffend; in this case, violently reoffend.

Manitobans have lost faith in this NDP's justice system. They have lost faith in this NDP's Justice Minister. All Manitobans want is the ability to shop without the risk of stabbings.

Will the Premier deliver, or is he content with his Justice Minister's status quo?

Mr. Kinew: We have more law enforcement to keep you safe, and earlier this year, what did the justice system do? A judge delivered a conviction of Jeremy Skibicki, the person who killed Mercedes Myran, Morgan Harris, Buffalo Woman and, of course, Rebecca Contois.

But there is a higher level of justice at work here as well, too. It says in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, the voice of the blood of your brother cries to me from the earth. And the Prairie Green landfill situation is asking all of us as Manitobans to look at these two Indigenous women the same way that the Bible calls on us to look at a brother.

The blood of our sisters cries to us from the earth. Today we moved landfill material in the target zone for the first time. Manitobans have put aside division and are moving forward together on this in a good way.

Since the PCs torched themselves in last year's election on this topic, I want them to weigh in today. Do—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

* (14:20)

7-Eleven Convenience Stores Closures Due to Increase in Crime

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, under the Kinew government, Winnipeg has gone from Slurpee capital to stabbing capital. Prior to this NDP government, 7-Eleven stores used to be on every corner, providing access to essentials like milk and bread and treats like Slurpees and nachos. They are a lighted beacon in many communities, anchoring them, providing employment and generating taxes.

Now the doors have closed on those childhood summertime memories along with a dozen stores. In reference to the closure, the Minister of Justice declared it, quote, a huge success.

Does the Premier (Mr. Kinew) agree with his hand-picked minister that almost a dozen stores closing due to the rampant theft and violence is a huge success?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, our government is taking action, working with police and others to bring forward a retail initiative to stop some of the violent crime on our streets.

But of course, members opposite campaigned on some of the most divisive and deplorable rhetoric ever

heard in this province. Some of the messaging was almost hateful in a way. That's strong condemnation, Honourable Speaker. But of course, that's just the words of the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) in his assessment of the campaign.

We've heard from the member for Dawson Trail. Wondering if we could hear directly from the member for Brandon West, if he'll apologize to the people of Manitoba.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: Quote: They just couldn't absorb the continual losses. This is the view of Winnipeg councillor for Mynarski.

The councillor went on to ask, quote: When they need that quart of milk or you need a loaf of bread and it's 11 p.m. or 12:30 a.m., where are you going to get it? In the North End, almost everybody except for 7-Eleven closes early.

I will ask the NDP's closure of these stores: Where are the residents of Ellice, McPhillips and Pembina Highway to go for their milk and bread, for diapers and Children's Tylenol, in the middle of the night?

Mr. Wiebe: Of course, our government's taking action, including with our electronic monitoring, which we expanded to rural areas and—in co-operation with victims of intimate partner violence.

But I don't hear an apology from the member for Brandon West, and I'm not surprised. I'm not surprised because there's a whole number of individuals, of course, who've never apologized, and those who have come out, he's made no comment about.

Folks like Candice Bergen who said it seemed cruel even to those who agreed with Stefanson's position on the issue. David McLaughlin, who said the anti-search-the-landfill ad, terrible ad on all sorts of levels; it was so categorically unempathetic. And yet the member opposite offers no apology.

Does he feel that it was unempathetic, the campaign that he participated in—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Brandon West, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: Police have told us that almost a dozen closures of convenience stores under the Kinew government is just the canary in the coal mine. Retailers have noted that if a company like 7-Eleven, which has

over 70,000 stores worldwide, revenues of \$112 billion, cannot absorb losses associated with retail theft and violent crime occurring in Winnipeg, then no business can.

The councillor for Point Douglas shared, and I quote: 7-Eleven can't continue to lose the amount of money with the amount of stealing that has occurred; it's just not sustainable.

Will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) roll down the tinted windows of his armed limo and take action today?

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, quoting from the Brandon Sun: After being pressed multiple times on providing a clear answer, the member for Brandon West largely fell in line with Premier Heather Stefanson's view.

That was who he was during the campaign. So the question might be asked: Has he changed his mind? Has he reformed his position?

Well, no, because recently he said about the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), who, of course, was the face of this divisive campaign, the member for Brandon West endorsed him, and he said, quote: I found a lot of his ideals the same as mine.

So this member opposite has shown us who he is. I gave him the opportunity in front of this House, in front of Manitobans, to apologize. He still hasn't. Neither has the member for Fort Whyte or any other member on the opposite side.

Manitobans are paying attention.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Brandon West, on a new question.

Winnipeg Police Service Funding and Staffing Levels

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, the NDP's Minister of Justice spends more time on the spin cycle than the Maytag repairman and he's hung the Winnipeg Police Service out to dry.

Thanks to mounting overtime bills, Winnipeg is on pace to spend \$339 million on policing in 2024, an increase of 4 per cent over the police budget in 2023. As noted by CBC, and I quote: A 2 per cent funding hike for 2025 could therefore be seen as a de facto cut.

In light of the increasing violent crimes, can the minister offer our brave officers trying to keep us safe more than a de facto cut, or is he content defunding the police?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Again, Honourable Speaker, to know exactly who the member for Brandon West is, all you have to look at is that he voted against a \$2-million increase to the Brandon Police Service, a \$5.3-million increase to the Winnipeg Police Service, he called 2 per cent increase a pittance and, of course, made sure to say our machete bill was window dressing trying to keep people safe in the province of Manitoba.

But of course, we know there are other members who have spoken out against this campaign that the member for Brandon West undertook. He said—this is from Shelley Glover, who said she was aghast watching the September 21 leaders' debate when the first issue that the PC leader Heather Stefanson raised was her refusal to search the landfill. Again, this was front and centre in their campaign.

Does the member take any—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Brandon West, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: The Minister of Justice seems to be of the opinion that misleading Manitobans will keep our communities safe.

For example, he likes to point out the alleged addition of a dozen new officers. Much like proving the existence of Bigfoot, CBC Manitoba said they encountered the same difficulty with this minister's claim. And I quote: That claim could not be corroborated by the mayor's office or Winnipeg Police Service, which point out that the officers in question are already being trained and already earning a salary.

The mayor's office and the Winnipeg Police Service say the minister is full of snow. If the mayor and police don't believe in the minister's fairy tale, why should Manitobans?

Mr. Wiebe: Of course, the member opposite knows that we have the support of the Retail Council of Canada, we have the support of the National Police Federation on the initiatives that we're undertaking.

But again, I hear no apologies from the members for Brandon West, for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan). None of them will take accountability, and yet, they want to come in here and talk about victims.

Is it safer, is Manitoba safer for victims of crime because they stood firm in their previous campaign that

was the banner that they ran under? Do Manitobans feel safer under a government that would not stand with victims of a serial killer?

That's their legacy, and they need to be accountable for it. I ask members opposite to have some conviction and stand up and apologize for their words.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a final supplementary question.

Needle Distribution Program Committee Inquiry

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Still on the topic of misinforming Manitobans, the NDP's front bench seems to be falling all over themselves contradicting one another, Honourable Speaker.

The minister responsible for the distribution of syringes, in reference to her crack commando committee, pounded her desk declaring that the government has, quote, nothing to do with this committee.

Then the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) puts on the historical record that the NDP's committee is actually a, quote, government committee, referring to it as their, quote, crack cocaine committee.

Perhaps the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) can wade into this prickly issue of used needles and tell this House who is on the government crack cocaine committee of Cabinet, what is their mandate and do they get hazard pay?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): This is a difference between us and them, between you, the people of Manitoba, the vision that you want for the future, and what they offer. Slogans trivializing important public safety issues.

We stand with victims against one of the worst crimes that has ever been committed in Manitoba history. There's moral clarity on our side of the House. We stood with the families. We worked to ensure that there was a conviction of a serial killer.

The members opposite politicized this issue when they decided to run TV ads and put up billboards and to raise it in the televised leaders' debate.

We keep this issue sacred. But before they come in here and try to raise their slogans about public safety, I think it's important that they address their position. Do they oppose the landfill search? Do they support it? Or are they remaining quiet today so that in the future they—

* (14:30)

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Addictions Crisis Needle Disposal Program

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): The NDP has no plan to deal with the addictions crisis in Manitoba.

HIV rates continue to soar under their watch, and the number of discarded needles causing harm in our neighbourhoods continues to climb. Yet this government has failed to open a single new addictions treatment bed in Winnipeg or expand access to life-saving interventions like Narcan.

The City of Winnipeg estimates that it would cost over \$260,000 per year to clean up discarded needles in just a few select parks across the city. Despite this, the NDP excluded the WRHA from any new funding for needle cleanup.

Why is this government refusing to invest in meaningful solutions to tackle the addictions crisis in Winnipeg?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): The member opposite is just wrong. She continues to put incorrect words on the record and is, quite frankly, either completely out of date with what our government is doing on these issues or just doesn't care to be honest with Manitobans.

But she has an opportunity right now to stand in her place and be clear with Manitobans. She ran under a hateful, divisive campaign that targeted the victims of a serial killer. She has yet to apologize to Manitobans.

Today is her chance to do that and show some form of accountability and leadership, which no one on that side of the House has done yet.

Will she do so?

The Speaker: The honourable member for Roblin, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, over 2,700 needles a day are distributed in Winnipeg under this NDP government. They are not part of a needle-swap program. They are freely distributed with no guarantee that they will be safely disposed of.

The NDP promised Manitobans they would address the addictions crisis, but they have done nothing to expand treatment beds in Winnipeg or make Narcan more accessible. They've broken their promise on bail reform, and they are now refusing to fund needle-disposal programs in Winnipeg.

Will the NDP fund a needle-cleanup program in Winnipeg today, yes or no?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, the member is wrong. We already do provide that funding. I'm proud to work with the Minister of Mental Health, Addictions and Homelessness to do this work and take a whole-of-government approach to making sure that Manitobans struggling with addictions have their needs met.

Honourable Speaker, it is so important that, as legislators, we take a responsible approach and that we treat all Manitobans with respect. We saw the previous failed PC government treat families that were suffering and struggling with the loss of their loved ones in such violent ways, and they exploited that and they targeted that shamefully.

That member has an opportunity today to stand up in her place and apologize to these families. It's the decent thing to do.

When you know better, you do better, Honourable Speaker. Will she do so today?

The Speaker: The honourable member for Roblin, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: The NDP have shown no leadership in addressing Manitoba's growing addictions crisis and the rampant violent crime in our neighbourhoods. No new addictions treatment beds, no access to Narcan programs, no action on bail reform and no financial support for needle cleanup in Winnipeg.

Under the NDP, it's easier to get arrested and jailed for having tuberculosis in this province than for violent crime. Shame on them.

The NDP will not fix the violent crime or addictions crisis in this city by making excuses and pointing fingers. The time for talk is over; Winnipeg needs decisive action now.

Why is this government failing to take responsibility for the safety of people in Winnipeg?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, for seven and a half years, the previous failed Heather Stefanson government took no action to make our communities safer, to strengthen health care or to make sure that those struggling with addictions had the care that they needed.

On this side of the House, we're taking real action, working with families and working with partners to do the incredibly important work.

On this side of the House, as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has already said, we have moral clarity when it comes to standing with victims and their families. These are Manitobans: Mercedes Myran, Morgan Harris. Members opposite won't even say their names.

That member can stand in her place today and do something no member on that side has done: say their names and apologize to all Manitobans.

Brandon University Campus Security Measures for Student Safety

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, I've been asking the Minister of Advanced Education what this government is specifically doing to address student safety on campus, and she's been worse than silent; she's been defensive.

Students and their families want specifics. Instead, they get vague references to thoughts and prayers and no action.

So I give the minister another chance: Why can she not name a single specific action taken in the name of student safety?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question and want to ask him if he knows what it feels like going door to door when people ask you what the worth of an Indigenous woman's body in a landfill is. As an Indigenous woman, what it felt like door-knocking and having to go home and talk to my daughter about whether or not people would look for her if she went missing.

I wonder if the member opposite, when he talks about public safety, thinks about the safety of the children in the streets of Selkirk and whether or not they will be taken care of and whether Indigenous women in this province will be valued for the people that they are.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Perchotte: At the U of M, there were multiple violent incidents within a few short weeks. Nothing from this minister.

Last week, students and staff at Brandon University held a march to express their concerns. Their demands included the ability to lock doors and cameras at the entrance to the university residence. This is easy to accomplish.

Can the minister at least commit to working to ensure these students' asks are completed?

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, we continue to work with every institution. There—I'm well aware of the asks at Brandon University, and I know the administration is working closely with everybody involved.

We take the safety of everybody seriously, and we don't pick and choose who we advocate for. We don't decide that some people are worth protecting and some people are not. We don't put a price on the value of an individual once they have been murdered. And we certainly don't take out an ad campaign to convince people that some folks are worth more than others.

And I would invite the honourable member to think about whether or not he's okay with the banner that he ran under and whether or not he'd be willing to stand up today and offer apologies and to—you know, there's a great thing that can—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Selkirk, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Perchotte: It is the minister's job to ensure that students have the tools and supports they need for success, yet she's been unable to give a single specific answer for students and their families that want to know what is being done to guarantee safety on campus. Students and staff at BU have just given her two actionable items.

As students continue to do the minister's job for her, will she at least commit to the completion of these suggestions?

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, it's clear with the tone that the member asks questions that he's learned nothing from the last year, including how to respect women, how to act collaboratively. And really, the amount of disrespect that's given every day—the number of times that that member has stood up and told me how to do my job is kind of incredible.

I would venture to the member opposite that he doesn't know what it's like to have to explain to a little girl why there are billboards up that say: Stand firm. What's that about, mom? What are those about? What are they standing firm about?

Well, they're standing firm about not going to look for Indigenous women who were murdered. Because don't you know that it's an important thing to stand up for—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Prairie Green Landfill Search Progress Update

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): It has been a long journey for the families fighting to search the Prairie Green landfill for the remains of their loved ones.

* (14:40)

Two years ago today, the Harris and Myran families received the news that began this process. Over the last two years of advocacy, hurtful and racial politicizations, the trial 'sendensing'—and sentencing of one of the most horrific serial murderers in our province's history. The determination and 'preserverance' of the families was remarkable.

Today was another step towards a resolution and reconciliation as the search continues.

Will the Premier tell the House more about the beginnings of this search and why it is a moment of healing for our province?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): It's always families first, and so I want to thank the families of Mercedes and Morgan for making sure that our province does the right thing.

Yesterday I was with them on the Prairie Green landfill, up that mountain, in ceremony, praying for a successful conclusion to the search. This morning I was shoulder to shoulder with the technicians who began searching the first landfill material from the targeted zone.

Everything that the PCs claimed in their election campaign last year has been systematically disproven. We're delivering this project under budget for a cost far less than they claimed in their advertising. We moved asbestos material safely and without issue. And the landfill material is intact enough for us to be able to identify it.

I'm going to table for the House a newspaper from the target date range, where we are searching for the remains.

When it comes to healing, the healing is needed because the members opposite did the worst thing that has ever been done in politics: running ads against the victims of serial killers.

But today, we are coming together. For the people of Manitoba, we move mountains—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

US Tariffs and the Carbon Tax Impact on the Agriculture Industry

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, the federal carbon tax will be increasing in April. This tax hike, along with the threatened 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian-grown products will create an economic tsunami for Manitoba agriculture producers.

When will this Agriculture Minister stand up for Manitoba farmers and say no more carbon tax for Manitobans?

Thank you.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Let me tell you that it was great to be at the AMM convention and talk to a number of agriculture producers about the subject.

But I do want to say—one of the things that I want to congratulate is the new chairman—or, president of the AMM, Kathy and the new vice-chairs, Scott and Brad.

But what's more important when we talk about election, Honourable Speaker—but even though they campaigned standing firm against the landfill search, it's an—impossible to know where the PCs stand.

Under the interim leadership of the member opposite, in an interview, he was asked by The Globe and Mail: the MLA for Lac du Bonnet, would you not say whether you're part of the—party has changed its position.

I know the—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, with many large agriculture employers doing business across Manitoba, such as Richardson Pioneer, Paterson Grain and Parrish & Heimbecker just to name a few, these companies employ thousands and thousands of Manitobans, both directly and indirectly.

Can the minister tell us if he has reached out to any of these industries and what these employee—employers are saying to him about the proposed increase to the carbon tax, as well as the 25 per cent tariffs that will go into effect within the next 49 days, coming from the United States; and if not, why not.

Mr. Kostyshyn: I'd like to reaffirm the announcement we made last week of \$15.4 million to 70 projects across the province of Manitoba, and it was my honour to be in attendance at Burnbrae Farms or—where

they received \$2 million through SCAP; Roquette, who received \$1.8 million; and Kimberly packaging of \$800,000; and Spent meats of \$350.

But I want to go back to—the fact is that: Does the member opposite believe in supporting the landfill search? As an MLA for the Portage la Prairie, has he apologized to the constituents of the Long Plain First Nations? Has the MLA for Borderland—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a final supplementary question.

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, companies such as Simplot and McCain as well as our Manitoba potato growers supply french fries to the US market. They're facing water issues, the carbon tax and the proposed 25 per cent tariffs being imposed by the US.

Other forward-thinking provinces such as Saskatchewan and Alberta are saying no to the carbon tax to help their companies stay competitive.

Why is this Ag Minister and his government chasing away good jobs when Manitobans need them most?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): We've been very clear. We oppose the federal carbon tax. We used our time during the election campaign last year to share that message with Manitobans. If this MLA believed in opposing the carbon tax, why didn't he talk about that during the election?

Instead, do you know what he talked about? He talked about attacking the families of the victims of one of the worst serial killers in the history of Manitoba.

The members opposite can heckle on the issue of searching the landfill. I invite them to go and share some words in front of the media today. If you have the courage of your convictions, repeat the message from last year. If you've changed your position, then share that with the public today. If you are remaining silent today so that you can criticize the landfill search again in the future, I would say that that is inappropriate and unbecoming.

Do you support us searching the Prairie Green landfill, yes or no?

Rural Crime Rate in Western Manitoba Blue Hills RCMP Staffing Support

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): In the spring of this year, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) walked into Riverdale Municipality and disbanded the

Riverdale police force after over 110 years of municipal policing.

Since then, his department has had a virtual meeting with them, and he has had a virtual meeting with a group of Westman municipal stakeholders, but he has taken zero action in terms of addressing RCMP staffing levels in Blue Hills RCMP district or rural crime rates in western Manitoba at all.

So what is this minister waiting for and when can we expect some action to improve rural crime rates and boost the Blue Hills RCMP staffing rates in western Manitoba?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): The member for Concordia, the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe), met with municipal leaders in question. Of course, the preamble is deeply flawed and misleading.

The members opposite, however, were part of a campaign that did the worst thing that has ever been done in the history of politics. When has a campaign ever attacked the victims of a serial killer? You would hope the answer would be never.

Unfortunately, because of the Manitoba PCs, political science students will always know that the members opposite did that in 2023. We have disproven every allegation that they made attacking the families, and we stand with them today, proud to announce that stage 4 is moving ahead.

The members opposite come here day after day to delay. You want substance? I'll put a substantive issue here forward. The Prairie Green landfill: Where do you stand on it? It was so important for them to talk about it this year, why can't they talk about it now?

What more is there to say? This was always the right—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The time for question period is expired.

PETITIONS

Phoenix School

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Phoenix School, a kindergarten to grade 5 school located in Headingley, has experienced consistent enrolment growth over the last several years. Enrolment is expected to reach 275 students in the next two years.

Because the school is now over capacity, the school division has had to install portable classrooms on site as of fall 2024.

For several consecutive years, the top capital priority of the St. James-Assiniboia School Division has been the renovation and expansion of Phoenix School.

In 2022, the Phoenix School expansion and renovation project was approved to proceed to the design phase. The project included, among other amenities, a new gymnasium, two new classrooms, a multi-purpose room and room for 74 child-care spaces.

In June 2024, the school division received notice from the provincial government that the project has been deferred. There is no guarantee if or when the project will move forward.

* (14:50)

There are currently hundreds of children on a wait-list for child care in Headingley. The daycare operator in Phoenix School has been told that they will continue to have space within the school for the 2024-2025 school year only, that further expansion of child-care space within the school is not possible and that space may be reduced moving forward due to the shortage of classrooms. If new space is not constructed as planned, many families may be left without child care.

It is critical that the expansion and renovation of Phoenix School proceed as planned in order to support the needs of students, teachers and families in the growing community of Headingley.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to proceed with the planned renovation and expansion of Phoenix School without further delay.

And this petition is signed by Emma Filion, L. Jamie Peterson, Rachelle Villeneuve and many, many other Manitobans.

Teaching Certification

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering

well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early/middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early/middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable minors—majors and minors and early/middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas.

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This petition is signed by Levi Robert Bruce Lazar, Brendan Kupchik, Brendan Macking [*phonetic*] and many more fine Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for the early and middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early and middle years credit requirements in approved teachable major and minor; and early and middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and the early and middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are

critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This petition has been signed by Manika Datta, Emerson Villelner, Rose Machado and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experience for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early-to-middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early-to-middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early-to-middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the facilities of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoban students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher

certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early/middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas.

* (15:00)

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This petition has been signed by Alex Penner, Gyron Polcharef [*phonetic*] and Carla Myketeka [*phonetic*] and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Breast Screening

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to 40.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive breast—sorry, don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught early are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This petition was signed by Ashlyn Cofton [*phonetic*], Heather Furtney, Chinsley [*phonetic*] Cumming and many, many other fine Manitobans.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further petitions?

Seeing none.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): I move, seconded by the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), that in accordance with subrule 39(1), the regular business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; specifically, the impact of the 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian products that the US President-elect plans to impose as of January 20, 2025.

Motion presented.

The Deputy Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), I should remind all members that under rule 39(2), the mover of a motion on matter of public—a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other recognized parties in the House are allowed not more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in Beuchesne, citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

Mr. Johnson: Every member of this Chamber understands the importance of exports to the Manitoba

economy and the impact that the threatened tariffs would have on sectors throughout Manitoba. Rough math, using last year's figures, places the impact of a 25 per cent tariff at or over \$2,600 per Manitoban. Last year, exports to America accounted for over \$15.5 billion across all sectors.

Agriculture products and implements, pharmaceutical and mechanical manufacturing and resource extraction are all industries that rely on exports to American markets. More importantly, they all employ Manitobans in pursuit of those markets. Small businesses all—already concerned, knowing that disruptions in existing trade deals will have immense impact and will almost assuredly force some to downsize and hurt Manitobans during the existing affordability crisis.

Manitobans need to know that we as their elected officials have a plan in conjunction with other jurisdictions to address and weather these threats. Manitobans need to know that their elected officials are prioritizing this attack on their livelihoods, their businesses and their province. This Premier (Mr. Kinew), threw out the playbook for economic development and left stakeholders asking for more. The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce remarked publicly, and I quote: Given the ever-changing global economic landscape, we hope the strategy is sufficiently flexible and adaptable, with a focus on building resilience in the face of future economic challenges.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, those challenges are on the horizon, and as of yet the provincial government has to release details on a plan. That's why it is an urgent matter for this House to discuss. The Premier has gone in front of media and said that this will plunge Canada into a recession. He has a responsibility to reveal his plans so that Manitobans can judge it at face value, or conversely, which is what I suspect, is that he has no plan: no plans for business, no plans for workers, no plans for Manitobans.

It is interesting that the Premier has only now found the political will to call for proper funding and staffing for rural RCMP officers. A year and a half ago, when the now-Premier stood in this very House and voted against calling on Ottawa to do their fair share, tells his true tale. It is telling that one of President-elect Trump's listed concerns is related to border security, and border security is one of the very few issues that this Premier has allowed his minister to speak on instead of talking himself.

* (15:10)

When the federal government announced a dramatic scaling back that staffed port of entry hours in Manitoba, the Premier finally allowed the minister to speak. The Minister of Public Service Delivery (MLA Sandhu) remarked that he was disappointed, but offered nothing substantive.

Twelve border crossings were adjusted in Manitoba, and 23 in the rest of the nation combined. Yet, there is no sign of that advocacy for border communities nor businesses that will be substantially affected by this change from the NDP government.

It was not even a year ago when the largest drug shipment in all the Prairies regions was discovered by officers in Boissevain, where it took over 400 kilograms of meth that was seized before it could hit the streets. Not a word from this Premier or his Cabinet, no support for the officers that made this bust. Certain members opposite would not even clap when the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk) recognized and celebrated those border officers.

Staffed ports of entry protect Manitobans and are an integral part of ensuring that the US does not retaliate with tariffs. The Premier has yet to put forward a plan to get the federal government to restore funding and operations. Manitobans need to know that we are doing all we can do to protect their jobs, to protect their livelihoods and to protect our economy.

This government has yet to articulate this and this House rises for winter soon. This is a matter of urgent public importance, as every day this current government twiddles its thumbs, more and more Manitobans become alarmed. Additionally, it is urgent to have this debate today.

This government has had the opportunity to bring this issue forward and everyone assumed they would; instead, they have shown it is not a priority. We now have a scarce few hours where this House sits before we rise.

The Premier met with the Council of the Federation, yet spoke without knowledge. He should have armed himself for these discussions with accurate and up-to-date information. Rather than reaching out to its members that represent communities along the borders, one of the most directly impacted, the ones who have fought tooth and nail against watering down the security at the borders for years, and he chose not to.

I remind the Premier, he has not a single border riding represented in his caucus and he has not reached out to myself or any of my colleagues to gauge the concerns of those Manitobans.

Again, I remind the House, if the US imposes a 25 per cent tariff on imports from Canada, it could have a significant impact on Manitoba's economy as the US is Manitoba's largest trading partner. Agriculture exports are a huge part of our GDP: roughly 8 per cent. Manitoba relies heavily on agriculture exports like pork, canola, wheat and soybeans; 25 per cent tariff would make these products more expensive in the US, reducing their competitiveness.

Everything we do as elected officials has ripple effects. Lower demands could hurt farmers' incomes, affecting rural economies and potentially leading to job losses in agriculture and related sectors.

Manitoba has a very large manufacturing sector. Manitoba's manufacturing sector includes machinery, transportation equipment and food processing. Tariffs will make exports less attractive to US buyers and there will be an impact on jobs. Reduced demand may lead to downsizing in manufacturing and we also have a massive transportation and logistics economy because of our exports.

Manitoba is a major transportation hub, particularly in Winnipeg. Reduced exports could decrease freight activity, impact trucking and rail industries. Lower volumes may lead to higher costs for companies reliant on cross-border trade.

Small- and medium-sized enterprises are heavily dependent on US markets and might struggle to absorb the increased cost, leading to reduced margins or potential closers—closures. There will be an overall economic uncertainty. Businesses might delay investment decisions due to the unpredictability of trade policies. Tariffs could weaken the Canadian dollar, making imports costlier for Manitoba residents and businesses.

Honourable Speaker, today we need to talk about possible mitigation efforts, and that's why this is a matter of urgent and public importance. Manitoba's economy, with its strong export orientation, is particularly vulnerable to protectionism measures like tariffs, emphasizing the need for adaptive strategies.

Right now, the strongest ally Manitobans could have in averting these tariffs is Governor Doug Burgum, who is—the President-elect has identified as his nominee for Secretary of the Interior.

Governor Burgum was previously inducted into the Order of the Buffalo Hunt for his efforts to provide COVID vaccines to Manitoba essential workers, highlighting not only the understanding of our province

and his state's shared prosperity but also an interest in his neighbour's success, which is us.

In fact, Governor Burgum was even included in the President-elect Trump and Prime Minister Trudeau's meeting Friday evening.

So, thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker. I'm sure no member of this House can stand in their place and argue that a threat of 25 per cent tariffs to the 15 and a half billion US dollars that it—represents our export market is anything but a matter of urgent and public importance.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak about this issue, which is important.

We know that the potential of, you know, 25 per cent tariffs from the United States, our largest trading partner, would have a significant impact on our economy here in Manitoba. And that's why our government has taken direct action immediately in the—following announcement that's come to—from President-elect Trump.

And so I think you've seen us take a very—first of all, a collaborative approach, working with our other provincial and territorial partners. We know that this is something that's going to affect folks right across the country—industries, individuals right across the country. And we know that we have a lot more strength when we work with our regional partners across the nation.

So to that end, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) got on the call with premiers and leaders across the country to work on a collaborative approach. I think that not only will articulate the needs and advocate on behalf of Manitoba businesses and industry leaders, but also to ensure that we have a very constructive approach for folks across the country.

As well, we've done the job of advocating and articulating our viewpoints on Manitoba when it comes to the potential tariffs. President-elect Trump has mentioned the tariffs and at the same time mentioned national security concerns and addressed, you know, issues around drug issues and the potential impact that it's having on American citizens. And I think it's important for us to look at how we, as Canada, can also address those concerns to the betterment of our own people here in our country and to strengthen that relationship with our US trading partners.

And so I think it's calling on us to ensure that we not only meet our 2 per cent GDP target for funding for NATO, which I think is 'essential' and we should be doing that as a country, and we are advocating to the federal government to meet those targets.

But I think we should also advocate to them, and we are advocating to them, to increase RCMP presence across the country. This will help us to tackle the issues around drug trafficking and the import of drugs across the border, US and Canada, but to also ensure that we are having a safe and secure border. We know that a safe and secure border along that great, I think, treasure of ours, that US-Canada border, is something that's very important. Not only will that help us tackle any legal issues around illegal immigration, but also, I think it helps us to strengthen our commerce and our trade.

And so much trade goes across the border, not just in goods shipped out of Manitoba, as Manitoba being a manufacturing and agricultural hub, but also folks who travel across the border for work each and every day.

And so we know that this relationship is an integral one. We know that upwards of 70 per cent of goods that are exported out of Manitoba go to our largest trading partner, the United States.

* (15:20)

And even prior to this, you know, potential-potentiality of a 25 per cent tariff, you know, we recognize as a government the important relationship with the United States.

That's why our first international trip as a government was as the lead—as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) led our delegation to Washington to go and build strong relationships with our US trading partners. I was fortunate enough to be part of that delegation, where we took folks from Agriculture, from Business, from Transportation, from critical minerals strategy, and we went with our adviser to US trade, former ambassador and former premier Gary Doer, who led us and used his wise experience to help inform us and ensure that we had a very productive trip, to meet with folks on both sides of the aisle, ensure that we're advocating on the best interests of Manitobans.

Now, I was lucky enough to have the perspective of folks in the agricultural world who are very articulate in advocating for pork, in particular, and in many other products that have cross-border implications if tariffs were to come into place.

And so, as we continue to ensure that we take strong action, an action, mind you, honourable Deputy Chair, that we are already in process of doing, it's important to be very clear with Manitobans and with Canadians that the steps that we're taking are already under way, that the work of ensuring our economy is—continues to flourish and be productive under our watch is our responsibility and it's something that we take very seriously. And action is undergoing already as we speak.

And with respect to the idea of the MUPI, I think it's very important that we—and Manitobans know our government is already working on this important issue. We take it seriously. We're willing to work in a constructive way and at the same time advocate for Manitobans' best interests, both to the federal government and to international partners like President-elect Trump, as well as other partners around the globe who are interested in doing business and trading with Manitoba companies.

And so, with that, honourable Deputy Chair, I'll cede the floor, and I'll let you know that Manitobans know that we are very concerned and continue to work constructively on this issue, and we look forward to listening to Manitobans, and particularly those in the business community, and seeing how we can constructively move their best interests forward in a positive way.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): On November 26—sorry?

The Deputy Speaker: Independent members don't have the ability to speak to MUIPIs.

Oh, the honourable Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Johnson: Given the importance of this topic, I would seek leave for the member for Fort Garry to speak to the matter of urgent and public importance.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there leave for the member to—from Fort Garry to speak to the MUPI?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: No. I hear a no. Leave has been denied.

I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on the motion proposed by the honourable Opposition House Leader for a matter of urgent public importance. The 90-minute notice required prior to

the start of routine proceedings by subrule 39(1) was provided and I thank the member.

Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. Crucially, there must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward. The reports in the media of additional tariffs on Canadian products are indeed serious and worthy of consideration and discussion. However, my duty in this moment is to determine if there are other opportunities for debate on such matters.

With that in mind, I must note that members have had several opportunities to raise this matter. They could raise it as a member statement. They could ask questions on this topic during oral questions, as some already have. They could have spoken on this matter as part of the Throne Speech debate. They could also now use their grievance to speak to this matter. These opportunities will continue to be available to members every sitting day in the House.

Accordingly, I do not believe the motion meets the criteria as a matter of urgent public importance, as there are other opportunities to debate this matter. With the greatest of respect then, I must rule this motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

The House will now proceed to grievances.

Seeing no grievances, the House will now proceed to orders of the day, government business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): I'd like to resume debate on the all-party committee.

DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT MOTION

The Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that we will be resuming debate on the government motion moved by the honourable Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine), called for—calling for a special committee on local journalism and the amendment moved by the Official Opposition House Leader.

The debate on the amendment is standing in the name of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk), who has 23 minutes remaining. The honourable member for Turtle Mountain—is there leave for the matter to remain standing?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Leave has been denied.

The floor is open for debate. The—sorry? Debate on the amendment.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Obviously the member is having a connectivity issue, and I believe, you know, with our rules that allow people to participate virtually, we should have a little bit of consideration if they're having issues connecting.

So I ask—again, I seek leave to have the member stand when he returns and can get connected again, his 23 minutes remaining on the clock.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there leave for the member to have his 23 minutes once his connectivity has been restored?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I hear a no. Leave has been denied.

The debate is open.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of the amendment to the motion to create a special committee on local journalism.

I believe this is an important step for ensuring that our local media can continue to hold governments accountable, provide transparency and inform Manitobans about the issues that affect their daily lives.

As members of this House, we all have a duty to support the free press—no capitals on that—and to recognize the vital role that journalism plays in our democracy.

Local journalism is a cornerstone of our society. It is through local media that citizens stay informed about government decisions, community events and important developments that impact their lives. Local journalists are often the first to uncover stories that might otherwise go unnoticed; stories that can expose injustices, highlight the needs of our communities and keep our governments transparent by supporting—and by supporting this committee, and the amendment to ensure everybody is included on this committee, we

are supporting the very principals of accountability and openness that we all stand for.

Now, honourable Deputy Speaker, I think many people in this House, and—know that I've been involved in community newspapers, or was involved in community newspapers here in Manitoba for 40 years, so I think that I'm certainly qualified to speak on the role of media in rural Manitoba, and I believe it's vitally important that the community newspapers, ethnic newspapers across Manitoba stay vibrant and healthy moving forward.

Now the—to that extent, sometimes I hear the word subsidies thrown around, and let's be clear, I'm not a proponent of subsidies. I think that that skews the marketplace and doesn't do justice to the fine operators of community newspapers across Manitoba.

* (15:30)

I think that all newspapers have ever wanted in Canada is to be recognized by governments as a valuable tool for advertising.

I think that in today's world, there's so many more opportunities for government to advertise in. And so often, messages are placed on social media, Google, Facebook, things like that, and a lot of the money from provincial and federal budgets are going to these giants who contribute nothing—nothing—to the Manitoba economy.

Meanwhile you have newspapers, radio stations, daily newspapers, ethnic newspapers, who contribute to the fabric of life here in Manitoba. Honourable Deputy Speaker, these newspapers don't run themselves. They have employees. They have office space that they rent or own. They contribute to the Manitoba economy, and I truly think that their voice needs to be heard.

And by including reference in the amendment to all the papers, radio stations, that serve all of our ethnic communities in Manitoba here is very noteworthy that this side of the House recognizes all the ethnic publications and radio stations here in Manitoba, and all we're asking to do is to amend the motion to include that and move ahead.

Honourable Speaker, community newspapers are a business first and foremost. I bought my first community newspaper when I was 19 years old in the community of Shoal Lake, Manitoba. And that was, like I say, I think back in 1978. I was a young guy then. And at the age of 19, I had worked for the newspaper in my community while going to high

school, developed a love for informing the community of what was happening in it, reporting on stories, but also selling advertising and making a business out of it.

I went to work for the Manitoba Telephone System for a year and a half. Came home one Christmas a little bit homesick, I guess, and went to the owner who had bought the paper a few years earlier from an old fellow in Shoal Lake. He came from Ontario, this other guy, and he decided he—I said to him, would you like to sell the newspaper? He says, let me think about it. So, couple days later he called me back and he said, yes, I'd like to sell it to you.

So, honourable Deputy Speaker, the deal was struck and at the age of 19 years of age, I was a community newspaper publisher in Shoal Lake, Manitoba. And I must say, the community embraced me. I was a young guy, but I think they took me under their wing and figured, hey, here's a guy that wants to live and work in the community, establish a business and report on the news that's so vital to communities.

And, honourable Deputy Speaker, I think that there's a definite distinction between the news in community newspapers and ethnic newspapers than there is in perhaps our big city dailies. I would submit that the only time the big city dailies care about small towns in Manitoba is if there's a tragic event or a scandal. Where community newspapers are owned by local people, for the most part, people who live and work in their communities and see these same people they report on, on the streets every day.

So to be a community newspaper publisher is very far removed from being the publisher of, say, the Winnipeg Free Press, where you can sit in a fancy office and maybe not meet people on a day-to-day basis.

So, honourable Deputy Speaker, that happened in 1979 in—or, yes, 1979. In 19—let me think here—sorry. I'm losing track of time, I'm a little—that was 1977, I'm sorry. It was January 1977. In 1979, a newspaper publisher in Rosssburn, again, Harry Aylwin, great fellow. Worked good with him. He was getting up in age and he thought maybe this young fellow in Shoal Lake might want to buy my newspaper. So we made a deal. So I owned the Rosssburn Review in 1979.

So we had two newspapers now. Hiring more people. People had to staff a Rosssburn office, and it worked well. Rosssburn, as you may be aware, is 20 minutes from Shoal Lake and in the—it's now in the

fine constituency of the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk). So—

An Honourable Member: Rossburn Review.

Mr. Nesbitt: Rossburn Review, that's what it was. The minister knows that over there. He's heard that name over the past.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, 1984—the Birtle Eye-Witness. Again, owned by a person in Birtle who was approaching retirement age and, again, we'd worked together with her over the years. She decided she wanted to sell their newspaper. So, again, came to the conclusion that that would be a good fit.

Again, Birtle is 20 minutes from Shoal Lake as well. So you can see the pattern here, it's kind of a—

An Honourable Member: Ten minutes from Lazare.

Mr. Nesbitt: —regional area.

Yes, and the member reminds me that St-Lazare is in the Birtle coverage area. And St-Lazare played a big role in the newspaper's coverage in that area. We'd cover the hockey teams. The St. Lazare Outlaws, we know very well. Our good friends Martin Dupont and all the boys over there. Great hockey teams over the years in St-Lazare. And again, you know, we were there with the cameras to take the pictures and record league championships and things like that.

So community newspapers are like a history book, as the minister says. You know, he remembers all these things. He remembers these names, and the more names in community newspapers, the more successful they are. Grandparents love to read about their kids playing hockey, the 4-H clubs, things like that. So again, the word—they're called community newspapers for a reason: they report the news of the community.

I guess the last newspaper I ended up buying in Manitoba was the Hamiota Echo. The Hamiota Echo—Hamiota is 20 minutes south of Shoal Lake and approximately, I think in the early '90s, it fell on hard times and went into receivership. So you know, it—again, it became a natural fit, so made a deal with the receiver and the Hamiota Echo came into the stable of four newspapers, you know, operating in a regional area.

Some of the news content would be the same because communities cross boundaries. The hockey teams play against each other. People travel to different communities. Communities loved it because they could run an ad in another paper to bring people to the farm machine redealerships in Shoal Lake, or the car

dealership in Birtle would run ads in all the other papers to bring people into Birtle to buy the good GM products that they sold in Birtle back in the day. Well, they still sell them in Birtle, honourable Deputy Speaker.

So those four papers, you know, ran successfully until about 1997-98. And as it became more regionalized, we decided to develop a product that would come out once a month included as a second section in all those newspapers called Crossroads. So that newspaper sort of did more feature stories on the area and contained advertising maybe from a little further afield, where the advertisers wanted to reach a bigger market by advertising in this section. So, again, very successful things like that.

Back in the early 2000s, then, the decision came that perhaps we needed to really regionalize the newspaper. So we took our all four titles, merged them together and established a newspaper—a truly regional newspaper called Crossroads This Week. That newspaper exists today, and it serves a market from the Saskatchewan border to Minnedosa and from the national park down to Sioux Valley. So it serves a pretty big geographic area. It serves the majority of my constituency, honourable Deputy Speaker, and much of the constituency of the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk).

So the company then had an opportunity to purchase another newspaper in Erickson, Manitoba. It was called the South Mountain Press. Again, another small community newspaper that really stresses local news, right on the edge of the national park, circulation into the national park, picked up—it was a free paper. I didn't mention, the other newspapers are paid circulation newspapers.

So I think the industry went to a lot of free newspapers back in the 2000s. And we didn't go that way. The thought with free newspapers is you would send them further afield, you might carry more flyers and things like that. You assumed your readership was higher.

* (15:40)

I would submit that your readership might not have been higher; your circulation was. Paid circulation newspapers have to be subscribed to, and I think the true measure of what you're doing with a newspaper is if people pay money to subscribe to it, and I just want to thank the fine citizens of the area that supported the newspaper over the years and continue to support it today.

So today my son operates the newspapers in western Manitoba: the Crossroads This Week, the South Mountain Press. And then, after he purchased the newspaper from me in 2018, the newspaper company, he—in 2022 he purchased The Minnedosa Tribune. So that's the final sort of piece of the puzzle for the area there and it's—we certainly have writers in all those communities. My son has writers in all these communities. There's ad sales done in all these communities, and the main production facility is in Shoal Lake where it's rather centralized.

So community newspapers started to struggle, I think, a little bit in the 2000s. That's when the big media companies decided they were going to invest in these small newspapers because they'd seen some pretty good bottom lines across Canada. And they bought up, snatched up community newspapers from people who wanted to retire. But then they sort of treated it like their own piggy bank. They would take all these profits—rather than reinvesting in the communities like local publishers that live and work in the community, have a vested interest in their community and area and in their employees—and took all those big corporate profits to Toronto, basically, Vancouver, places like that.

So, when we had an economic downturn there, I think in the mid-2000s, perhaps, that's when perhaps advertising sales started to drop in community newspapers from a national point of view, and that really hurt the chain publications. It really didn't do a lot for their communities and maybe lost some of their local community advertising. When the national advertising dropped off, these newspapers then started to suffer.

So what did these big chains do first and foremost? They started cutting staff. Lot of chopping done, and I think you still see that in the media today sometimes. I think CJOB just had some layoffs here a week or 10 days ago. And so the big chains, of course, driven by profit and their shareholders, had to cut costs because of declining advertising revenues. And that decline was, you know—national advertising, federal government advertising. The big three auto makers started to put more of their money into web dollars, and provincial governments started to reduce their advertising. So it all added up, honourable Deputy Speaker, that community newspapers perhaps weren't doing as well as they used to. The ones that were owned by big chains were doing poorer, so.

Now, fast forward to the last few years, and you found that a number of newspapers in Manitoba have closed. And I would submit that the newspapers that

have closed were all owned by chains; again, a further rationalization of lack of advertising dollars. They cut everything to the bone. There was nothing left but to close the publication or find someone to buy it for pennies on the dollar.

I think, you know, we can find examples here across Manitoba. Ken Waddell, a good friend of mine from the Neepawa Banner & Press. Ken found an opportunity from Glacier Media to purchase their Virden operation because, quite honestly, they were suffering in Virden and bleeding ink, pardon the expression, or bleeding red ink, I guess. And I think perhaps the Virden paper was in danger of being—closing, honourable Deputy Speaker.

And I might say the good folks of Virden are part of my constituency, and I was very excited to see Ken Waddell and his wife Chris take over the Virden Empire-Advance. Ken is one of the stalwart newspaper publishers here in Manitoba. He also operates the Rivers Banner, and I think he would back up a hundred per cent of what I'm saying here today that, you know, local media, ethnic papers, all the ethnic media here in Manitoba, radio stations that service Manitoba, they all need advertising to survive. And without advertising, the future of media here in Manitoba could perhaps be in jeopardy.

I think that, you know, as I've said, local media and news outlets perform an important function in our communities and provide a valuable service to Manitobans. I can't tell you how many times I've delivered newspapers to communities in my area, driving them around to post offices to make sure they're there on publication day and to have people actually waiting in the post office for their newspaper. And, you know, I must commend the good folks at Canada Post and rural postal outlets that they don't wait to put the papers in the boxes; they want to put them in as quick as they can because people are—sit there demanding them. And it's truly special to see how much, you know, residents of rural Manitoba especially appreciate their community newspaper week in, week out.

And, Honourable Speaker, besides, you know, publishing community newspapers, I also played a—I had the opportunity to really play a role in the industry. I served on the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association board, I don't know for how many years, 25 years perhaps out of my 40, maybe more, not exactly sure; I wasn't keeping track. But I held all the office positions in the Manitoba association and was fortunate to be president for a couple two-year terms

at various times. From that, I went to the national board and served on the national board for, I think, 10 or 12 years, again, becoming the president of the Canadian Community Newspapers Association, as it was known at that time, that represented 640 newspapers across Canada, community papers, ethnic papers, all papers all across Canada. Had the opportunity to visit every province, make many more friends in every province, and still, still to this day, have so many friends in the industry and love to talk to them and stay in touch with them.

To that end, there was a summit held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, a few months ago about the future of newspapers in Canada and what could be done to reinforce what we see as an institution that needs to be maintained. I think losing any more community newspapers, rural, radio or ethnic papers would be criminal. I really believe that everybody can't get their news from Facebook and Google, nor do they want to.

So my son was one of the two publishers chosen from Manitoba to go to Charlottetown and participate in this symposium with people from the United States, people from all across Canada. He was joined by Lana Meier from Stonewall—publishes papers up in the Interlake.

They spent three days looking at the industry and what could be done, and I want to tell you there was no talk about subsidies. My son said subsidies weren't even in the question. Obviously, I think newspapers are looking for a fair shake from Google and from Facebook. Google is playing ball with the federal government in terms of compensating the media for what they—what their algorithms take from newspapers. They're working to, you know, to compensate newspapers for that. Facebook is still holding out. As you know, you won't see any links to news stories on Facebook these days, and I think that they're hoping that Facebook comes to their senses at some point, as well, perhaps with pressure from the federal government.

Another interesting development down there was a small publisher in Alberta, publisher of the Crowsnest Pass in Alberta, has partnered with huge legal firms in Toronto to launch a class-action suit against these big conglomerates as well. And I think that that suit has been successful, and I think these big conglomerates are appealing it right now.

* (15:50)

So I think all newspapers are looking for—and radio stations—is a fair shake. I think they—I think the importance of them needs to be recognized by governments—provincial, federal—and I don't think earmarking a percentage of government advertising to go to the community press—ethnic press—and radio stations is a bad thing.

Where else would the government—the provincial government—want to advertise in? They need to get their message to rural Manitobans. They need to get their message to the suburbs here in Winnipeg where the community newspapers are run by the Winnipeg Free Press.

I think that—what better way than putting them out in front of people in newspapers? I don't think that Manitobans should have to hunt for news or hunt for advertising about programs that the government advertise—government needs to advertise. It needs to be put out in front of them, and I would submit that supporting the media by advertising in the media is the best thing a government can do. I think that there's certainly been chatter about that in the industry as well. I think Premier Ford in Ontario has taken strides; he didn't strike an all-party committee, he acted. He told Crown corporations, government departments in Ontario—he earmarked a certain percentage of advertising to go to the community press.

And, you know, I think that there's not likely many MLAs in here that won't argue the value of their community newspapers. In the city—I see columns from MLAs in the city papers, you know, on a rotating basis. In the country—I think the majority of us have columns in the rural papers as well.

They welcome our input. They carry government news releases. All they're looking for is a fair shake back from the government in terms of advertising.

And again, I'm stressing, no subsidies—advertising. I don't think the public would be in favour of subsidizing newspapers. I think whatever the government can do to encourage citizens to subscribe to newspapers, read newspapers—and I think if the public knew that they could get all their advertising messages, they could get all their information they need on what the government's doing, what's happening in this Legislature from community newspapers or on the radio, I think that that is the best thing the government could do for the industry.

And I realize we're not advocating today for the industry or anything like that. We're talking about the amendment to make sure that nobody's left out—

nobody's left out—when it comes to this all—to what this all-party media—committee can discuss. I think that the all-party committee is certainly something that's very interesting, and I think that asking for the views of Manitobans on how they see the industry, how advertisers see the industry and, you know, talking to Manitobans where they want to see the messages, where they want to read their news, where they want to see their advertising—it is important thing.

And I would expect that this committee would have the mandate to represent all media here in Manitoba, and I recognize the original motion talks about cultural media and things, but I think our amendment makes it more inclusive, and I think that's important, and I would hope that the members on the other side agree with that—that we're just trying to make it inclusive, and we're not talking to oppose anything here.

I think it's a listening exercise. I think this committee will likely—I would hope would travel to all areas of Manitoba—have some public input that way. I think you're going to get public input. I think you're going to see communities rallying, chambers of commerce rallying citizens to say: Yes, our community newspapers, our local radio stations are really, really important, and we need to ensure they survive.

And, honourable Deputy Speaker, you know, the way people consume newspapers is different right now, maybe. Like, the printed products are—there's still the diehards that love the printed product, and I'm one of them. You know, I get up in the morning, and I read the headlines in the Winnipeg Free Press; I read their sites. But I can't wait to get a printed copy of the newspaper. I guess maybe it's the ink in my blood, I don't know, but we have many, many people like that in rural Manitoba.

Now, newspapers have adapted over the years, so, you know, our papers can be read on smartphones now. A lot of our papers send composite PDF editions to subscribers further afield. For example, people that—snowbirds that go to Florida; people like the MLA for Red River, who goes to Florida. You know, he—I'm sure he reads his community newspapers every week, because they get sent to him down there in a format that he can keep track of what's happening in his constituency.

So it's very important that the public have the ability to consume the news in whatever way they want, whether it be on websites, printed product or PDF editions. But it still remains, honourably Deputy Speaker, they're still looking for news that matters.

And community newspapers are very, very important for providing news that matters. And supporting community newspapers with advertising dollars will ensure that news content continues to be generated locally and continues to be read by Manitobans all across this great province.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to thank all my friends and colleagues in the newspaper industry who have—I've had the opportunity to work with over the years, whether here in Manitoba or Canada. And I must say I'm not out of the newspaper business. I'm still a partner in a newspaper in—newspaper operation in Saskatchewan that has seven newspapers out there, seven community newspapers that I'm very proud of, operating out of the Melville area, again, providing news from the Saskatchewan border to almost Regina.

So I still keep my hands in the newspaper business that way, talk to my managing partner all the time, and I'm very bullish on the future of community newspapers, but I think anything the province can do to support community newspapers, radio stations, daily newspapers, by advertising is the way to go.

I just want to leave one thing in people's minds: let's not talk subsidies, let's talk how we can support newspapers, and I think this all-party committee, travelling across the province with representation from both sides of this House, is a great way to start this process.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I do have to say that I'm extremely impressed with the knowledge, depth and breadth, that the MLA for Riding Mountain has in regards to the newspaper industry. It's a very difficult act to follow, honourable Deputy Speaker, to have somebody come ahead of you who spoke so eloquently about an industry that matters to most people in our province.

And for the member from Riding Mountain not only to speak so well about it, but to have such knowledge and actually first-hand account on the industry and what it takes, and I'm very grateful that his son has followed in his footsteps. So hats off to the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) for that.

We heard a—over our debate here about our proposed motion, several times, the impact that the local newspapers or the media print has on the people of Manitoba. And I'd just like to talk a little bit about the effects that it has on my community of Selkirk, representing the RM of St. Andrews and the city of Selkirk.

Going back over 100 years ago was the start of the Selkirk Enterprise. The Selkirk Enterprise was a local newspaper that started in their building on Clandeboye Avenue in Selkirk. And that paper was held within a family for generations. It distributed the printed word of the day on a weekly basis throughout the community.

As I attended school for grade 11 in the Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive Secondary School, the Selkirk Enterprise became our paper. And it's what gave the local residents knowledge of what was happening.

* (16:00)

There was a tremendous number of sports articles in there talking about what was happening at the high school level, from volleyball tournaments to the water polo team to the track and field events that went on. But it also highlighted our hockey players, and Selkirk has had a number of professional hockey players come out of the area. And it's nice when you can actually watch somebody's career be recognized at an early age, whether it be the Junior B level and onwards up throughout their career, and eventually making it to the NHL.

And without that connection that you have with the local papers, many people would not know. They wouldn't know about the certain individuals in our community that step up above and beyond.

And those papers over the years have given employment; they gave opportunities. They gave places for people to, prior to this day and age of media technology, were able to advertise things for sale in their buy-and-sell columns and to put little advertisements in the paper to advertise their business.

And at 16 years old when I started my company in a—in lawn care system, where we would fertilize and weed-control lawns, the only place that I could advertise that was—competitively enough that I could afford it, was in the local paper. And without that local paper, that small little business I had would not have been a success.

And I often try to seize every opportunity I have, and I got to know the family that ran the Selkirk Enterprise at the time. And the family that was running it and working in there, they had asked me if I would be available to help out to pick up and deliver the newspaper. And although I was a very young child, I had a paper route with The Winnipeg Tribune. Some people might remember that from days gone by.

And then eventually, I had a paper route with the Winnipeg Free Press, and I can attest that, as a young child delivering the Saturday papers, it was a arduous task to do. They were—the Saturday paper was the big paper and often had to do it with two satchels, one on each shoulder, to get through your route.

But getting back to the Selkirk Enterprise family, they asked if I could help out and pick up a paper. And in memories of the days as a child, when I used to go and pick up papers and deliver them individually to the consumers at each house, this was a little bit of a different scenario.

I would leave from school, make my way over to the Selkirk Enterprise where I would get a hold of their van, which they had a very large van at the time. And I would drive into Winnipeg with another member of their family and we would go to a place called Webb Graphics.

And Webb Graphics was at the time a large printer of most things media print at the time. It was—they did things like the Buy and Sell, they did the Auto Trader, and many other things. So scheduled on a weekly basis, me and my colleague would arrive there where we would load bundles and bundles and bundles of newspaper. And I believe at the time, we were somewhere around 20,000 papers we would pick up in the bundles.

We would—after leaving Webb Graphics, we would treat ourselves to a couple of burgers at the local McDonald's on McPhillips and then make our way north to Selkirk. Along the way, we had a very large list of establishments that required the paper, so we would stop and drop off in bulk numbers of papers at different gas stations, restaurants, malls, many different stores.

And the landscape back then was quite different. A lot of the local retailers that we have back in the day then are now no longer there. They have been pushed out by corporate businesses or they have retired and moved on and shuttered their doors and something else has come back in its place.

But we used to stop at the places. And I remember distinctly, as we would travel in and we would stop at the local gas stations or the St. Andrews grocery store along the way, how excited people were to see the paper.

The Speaker in the Chair

Everybody wanted to get that first copy of the paper. It was incredible. When we were—we'd be pulling up,

and if we were late, 10 or 15 minutes late, because of roads or maybe some delays out of our control, if we would show up, people would be in the store and they'd say, you're late, I've been here waiting for my paper.

And I did that run for probably about six to eight months. Eventually, after that, I moved into Winnipeg, which just made the job impossible for me to get back and forth. But I do remember the time, and I was proud to be involved at the paper.

And on more than one occasion, they would ask me to accompany one of the reporters. And it was a small family, small group of reporters that would go out. And I would accompany the reporter; either I would take some photos of the event or I would be talking to the people at the event, just trying to get information as to where the reporters should go. And I got to see many, many different things.

I remember going to the Beausejour snowmobile races and that was something extremely unique, to being in the centre of the oval taking pictures and being amongst the media. At that point, I felt like we were in stardom to have that accessibility to where the media personnel go.

And every person in the media was distinguished, they were articulate. They spoke about their communities in a highly regarded fashion. And I seen a lot of these members attending community events and even getting involved as volunteers to help out.

One of the members that I recall distinctively was in 2010. I was involved in a community marketing group that was trying to give some recognition to the 100th anniversary of the Lockport lock and dam, which we called the Lockport Dam Festival.

Now, throughout that festival at that time, we had—the Enterprise had since changed names and sold out and it became the Selkirk Journal. The Selkirk Journal had many, many people involved there.

They created a lot of things; these local newspapers gave back to the community all the time. They created events at—more of a community housing event where people would come to. They would let the people in business know of all the events that were happening. They would come around and ask if you could participate in advertising for those events, but also take participation in the event.

And I remember when—in 2010, at the Lockport Dam Family Festival, when we started working, we had Brett Mitchell, who was starting up a new paper.

And it's a very arduous task to try to develop a brand new paper from scratch. Brett was a very well-respected—Brett was very well respected in the community, and he went—*[interjection]* He'd always wears a hat, as my colleague here reminds me.

Now, as Brett was starting the paper under the banner of big and colourful media, it was called the Selkirk Record, and one of the first things that he did for his first edition, he gave free advertising as sponsorship to our organization. And those are the kind of levels of things that these small community papers bring forward all the time to the community. They continually give back to the community. They reach out and they let people know that they're embedded in the community and they take participation in the things that matter in our community.

* (16:10)

So Brett went ahead and he advertised for us and gave us a large dollar value of media attention in his new paper. I remember at the time, many of the people around the table were very thankful, and we hoped that Brett would make it in such a competitive market for the area of Selkirk. And that paper serves all of St. Andrews and Lockport—on the east side of Lockport—East Selkirk, St. Clements—it serves a large area. We were hoping he would make it. We were hoping that we would have nice representation for two papers, and we had that for many years.

It was many, many years later that the Selkirk Journal stopped their publications. And we were very disappointed in that. We found that both papers brought tremendous value. And as my colleague from Riding Mountain can attest, all print publications in your community will bring something to the table, and losing one was very difficult for us.

Thankfully, the Selkirk Record stepped up even more. They recognize the importance of the paper, and they went and they expanded. And they have several different publications throughout the province.

But what was unique is when I walked into the building of the old Selkirk Enterprise, which was now the Selkirk Record—the Selkirk Record is operating in the old building—they gave me a tour, and they showed me that they had the old presses there—the old offset letter presses. And I guess it comes with experience when you look at that and you can read those words as fast backwards and—in reverse typeset than you can forward. And that was a craft back then.

And nowadays, we go on our digital media, and we squish stuff, and we move it, and we change

font size, and we load a picture up. This was all done manually. That artistic craft where somebody would sit down there and figure out the font size and lay it out and put the blocking in there so they could start running those papers through, and they would take a look at it and make sure it was perfect.

Now, every pressman that I've ever met over the years has such tremendous pride in his job. I've got a great friend of mine who was a pressman for many years, operating these big presses, the Heidelberg presses, and on and on. And they will tell you the importance of the print newspaper, especially in the smaller communities.

And I know that even as a young 16-year-old dropping those papers off and even today when the papers come in, whether it be at my house or my business, I have to search who got the paper first, because as soon as I see it sticking out the mailbox, they've squirreled it away, and they're trying to read it in the corner. And everybody is looking for a little bit of something different in the paper. Some people zero in on the local community stuff, some people zero in on the sports, some people zero in on the news.

And when you read things like the letter to the editors where local people have an opportunity to say what's on their mind and they send these letters in, they could be praising the local government, they could be complaining about the local government, they could be talking about things that we need to do in our community, or they can talk about something personal that they wanted to bring forward.

But those letters to the editor were relevant to the people that received that paper. Getting a letter to the editor from somebody across the country might be entertaining, but it probably would not be relevant. And with these local papers, the relevancy of what they publish on a sometimes weekly basis—sometimes there's a little publication that goes out on a monthly basis—but the weekly papers are the ones that seem to keep the local activities alive.

And as we have more groups in Canada, and more groups, whether they be ethnic or community groups or religious groups, they want to get their message out, and they want to make sure that they can reach their target audience, and they need to have the ability to have print publications.

And they don't have to start on those old, offset letter presses. And those are a difficult thing to work with at the best of times, trying to see something totally backwards. As a young student in grade 9, we

took a little bit of offset printing, and when I was told that we had to make it totally backwards and try to copy the newsprint of the day, I went out and I totally did everything backwards, and he ended up with a nice big poster: instead of Led Zeppelin, it was 'del nileppez.' So it's something that you have to make sure that you get correctly.

And over the years you see how things change in our—in the industry, of the newsprint and things go to digital systems, costs become more. You're not buying bottles of ink to put through there; you're buying toners and cartridges that you're printing on a local level or you're getting papers produced like it was over at Webb Graphics.

You have to have a region or community. You have to make sure that that publication stays alive. And I have relatives in the Interlake that they can't wait to get their Interlake Spectator. We know that The Winkler Morden Voice is another paper out there that people can't wait to get, the Stonewall tribune, and it goes on and on of all the different papers out there.

Now, companies starting out when—in 2000, when I started our business that manufactures buildings, fabric-covered and metal-clad buildings, we came up with a name: Kodiak Shelters. And we wanted to advertise, and we called our local print media people in there and the guy says, where's your logo? You got to have a logo. And I said I'm going to—yes, I'm trying to figure it out. Kodiak, the big bear, we want to get something that represents it. And he came back and says, I've got something for you, I will give you. So for the last 24 years, the Kodiak Shelter Systems' logo was given to me by a member of the newspaper. And it's a logo that we are very, very proud of, and we're very thankful to Dennis Fuerst who has given me that.

And I ran into Dennis not that long ago at one of the events in Selkirk, and he says, I see you're still using that logo. And I said, of course, you got it right the first time; thank you so much.

And that's what the local journalism is all about. It's about being involved in the community, giving to the community and making sure that that community has a voice, and that voice goes from household to household to household, and it comes out on a weekly basis. And people still contact the newspapers and said, I'm looking for an article that you wrote way back when. They're not interested in looking online to try to find it in the archives; they go down to the newspaper and they ask.

But these local media newsprint outlets do so much more for the community. Selkirk inclusion had reached out to me on a Take Your MLA to Work Day, and they were—wanted to showcase the program that they have with some fantastic people that they helped secure employment for.

And one of our very first stops was to The Selkirk Record where there was a young lady there who had intellectual disabilities and found it very, very difficult to find employment. She is a very brilliant mind, but she has a certain disability that prevented her from getting employment, and she found it very, very difficult over time.

* (16:20)

Through Inclusion Selkirk, she was able to find employment at the Selkirk Record. And all the challenges that she had faced, they met those together head-on. And the people over at Inclusion Selkirk would get involved every step of the way, even ensuring that this individual was able to obtain her driver's licence so she could continue employment at the Selkirk Record.

The people that are at the Record show that it is a true family. When you walk in, you're greeted like you would from family—that you feel like you are valued and you are welcome in their place of employment. They talk to you with dignity, and they see people who walk in there who are happy and proud and look for a story. They see people want to place a posting in an obituary because they have just lost somebody very close to them, and every single person that walks through that door is treated with dignity and respect. And that's the effects that you get when you have a small business doing the work for the community.

And print publication is one of those things that once we lose them, it's very difficult to get back. And we have to make sure that we support them. When we have an opportunity to advertise in the local paper as business owners, we need to do that.

And when Kodiak Shelter Systems was starting off, we wanted to advertise, but our budget was very, very small. And when we talked to the papers, we said: Is there anything we can do to bring those costs down? And they said: We'll work something out. We know that once you start advertising, you're going to start getting some sales. And it's not going to happen overnight; it's going to take a little bit of time. So if we have—instead of one giant ad, if we have several smaller ads come out week after week after week, we

can eventually build to where your ads get bigger—that you can afford more print space.

And we did that, eventually taking out full-page ads in our paper, and we would have an open house or a hot dog day for our customers or people interested in our product to come down. We had the local media come down, which were the same people that I just spoke about, and they would take pictures of the event and put it back in the paper, and it gave me free advertising.

But as I come to this Legislative Building, and as the opportunities present to give private members' statements, every chance I can, I try to showcase what I call the unsung heroes of Selkirk. I try to showcase the people in my community that have done so much for everybody, and these people who give of themselves do it for unselfish reasons. They don't do it for 'notoriety' or fame or for any pats on the back; they do it because it feels right in their heart.

And when I phone them, and I ask them if I can please recognize them for their important contribution to our community, some of them need to be persuaded. They need to be persuaded that recognizing their efforts is something that we all want to accomplish on behalf of that person.

And once they agree, I'll get in touch with Katelyn over at the Selkirk Record or to Brett, and I'll tell them about the event. And more times than not, they will change their schedule to make it down here to sit up in the gallery alongside the unsung hero to be here for the important day that I read that member's statement.

And once that statement is done, usually within two or three weeks depending on what is happening in the news cycle, they'll get that information into that local paper. And here's the vital importance: those unsung heroes that are shown in the paper, that are spotlighted for their contributions to our community, are relevant to every person that reads that paper.

And I find that when I run into people on the street or in the grocery store or anywhere else in my constituency, and they'll say, oh my goodness, I am so happy you were able to give recognition to Shay Nordal over at the Marine Museum. I am so happy that you were able to give recognition for the people over at Inclusion Selkirk. I am so happy that you were able to give recognition for Constable Paul Human. I am very grateful that you were able to give recognition for Mr. Jim Gaynor.

And the list goes on and on: the Lockport community marketing group, the organizations that help

out with the seniors. And this is where we have an opportunity to keep showcasing the people that are important.

But what—just in this House wouldn't do it. You need that local newsprint to get that information out. Without our local newspaper, the story dies within these walls. You would have to direct somebody here or post it on Facebook or TikTok or some other publication.

It's that local publication that keeps that story alive and makes sure that the honouring of the individual or groups in this House that I do matter, that people know about what we do here matters, and that everybody who's contributed to our local community are of vast importance to us.

On that note, Honourable Speaker, I thank you for your time.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I am pleased to stand and speak to the proposed government motion regarding special committee on local journalism, especially pleased to stand in support of the amended—amendment that has been put forward here.

And I just want to start off by reading what that amendment is. That the first clause of the motion be deleted and the following substituted as the first clause: that a special committee on local journalism be created to make recommendations on exploring the future of local journalism, including rural and cultural media representing all 'ethnities' and non-official languages, so long as they do not promote hate speech or undermine the Manitoba values of inclusivity and respect for all races, religions and backgrounds, with the mandate to consider matters of public support for journalism and report its conclusion to the Assembly within 30 days of the start of fall sitting 2025.

I think we can all agree and acknowledge the importance of journalism and like the member from Riding Mountain and the member from Selkirk, they've already highlighted many of the important things that local journalism promote in our communities.

And I would like to thank the member from Riding Mountain for his contributions to the newspaper and media world, and the years that he spent and invested in getting local news out and supporting his rural communities in that respect.

And having this local representation fosters democracy, provides information, and it connects our communities.

* (16:30)

Media and news outlets perform a very important function in our communities and provide valuable service to Manitobans. In Manitoba, we have 41 unique newspaper titles in circulation, and Manitoba has approximately around 167 radio stations.

Local journalism, in particular, serves as a vital link between communities, their residents, all of which provides on local events, issues and governance. It fosters the civic engagement and encourages informed participation in democracy.

I also want to take just a moment here and share what else local newspapers can provide, on a more personal level. Growing up and living in rural Manitoba on a farm, my granny shared the same farm—or we shared the same farmyard; we had two homes in the same farmyard. And I would go over and spend an afternoon with my granny. And what we do is we would clip out of the local newspaper that we would have. We would clip coupons out of that paper, and we'd talk about—my granny liked to also clip obituaries, and she would have a scrapbook of obituaries. So—and then her and I would take those coupons and we would go to the store, and I'd always be excited when they could save a few dollars at the grocery store. That doesn't seem to happen nowadays, right now with this NDP government.

But that was something personal to me, and it was a very cherished time spent with my granny and clipping through the newspapers. So, it's important for, not only getting the news out, but it can bring family together, whether it be to clip those—that those coupons or obituaries out, but it also creates a conversation and time well spent with family.

Again, on that, I had—my other grandma, when she passed away we went down in her basement, although we knew this much earlier on, but she had stacks and stacks and stacks of the local newspapers. And she was very meticulous in how she kept her newspapers. She had them all bound together according to the year, and they were bound with string. And she had little notes on them as to what was—what year they were, so they were all clearly identified.

But when she passed away, it was left up to the family, what are we going to do with these hoards and hoards and stacks of newspapers. And it was quite a feat just to get them up and out of the—out of her basement. And I believe we took them to the Neepawa Press at the time for their archives, so that they could store them properly and, you know, maybe have to reference back to them.

So again, it's local news media, newspapers. They're something tangible, they're something people can hang onto and, again, it's getting the information out to our local communities.

I know in Agassiz we have a number of local newspapers. We have the Treherne Times, and we have the Neepawa Banner, that of which Ken and Chris Waddell own, and I know there's been mention of those owners previous to my statement here today.

And years ago, Chris and Ken Waddell had just what we call the Banner, which again was very informative but at the same time, Neepawa had two papers, and one of—the other was The Neepawa Press. So, Neepawa—it was interesting, because they would sort of report on different things, but yet kind of one of the same. And some years ago, Chris and Ken Waddell purchased The Neepawa Press and now that's become the Neepawa banner press. So and, again, that is important in our community, because it's getting the information out.

As well as we have The Treherne Times, which is down in the southern part of Agassiz, which captures a lot of the local information down there. And just a couple of weeks ago, I was at an event down there and they had a—what they call a field reporter out and—capturing some of the photos and statements that were being made that—at that particular event.

And we used to have the Carberry times in Carberry. And again, we used to have a reporter there, his name was Gladwyn Scott, and I would speak to him on a weekly basis, just getting the information, whether it be on sports or community events, and sharing the information of what might be going into the paper.

So, again, it's just the importance of local media sources getting that information out. We see, and I know the members prior to me spoke on the importance of, whether it be sporting events, local school events or just even a—I know our local Neepawa paper has a thumbs up or a thumbs down where people can just write in and express their appreciation, whether it be for an individual or an organization; or a thumbs down, whether it be on the roads that are within our constituency. I know there's been a few of those put out there.

But it's a way to celebrate the good things that are happening in our rural communities, in our local areas, and it's all relevant and it's information that we can all relate to and be informed about. And I know Chris and Ken Waddell have just recently taken over

the Virden paper, and they've had the Rivers paper, as well, for sometime—and, again, capturing that local information.

Included in what some of these rural communities have going on, they have the local broadcasting stations, which I am learning is a very important part of what our rural communities do as well. So these are local stations where they have employees go out and they videotape the—maybe it might be a band concert at the school. You know, it'll—they're going to be out videotaping the Christmas concerts that are soon to be happening right away.

So this is an opportunity to get those broadcasts shared with other individuals who might not be able to get to the events and the hockey games and the debates, or what have you, that might be happening. And I'm finding that this is a lot—this is a great way for some of our seniors who maybe aren't mobile; they might be homebound. But it's a great way for those individuals to watch what's happening locally and to hear the news that's happily—happening locally. And, again, this weekend, I was in another parade. And I can see that there was two: the Gladstone and the Neepawa local broadcasting stations were there recording this so that they can share it on their respective stations for their communities to see and be a part of as well.

So we can see from that the importance of the local broadcasting and to be inclusive of all peoples as well as, you know, the language. So I know, in Neepawa—I'll use that as an example—in Neepawa, we have a large Filipino-based community. That of which I think it's important that some of the information that we get out to the community is maybe put into their language. So I think it's important that we, when we look at this, we look at this inclusive of all people, inclusive of all backgrounds, languages and ethnic—'ethnicities' so that everybody's getting the information in their respective language.

Another component that's important for these local newspapers is the advertising costs. I know, for years, and we all do in here, we advertise locally in our papers, whether it be monthly, weekly or biweekly. But those costs that we incur pay for that media outlet to employ those individuals who are out on the ground gathering the information. And it is good for the rural—well, in our case, rural economics, but our province as a whole. It contributes to not only getting the information out there but also getting the dollars back into our economy.

You know, in promoting the diversity, it emphasizes the need for a collaborative approach and in-making it inclusive of all peoples is enhancing what it already is delivering on and bringing again-bringing together again some of these diverse communities.

* (16:40)

You know, we all know that local media has changed over time. I-with easy access to news and media directly on our phones, the traditional news and media outlets have faced significant pressures and challenges, and they need to adapt their delivery models and business plans.

And, again, this takes me to several conversations that I've had and-not just to seniors but maybe more in particular to that group of people-is the fact that, you know, they've maybe missed going to an event, or they've maybe missed out on a local community meeting for whatever reason. But they say: Well, we didn't know about it. How did you know about it? Well it was on, you know, a social media platform, maybe, in some case. And they're like: Well, we don't subscribe to that. We don't have that. We don't have a computer. We don't have the Internet.

And so, without local advertising in a newspaper, these people miss out on some of what is going on in their communities.

And so it's very important that we keep our local papers, and we put the information out there. And I know it's a way of all people and-government officials or otherwise-it's an opportunity and a space where people can get their information out. I know, myself, in the Neepawa Banner and The Treherne Times, I've put information out in those papers. I know I'm going to be advertising here in the near future for a Christmas open house and getting that information out to my community in hopes that they are able to show up.

And, you know, this kind of leads to, you know, the Carberry News-Express. It was a small paper, but again, it's important that we support those papers so that, you know, we don't lose that local voice-that bit of local, I want to say activity, creativity and that attachment to our communities.

And what does the future of local journalism look like, including the possibility of public support and dedicated advertising budgets? It's crucial, and, you know, it might align with successful initiatives we've seen in other jurisdictions. I know my-the member from Riding Mountain was referencing the Ontario and other federal programs.

The committee should, as well, thoroughly assess the potential for government advertising to support local media in ensuring it is distributed equitably among these diverse outlets and, again, be inclusive of all backgrounds and all peoples. You know, granting the 'commidittee'-committee the authority to determine how it conducts its business is essential for the flexibility and responsiveness. This approach encourages engagement with various stakeholders, including journalists, media organizations and the public.

There are maybe some cautionary considerations, like what-the perception of biased. It's crucial that the committee operates with transparency and an openness but all while maintaining the trust of the public here, as well. Efforts must be made to avoid narratives of a media bailout, particularly in rural areas where skepticism may exist.

I should note, too, that this motion was not part of-the government's motion was not part of any campaign commitment. There's been limited consultation with opposition or independent members about it. Just a little bit of a concern of, you know, 'exclusivity' and diminish the buy-in, but certainly, there's additional points to consider, again, about the context. Is this a response to the declining media resources? I don't know.

But-and many, many local news outlets, like I said, are facing the financial challenges, and again, I'll make reference, you know, to the Virden newspaper where the Waddells from Neepawa have taken on that paper and rebuilding or building it or continuing or-but again, it's a challenging time for some.

You know, let's talk about the federal and provincial jurisdictions. There is an initiative in Ontario's advertising spending commitment, which we can maybe look at and can maybe serve Manitoba here.

Since 2019 the federal government has been funding the local journalism initiative, and in 2024 it announced a three-year extension, where press agencies, private news organizations and non-profit news organizations are eligible.

Another initiative is the Canadian Periodical Fund, which provides assistance to Canadian print magazines, community newspapers and digital periodicals to enable them to overcome market disadvantages, and includes a few major components.

There's more: in 2019, the federal government introduced the refundable Canadian Journalism Labour Tax Credit for qualifying news organizations to support

labour costs associated with original news content for profit and non-profit news organizations.

In June, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission implemented the Online Streaming Act, which amended the Broadcasting Act to ensure online streaming services make meaningful contributions to Canadian and Indigenous content. The CRTC now requires online streaming services to contribute five per cent of their Canadian revenue to support the Canadian broadcasting system.

On November 4, the CRTC launched consultations on a temporary fund to support local radio news. In Ontario, the provincial government directed the four largest Crown corporations there to allocate a minimum of 25 per cent of their advertising spending toward Ontario publishers. Effective this past September, Ontario's government agency spent over \$100 million on marketing annually.

And again, Premier Doug Ford committed to spending 25 per cent of his government's advertising budget on Ontario-based news organizations; organizations defined as qualified Canadian journalism can apply.

And here in Manitoba, there could be benefits of the special committee as I mentioned earlier, but what is the real goal of this government? And back to the amendment, our province is very diverse, and I believe we must mention that, and the importance of reflecting our province's diversity and background of many of our Manitobans.

The committee could take a more, let's say, holistic approach with a comprehensive look at the ecosystem of the local journalism, and consider not just financial support but also the role of the digital platforms, the community engagement and the impact of social media.

I'd like to express my curiosity again and ask: Did the government inquire—was there input and some public consultation prior to this motion coming forward? You know, consultations like this can lead to valuable insights and recommendations. This approach can foster a sense of ownership and collaboration.

So as far as the consideration for the amendments, if I may note the amendment recommendations once again, where the motion references specific languages, (a) that the motion be amended by deleting all of the words cultural media and substituting: of all ethnic and non-official language newspapers, so long as they do not promote hate speech and undermine the Manitoba values of inclusivity, respect for all races, religions and background, with the mandate to consider

matters of public support for journalism, and report its conclusion to the Assembly within 30 days of the start of the fall sitting in 2025.

* (16:50)

It's important to ensure that these cultural and ethnic media outlets are included, and that we are not exclusive or limited in scope. As it is currently written, the motion excludes many ethnic and cultural media publications.

Manitoba is home to a diverse media landscape with a wide variety of publications and newspapers that are reflective of our diverse population and communities. With evolving technology and news media consumption primarily through phones, tablets and computers, print media of all forms have experienced significant challenges and pressures.

Our ethnic and cultural newspapers and periodicals provide valuable content and information to all of our vibrant communities. We want to ensure that all of these organizations are captured and considered carefully by this—excuse me—by this committee.

This motion made by the government as it was presented does not demonstrate that inclusivity, and I support the inclusion of all media to be a part of the 'commidia'—committee, because this can only enhance its legitimacy and ensure that a wider range of opinions and experiences are represented and is a transparent committee, which is very important. Transparency is important. It establishes clear guidelines for the committee's operations and can help mitigate concerns about potential biases and/or conflicts of interest.

When addressing skepticism and building on trust are crucial components to this, it will be essential for the committee to communicate its intentions clearly and to involve a range of voices in its discussions and recommendations.

By making these amendments to the motion, will promote inclusivity and transparency to stakeholders. It can help ensure that the committee effectively serves the interests of all communities and strengthens the local journalism landscape.

Engaging in open dialogue and collaboration will be key to achieving these goals. And again, by making these amendments, we can ensure that the Special Committee on Local Journalism serves its intended purpose effectively, reflecting the diverse interests of all Manitobans.

And I just want to take a moment here again, Honourable Speaker, and express the importance of

local media, local broadcasting and the importance of getting not only our messages out but also sharing with our communities. It's important.

I know there's people that go down south maybe for the winter months, and some of this local broadcasting and, you know, the subscriptions to the newspapers is an important part of when they do go south because it keeps them engaged with what's going on here back in their communities and it also allows them to, you know, watch their child's sports or their child's concerts, what have you, and keeps them engaged with rural Manitoba.

And just to conclude, Honourable Speaker, the creation of a Special Committee on Local Journalism represents a significant opportunity to address the challenges faced by local media here in Manitoba. And I would encourage all members to consider the suggested amendments for a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to supporting the local journalism here in Manitoba.

And again, Honourable Speaker, I just want to say that, you know, having these local papers in our area is an opportunity to get our story told and get our advertising out there on whatever it might be. I know my colleague, member from Selkirk, made reference to how it helped him with his business in terms of getting employment and getting people hired. It also helped him promote his business.

So not only that. It is a form of building Manitoba, advertising for what our province has to offer on a much broader scale as—not just local, but on a much broader scale, it's an opportunity to get our message out there in what we have to offer and promote our communities in that respect.

So once again, I'm just going to close here, and I'm going to read out our motion again:

That the first clause of the motion be deleted and the following substituted as the new first clause:

That a Special Committee on Local Journalism be created to make recommendations on exploring the future of local journalism, including rural and cultural media representing all 'ethnicities' and non-official languages, so long as they do not promote hate speech or undermine the Manitoba values of inclusivity and respect for all races, religions and backgrounds, with the mandate to consider matters public support for journalism, and report its conclusion to the Assembly within 30 days of the start of fall sitting 2025.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, I'm just going to close and say that I hope all members of the House will support this motion that we have put forward to amend the government's motion on special committee on local journalism.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It's a great opportunity, although brief as it might be in the next couple minutes, just to begin some of the comments that I have regarding this particular government motion that's been brought forward by the current government.

I really enjoyed listening to my colleague from Riding Mountain who spoke about his history in the local media industry. And think that we have all probably had this experience with colleagues in our caucus where we know generally some of their background, and then you get a chance to listen more specifically to the work that they've done in different parts of their life.

And it's often things you didn't realize, even it's—if you've served with them for a long time. And that was sort of what I was feeling listening to my friend from Riding Mountain, about the depth of experience that he has in the local media industry.

And I enjoyed hearing it, because as somebody who has had a long-time interest in media—even as a young child, after my father passed away when I was 10—I remember it was a bit of a lonely time in my life.

And I remember listening to radio—to Larry King when Larry King was then on the radio—and you'd get these sort of weird AM bounces that happen when you're scrolling through the dial on AM radio. This was probably from a station from Minneapolis, I think. And I would listen to Larry King before he went on to CNN television, just sort of hear people from around the world on his broadcasts.

And for me, it both, you know, sort of fulfilled a bit of a lonely time in my life following the passing of my dad, but also opened the world to me to a lot of different interests that I had in the media and in world affairs in general.

So we sometimes, when we think of the media, we think in a very narrow sense of what they do in terms of reporting specific events, but they can also shape an individual and broaden their interests in the world that can sometimes change the trajectory of their life. And I think, for me, in no small way, the media did that for me, because it enhanced my interest in world affairs; not political affairs necessarily—that

came a little bit later—but just what was going on in the world.

You know, when I was an intern, I spent more time—an intern in the Manitoba Legislature—than I care to remember cutting newspapers and doing clippings for MLAs at the time. That was a thing for interns back then, before—

The Speaker: Order, please.

* (17:00)

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 27 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 2, 2024

CONTENTS

Matter of Contempt		Needle Distribution Program	
Wasyliw	255	Balcaen	266
Fontaine	256	Kinew	266
Jackson	257		
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Addictions Crisis	
		Cook	267
		Asagwara	267
Tabling of Reports		Brandon University Campus	
Schmidt	257	Perchotte	268
		Cable	268
Ministerial Statements		Prairie Green Landfill Search	
Maya Turner		Redhead	269
Cable	257	Kinew	269
Perchotte	258		
Speaker's Statement		US Tariffs and the Carbon Tax	
Lindsey	258	Bereza	269
		Kostyshyn	269
Members' Statements		Kinew	270
UMFA Union Certification Anniversary		Rural Crime Rate in Western Manitoba	
Chen	259	Jackson	270
Government's Fiscal Management Record		Kinew	270
King	259		
Aki Centre		Petitions	
Devgan	260	Phoenix School	
Ports of Entry—Reduced Hours of Service		Cook	270
Narth	260	Teaching Certification	
World AIDS Day		Ewasko	271
Blashko	261	Jackson	271
		King	272
Oral Questions		Breast Screening	
Education System		Balcaen	273
Ewasko	261		
Kinew	262	Matter of Urgent Public Importance	
Violent Crime Incident		Johnson	273
Ewasko	263	Moses	275
Kinew	263		
7-Eleven Convenience Stores		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Balcaen	264	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Wiebe	264	Debate on Government Motion	
Winnipeg Police Service		Nesbitt	277
Balcaen	265	Perchotte	282
Wiebe	266	Byram	287
		Goertzen	291

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