

**First Session – Forty-Third Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**  
**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, October 31, 2024**

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

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

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

Please be seated.

Good morning.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**The Speaker:** The honourable opposition—

**Speaker's Statement**

**The Speaker:** So, I have a statement for the House.

As previously announced, I received a letter from the Opposition House Leader indicating that the opposition caucus has identified Bill 214, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements), as their third and final selected bill for this session.

In accordance with this letter and rule 25, Bill 214 will be considered this morning as follows: second reading debate will resume immediately after this statement. The question will be put on second reading motion at 10:55 a.m.

We will now resume second reading of Bill 214, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering

Agreements), standing in the name of the honourable member for Riel, who has six minutes remaining.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—  
PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 214—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act  
(Net-Metering Agreements)**

**MLA Mike Moyes (Riel):** I appreciate the opportunity to pick up where I left off last week in speaking about this important topic.

We do have a great advantage here in Manitoba, in our great province. We've got our energy coming from Manitoba Hydro. It's our Crown jewel and it's something that our NDP government will always protect.

We're going to protect it from the pirates of privatization of the PC Party. We're going to ensure that we're going to meet the energy needs of Manitobans for generations and generations. We're ensuring that rates are going to be kept affordable for all Manitobans. And I do appreciate the member opposite for bringing up the need for more energy because that's very true; we do need more energy. And, in fact, more renewable energy is always preferable. We need more energy to expand our economy and to ensure that Manitobans have affordable electricity.

And this is exactly why our government released its affordable energy plan. Yes, it's a great plan. Our plan will ensure that Manitoba Hydro has the capacity to meet the energy needs of Manitoba families while also expanding clean wind energy in partnerships with First Nations and Métis governments.

These partnerships are going to serve Manitobans. It's a major step forward for economic reconciliation, and it's going to create more blue-collar jobs and emphasize clean—the clean energy economy, and it's going to provide strategic investments in clean technologies, sustainable energy and critical mineral development.

So the first 600 megawatts—the next 600 megawatts that we're going to develop is going to be wind energy. It's going to help diversify our energy; while Manitoba Hydro is powered by water, we know that with climate change, that sometimes can go through ups and downs and we do need to diversify. So I appreciate the member opposite for looking at solar.

However, the record of the PCs on solar energy is problematic at best. In 2018, they cut the solar program. We had a Manitoba Hydro solar energy program, and what it did was it provided a dollar per watt per projects up to 200 kilowatts. And it was highly successful. In fact, it was overrun with applications, and most of those applications were, in fact, in the rural areas. It was farmers. It was folks that had land that they could just put up solar panels. Now, don't get me wrong, there's folks in the cities that were also putting them up on the rooftops and allowing us to harness that solar energy. But it largely was a rural program.

And so in 2018, what did the PCs do? They cut it—they cut it. It is a shame. And so I think that's problematic, and so I do appreciate that, you know, the PC opposition is finally coming on board with renewable energy and not just, you know, turning a blind eye to our climate action and our climate change needs, and I appreciate that.

However, there are some issues with the net metering. I think one of the issues, that I'm not sure if the member opposite is aware of some of these issues, but it could potentially cause Manitoba Hydro to be paying for energy at a higher rate than what we can get on the market. That's going to put a stress on our Manitoba Hydro rates, and we know more than ever that we need to keep life affordable for Manitobans.

While rates have started to come down, the interest rates, and while we have really done a number of things, those 21 different things in our budget to make life more affordable, we know that times are still tough for a lot of families. And one of the things that we need to ensure is that Manitoba Hydro rates remain low.

While I appreciate expanding into the solar energy area, this I don't think is necessarily the way to go forward. This is something that we need to look at carefully, we need to always make sure that Manitoba Hydro rates are as low as possible for our economy and for everyday Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

And so we know that Manitobans will make the clean energy choice when it's affordable to do so. We know that outright. Manitobans are good people. They know that we need to take climate action. The members on this side of the House know we need to take climate action, and that's why we've done a number of different things including our affordable energy and expanding it to different things, like wind. And we're more than happy to look at solar.

However, this net metering is problematic. We cannot put Manitobans at risk, and that's exactly what PCs' history have been on Manitoba Hydro. It puts people at risk. It puts us at risk of not having enough energy, it puts us at risk of rates going up and that's just unacceptable.

\* (10:10)

So I would just—I would urge all members in this Chamber to really take a look at how we can intelligently look at taking climate action, how we can expand our energy needs, but at the same time, making sure that our rates are always affordable. And together, on this side of the House, we are going to ensure that Manitoba Hydro rates stay as affordable as possible for generations to come.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia):** I thank my colleague for his remarks. I would like to put some words on the record.

So I want to talk about our government's priorities for a moment, if I could, with what we're doing in Manitoba. Our NDP team believes that we need to make life more affordable for Manitobans, and we're committed to looking into every avenue possible to make sure that people's money can go as far as it can for them. And this, of course, means keeping utility rates low and allowing them to be set independently by the Public Utilities Board.

Manitoba Hydro is our province's Crown jewel and it's going to be strengthened by our government, not privatized. And then, of course, doing this would make sure that we keep rates affordable for Manitobans. Our government knows that Manitoba will make the climate-friendly choice when they can afford to do so.

This is a difficult thing for people. People making money in this province, you know, it doesn't go as far as it used to with mortgage rates, with rent, with food costs, utility costs. People are being stretched and so when Manitobans are able to do so, we know that they will make the choice for a cleaner choice.

Our government is creating more blue-collar jobs and emphasizing our clean energy economy through strategic investments in clean technologies, sustainable energy and critical mineral development. These are all incredibly important areas, and doing this will ensure that Manitoba Hydro has the capacity to meet the energy needs of Manitoba families. We're making significant investments into energy generation, like wind generation. These are important areas.

For the first time in the province's history, the Manitoba Affordable Energy Plan solidifies government policy to include Indigenous-owned utility-scale electricity resource—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I'd just remind the member to keep her comments 'relevert'—relevant to the bill that we're discussing here this morning.

**MLA Kennedy:** Thank you for your guidance, Honourable Speaker.

So I want to talk about what we're doing here with Manitoba Hydro. Our government is wanting to move the needle forward on Manitoba's clean energy and reconciliation. Our new Affordable Energy Plan reaffirms our commitment to public ownership, and we want to ensure that Manitoba Hydro rates stay affordable for folks.

Now I want to talk about the PCs' record on hydro. Our team is committed to finding ways to save Manitobans money on their energy bills and we want to ensure that, unlike the previous seven and a half years under the PC government, we want to ensure that we have affordable rates for Manitobans.

I want to discuss the issues with regards to the affordability issue within Manitoba. We want to ensure that we are keeping money within Manitoba. Now, under the previous PC government, they basically have no leg to stand on when we're speaking about issues that are facing Manitoban families.

Now, we saw the previous government send cheques to out-of-province millionaires. And we want to ensure that money stays within our province. Our NDP government is working every day to make things affordable. We want to—

**The Speaker:** Order please.

Once again, I must remind the member to keep her comments relevant to the bill before us. It's not a bill that talks about everything about Hydro. So please, focus your comments on this particular bill.

**MLA Kennedy:** Thank you—*[interjection]*

**An Honourable Member:** —net meter—

**MLA Kennedy:** Yes, I recognize—net meter.

We want to—I'm going to end my comments here.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** I am really pleased to be able to stand up and speak on this bill.

You know, our government is really focused, as some of my other colleagues have said, in ensuring that Manitobans have access to affordable, sustainable energy. And today we're discussing Bill 214, which proposes net metering agreements, which would allow Manitobans to receive credit for energy they generate and then they would sell that back to Manitoba Hydro.

So while this may sound promising, sort of at first glance, you know it's important—and this is why we're here today, to talk about this. We have to look at whether this approach really aligns with sort of fiscal responsibility and our goal of saving Manitobans money. And we've unfortunately seen sort of the track record of the current iteration of the PCs when it comes to fiscal responsibility. Which is sort of what this bill is trying to get at, with government and making this amendment.

You know, I've had a good opportunity to speak with our current Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and the Minister responsible for Hydro, and we talked about this net metering agreement and that billing and I just want to say on the record too that the energy policy that's being put forward right now by the Minister of Finance and the Minister responsible for Hydro and our Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Schmidt), I think it's going to do some really spectacular things for Manitoba and affordability for Manitobans overall.

But again, you know, the government—our government here, is taking really meaningful action to keep energy costs low for families across our province, which is really what is at the heart, I think, of this bill. And I have to say, also, it's—I question a little bit what is trying to be accomplished here. Because recently, for example, in our BITSA bill, we capped Hydro rate increases—a move that the PC opposition actually voted against.

So we believe that there is a better path to affordability than adding policies that could potentially—and this is one of those bills that could potentially place Hydro in a somewhat precarious financial position or make things more challenging.

And, you know, often, I speak to a lot of folks in my constituency and folks who have actually worked for Hydro in the past or currently. And they really remember that under this previous PC government, the one now bringing forward this Bill 214, hydro rates went up and not a single megawatt of new energy was created. And that is—it's really troubling.

So, I mean, this bill seems to sort of echo that same lack of foresight, that characterized past actions. So and I know they're starting to heckle and they're getting frustrated by some of the comments I'm making, but this is part of the conversation that needs to happen around a bill like this. And I'm glad that they want to participate so vigorously in this debate. It's important.

So, again, our government, as been mentioned, we're doing some real work to put money back in Manitobans' pockets. And we're really committed to looking at all of the different avenues possible to help them make ends meet. So we did—we brought in the gas tax holiday, for example. It brought 14 cents a litre savings to every fill that Manitobans had.

But again, you know, we're talking about net metering. And what this potentially does in Hydro if we start doing this. And, you know, when I've had these conversations about what ends up happening is, yes, like, it could potentially be a good thing for a minority of folks who have that solar panel there at their house and are able to sell that back to Hydro. It ends up potentially creating a situation where we're at a financial loss with Hydro, which is really—as the—my colleague the member from Riel mentioned, it's a Crown jewel of Manitoba.

\* (10:20)

And it actually—again, something that I know the opposition is really aligned with as well—is trying to bring new business, new opportunities economically to our province. And one of the big selling points to a lot of folks when I speak to people from outside of our province who are wanting to potentially bring business here is that our renewable energy is so affordable. And so I always want to make sure that we have fulsome discussion about what all these policies might do in terms of the future of Manitoba Hydro, and our Crown jewel.

So, you know, as I said, it's one of our most valuable assets, and you know, when the PCs were in power, they actually decided to raise hydro rates significantly, again without producing new megawatts of energy, which again is going to be really important for our future economic growth, you know. And their focus, it seemed, wasn't necessarily—and this is important because I just, it's—for me, it's important to have this context when we're having this discussion around net metering.

You know, they failed to grow our energy capacity. It left us in a more vulnerable position, and

making sure that we're preserving Hydro as a sustainable public asset is so, so important. And it was frankly a little bit troubling to see the testing of waters around privatization during those seven and a half years. And, you know, we had a really profitable stake in Teshmont, for example, which was sold off by 'Manito'—and Manitoba Hydro International which were both profitable ventures.

**An Honourable Member:** Relevance.

**MLA Pankratz:** They're calling for relevance. This is all—it is important. And I appreciate you wanting to keep me on track, but the point here, again, is trying to make sure that we continue to have a profitable and sustainable future for Manitoba Hydro. And this bill, again, speaks to sort of that lens that this party has come from in the past. And so it is important for me to bring these past issues up because it potentially can characterize where all of this is coming from.

I know, they keep on saying relevance and they don't want me to talk about some of this—these past issues. But it is important, and it's important for Manitoba to discuss it.

Yes, so I mean in contrast—and this is also important—our government is committed to strengthening Hydro and making sure that it actually remains public and it belongs to Manitobans, right?

We're not interested in selling off pieces or undermining its long-term viability, which again, the long-term viability is an important piece of this Bill 214 that we're talking about today.

So, instead, we're really investing in the future and protecting the interests of Manitobans.

You know, it is also important—I appreciate that now, after seven and a half years of not really doing a lot, they're bringing forward a bill that could potentially have some positive environmental effects in terms of incentivizing maybe some more use of solar panels.

But we're doing a lot right now to try to move that forward. And I think that there's potential for this bill to go further, and maybe there can be conversations in the future about something that would be more effective for Manitobans here.

You know, we've taken steps like the EV rebates when it comes to the environment, and since they're showing more interest in that, I just want to point out that now Manitobans are able to get \$4,000 rebated on electric vehicles—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I'd just remind the member to keep his comments relevant to this bill. He's taken some liberties with straying pretty far from it, so keep it relevant to this bill, please.

**MLA Pankratz:** I appreciate that. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the guidance, as always.

So this former PC government, during its seven and a half years in power, they really—they ended up cutting hydro rates—or raising hydro rates rather. They cut jobs and undermined stability of Manitoba Hydro. So again, when we're talking about doing something like net metering, we need to look at how that specifically relates to the stability of our Crown corporation in Manitoba Hydro.

So what ended up happening was, they did a number—they took a number of actions that made things more difficult for us to keep energy costs low for Manitobans.

So, you know, I don't have a ton of time left, here, but Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable member for Waverley has the floor.

**MLA Pankratz:** You know, Manitoba Hydro is—honestly, it's more than just an energy provider and it's a public asset that belongs to everyone here in Manitoba. And as we move forward, our government really remains committed to preserving that strength and ensuring its sustainability for the future in keeping energy affordable.

And, you know, this bill may offer some modest benefits, and that's fair enough. But, you know, I think it ultimately, it falls short of addressing the broader issue of energy affordability for Manitobans.

And, you know, so, I would just urge my colleagues to really consider, today, the long-term implications of this bill because Manitobans, they deserve a government that prioritizes their financial well-being and provides meaningful, accessible energy solutions.

And that's the government that we are. We're bringing a vision that will build Manitoba Hydro for generations to come.

Thank you so much, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and very pleased to—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

It's Honourable Speaker, not Mr. Speaker.

**MLA Maloway:** Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 214 today. And I understand it's about net metering versus net billing.

I have a constituent who has invested a fair amount of money on solar panels. I saw him a few months ago. He has his brand new electric vehicle parked out front and he's got these solar panels on his garage. And he's very happy with the—what he's getting in compensation from Manitoba Hydro. I—and my assumption is that they are currently doing a net-metering approach with him. He wasn't complaining to me and saying, wow, I want net metering brought in.

I realize it's an option. It's right on the Manitoba Hydro website; they're giving it as an option. Now, it was there. It's there now. They were in power for nearly eight years. If it was such a great idea, you know, you had eight years to bring it in.

But it kind of gets back to the whole history with the Conservatives and Manitoba Hydro. I mean, I could read you a list of all the hydro projects, like Kelsey, Jenpeg; all these other ones that we built since Ed Schreyer became the premier.

And if you look in the last 60 years, I would like to find one that they did—one. And they've been in power for roughly half the time. They did zero. Every single project—now, back in the 1960s, I think, was their last one I think under Duff Roblin, that's how long ago they had a hydro project.

So one wonders then, why is it that it's just NDP that actually announces and builds these projects?

Now, I guess they maybe cut the ribbon on one or two of them, but—and then they complain. They complain about, you know, you look at the projects that we've done and, you know, the—Steven Fletcher, when he was federal minister—he was the—

**An Honourable Member:** Relevance.

**MLA Maloway:** Well, relevance—Stephen Fletcher wanted to bring in a national power grid. We've been talking about that for 50, 60 years. And, you know, we—he asked me to set up meetings with Dave Chomiak, our minister, and we did talk about a national power grid which is all part of this net-metering business, right?

It's all about having a successful power grid across the country. And in those discussions that were

going on, we discovered that the United States is so concerned about us having national power grid, that they were prepared to finance, but we couldn't figure out how to do that.

And, you know, there was a—Steven Fletcher proposed a DC line. He was the minister, national minister of infrastructure for the West. And he wanted to spend some money, involving Manitoba Hydro. They wanted to build a DC line from Fort McMurray to Thompson. I—Where is it? It just wasn't done.

\* (10:30)

We wanted to do another line from down the railway, right away, to Thunder Bay. And, you know, that was a proposal that the federal Conservatives were wanting to do, and the Manitoba NDP was wanting to do it. In Saskatchewan, we built a bipole. You know, the bipole was—helped us get agreements with Saskatchewan government—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

As much as I appreciate the history lesson, and the member for Elmwood (MLA Maloway) has a lot of knowledge about these things, but I'd ask him to keep his comments relevant to the bill we're talking about this morning.

**MLA Maloway:** I recognize that I have been trying to relate to Bill 214, the net metering and net—versus the net-billing concept here, but you have to look at the context of their history involving Manitoba Hydro, in general, and how they have really underperformed in a whole bunch—on a whole bunch of areas. So, I mean, here—one year after they've lost the government, all of a sudden they're interested in bringing Bill 214 net metering.

Now, I mean, you know, if it's a reasonably popular idea, I'm sure the government will, you know, decide in the fullness of time to introduce their own bill. I mean, that's—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Maloway:** —happened to me with the catalytic converter issue, right? They, when it was popular enough, they brought in their own bill. So, I mean, I don't fault them for introducing the bill. I mean, that's their role as opposition, but—and foster some discussion about the whole idea. The point of the matter is that Manitoba Hydro, as far as I know right now, is actually doing basically the same thing; they're doing the net billing. And the people—the person that I know that's invested in the whole idea is happy with

what Hydro's doing. He's not out here protesting at the Legislature demanding Bill 214 and net metering.

But, you know, I mean, I will take it up with him now that it's—you know, it is an issue. I will let him know that the Conservatives are—and he's not a Conservative voter by any chance, so I don't think he's going to be changing any time soon to support their net metering. But, I mean, the point is that I think it's good to have discussion, and the opposition has to do something with their time here, because the PUB is going to want to know what they're doing here, right? What kind of an opposition are they? So they can say, well, we brought in a bill here on—regarding net metering. Well, then the point is, well, the question will be, well, why didn't you do something about it in the eight years you were there if it was such a big issue?

Nothing wrong with answer—asking these questions. I mean, that's just part of the role. They're doing their role, we're performing our role, and if I was—you know, if I was in opposition right now, I'd be probably doing the same thing. There's nothing wrong with it. It's all part of the democratic process. But why, you know, get our shorts in a knot and get all excited about, you know, how this is the end of the world if we don't pass this bill? But that's what they're going to do. They're going to accuse us of all kinds of improprieties here and be upset that we didn't support their bill, you know, and then we're going to, like, move on to the afternoon session and it'll be—start all over again.

Anyway, I know that we have other speakers on our side here who want to speak. We're going to have a vote on this matter in, you know, 20 minutes or so, so I want to give some other people a chance to speak about this issue.

Thank you very much.

**MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond):** I'm pleased to rise and put some record—put some words on the record on this important issue.

Our NDP team believes in making life affordable for all Manitobans. We are committed to looking to every avenue possible to save them and their families money, and this includes keeping utility rates low and allowing them to be set independently by the Public Utilities Board. Manitoba Hydro is our province's Crown jewel and will be strengthened by our government, not privatized.

Doing this will ensure that energy will remain affordable. Our government knows that Manitobans



will make the climate-friendly choice when they can afford to do so. By doing this, we are making life affordable for Manitobans by benefitting from clean energy economy.

Our team is working hard to lower costs for Manitobans, and from the beginning, we have been delivering on our affordability commitments. Since forming government, we cut the gas tax and have extended until the end of the year. Unlike the PCs, we are following through on our commitments.

This bill being debated today provides an optional arrangement with Manitoba Hydro as net metering allows Manitobans to save energy costs. Manitobans who use their own renewable energy, like solar panels or wind turbines within the grid system, are provided with a credit for energy they can sell back to Hydro.

Net meters measure the difference between the energy consumed and the energy delivered to the consumer. While net metering would decrease costs for people, the shape that the PCs left Hydro in, making it difficult to make such a drastic change. Their mismanagement of Hydro left Manitoba in significant debt, but we are committed to delivering affordable energy for all Manitobans.

The reality is, most Manitobans don't own solar panels due to its personal high costs. So this bill would mean only the people who can afford solar panels would benefit—would get this benefit. But we want all Manitobans to have access to affordable energy, not just the few who can afford it.

That's why we've brought in a rebate for EVs for up to \$4,000 for people ready to make the switch to greener options. We know that the only way we'll make this transition to a clean energy economy is having all Manitobans on board. The only way to do that is to make energy affordable.

Honourable Speaker, I want to point out the important announcement in July, that I attended with Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro (MLA Sala), which is that Manitoba Hydro will resume operations of its international consulting business, Manitoba Hydro International. By resuming operations, Manitoba Hydro International will provide utility consulting—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

Once again, I would ask the member to keep her comments relevant to the bill we're discussing here today.

**MLA Chen:** Resuming operations provides an additional source of revenue to further support energy affordability in Manitoba. Secondly, restarting Manitoba Hydro International enables us to share our expertise globally and provide important supports around the world, and creates good jobs for Manitobans while doing it. So our NDP team is already doing a lot of important work with Manitoba Hydro.

When our NDP government was first sworn in, we secured an agreement to bring in heat pumps that would reduce the electricity use by many Manitoba households. Our clean Affordable Energy Plan is taking an efficient first approach that will maximize energy savings for Manitobans. Our government knows that Manitobans will make the climate-friendly choice when they can afford to do so.

So, inclusion—in conclusion, our government is committed to making Manitoba Hydro public and to keep rates low for all families.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The honourable—[interjection]

Just before I recognize the next speaker, I would ask the member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton) and the Justice Minister to contain their comments. Hollering back and forth makes it hard for me to hear whether the comments that the speaker is making are relevant or not.

\* (10:40)

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** Definitely it's my privilege and my opportunity to express my thoughts on the net-metering agreement that's been brought forward in Bill 214.

As well all know, the NDP government will continue to build an affordable energy and plan that will lower costs for Manitobans. It seems somewhat ironic, whenever the subject comes up about Crown—and I have somewhat a strong opinion one way or another—no difference whether it's the Crown jewel or it's the Crown lands.

It does seem to be—it seems to be somewhat opinion of members opposite to continue to not want to work in the public component of Crown operations in our province of Manitoba and benefit that it brings to our taxpayers that are all part of our own Crown corporation or Crown opportunities—that the dollars are saved and shared.

Our government knows that Manitobans will make a climate-friendly choice when they can afford

to do so. Unlike the PCs, following through our commitments—who had seven and a half years to deliver on affordable measures—the bill being debated today provides an optional arrangement.

Manitoba is a—net metering allows Manitoba to save energy cost, but at the end of the day, while the net metering would decrease costs for people, the shape that PC left Manitoba Hydro in a very, very drastic situation. And I think I've got some evidence, but I'm hoping that members opposite will give me an opportunity to prove my point as I've just indicated to them that I know that when we had legislation—but instead, this side of House, we're getting the work done. But the former PC constructed legislation that Manitoba Hydro finances were in challenges, almost to the point they felt that it was a priority to privatize certain segments of Manitoba Hydro.

And when we talk about the fact that, you know, the opportunity of the communication component of Manitoba Hydro that was going to be sold off—it kind of has a similar scenario as MTS. And why is it—kind of a similar game plan—that we tend to be always selling off a value-added opportunity that brings in more revenue into the province and saves taxpayers money. But the present government—the previous government seems to always wanted to sell off assets that has a lot of value to the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would ask the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) to drag his comments back to the bill that we're talking about here. He's kind of vectored off quite a bit, so back to the bill before us please.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** My—apologize that I tend to try and make some connections about the reality. Manitoba Hydro, you know, representatives and the government takes responsibility to save taxpayers money. As I said earlier, Manitoba is a Crown jewel that we have and the metering suggestion that's been brought forward in this Bill 214 I think is now somewhat truly being investigated much to my fellow MLA made some comments about a neighbour of his that bought solar panels and was not anticipating to see the benefit through this metering device. He or she, the family made the investment, and I think that should be the opportunity of that investment on their own choice, not to be rewarded of their investment on the metering device.

So I have my thoughts as members opposite obviously don't agree with me all the time. We

occasionally have a common scenario, but we do have a number of opportunities of the importance of energy efficiency in the province of Manitoba, all right? And we authored to that we need to maintain the Manitoba Hydro saving to all representatives that use Manitoba Hydro in Manitoba.

We basically can say Manitoba Hydro is the oil industry of Alberta, and I think we need to have a fair comparison of revenue that comes into our province through the fact of Manitoba Hydro. And the balance sheet does exist. And we talk about the efficiency of the transmission lines that we've developed and opportunity that, you know, when Brad Wall was the hired individual of selling hydro to Saskatchewan.

And I—you know, we've brought in a very attractive revenue source from our neighbours to the west. And I think that's our opportunity to bring in more dollars into the province of Manitoba, and we have to maintain affordable hydro for our province and our taxpayers in the province of Manitoba.

But yet, we do seem to have a disagreement with members opposite that they choose to favour privatization to a certain extent, and let me remind members opposite: MTS is similar.

But I will get back on the subject of—

**The Speaker:** Just remind the minister again that we're talking about net metering, not MTS.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** My apologies, honourable Minister, and I do see some relevance and maybe the template of the similarities, but I'll go back on track. But I honestly have to say, Honourable Speaker, that the discussion today is I—to have the business plan on net metering revisit the opportunity and to see if it's a worthwhile proposition for the benefit of Manitoba Hydro and to the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba, that are, in fact.

And I think what we need to do, sooner than later, is to bring forward that financial spreadsheet in fairness—in fairness of education to the taxpayers that are all joint owners of Manitoba Hydro, right. And whether it's the opportunity that we 'risit' and maybe bring it back later on, but I think at this stage of the game, where the importance of our financial situation this government has faced because of decisions that were made by the previous government, we need to have opportunity to correct more revenue, to bring back into our province so we can get into a balanced budget at our opportunity and then provide opportunities of net 'zering' possibly in agreement.

So I'm going to conclude my commentary right now, Honourable Speaker, that I do want to say I really value Manitoba Hydro, the investments they've made. And much to an earlier comment made by MLA, that if it was the fact that—if it wasn't for our party, we probably wouldn't even have one hydro dam in the province of Manitoba. And then bring in the revenue and sharing in our provinces.

So I'll conclude my commentary, Honourable Speaker, and I apologize for my distraction once in a while, but I do appreciate the comment that's been brought forward. But let me conclude by saying this: The net-metering agreement needs to be revisited and provide a fairness and opportunity for the benefit of Manitoba Hydro and our people that are shareholders in Manitoba Hydro, the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba.

Thank you so much for a chance to speak today, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights):** In a nod to the outstanding Halloween costume of my friend from Lagimodière, it gives me a great honour to put a few words on the record today.

I want to begin by just talking a little bit about the fact that our team is working incredibly hard to make sure that energy is an affordable necessity for Manitobans. And from the beginning, we've been working on that. Concepts like net metering or net billing are ways in which that might be able to happen.

But we need to be very careful and make sure that we have this discussion within the broader context. And of course, second reading is all about that broader context. It's all about looking at the situation in which legislation is introduced. We need to look at the bigger picture and make sure we're taking everything into account as we do that. That context matters. It's not the specifics of the bill that we're arguing; it's the context in which we're trying to introduce it. So that's the way in which I'm going to approach this.

\* (10:50)

So it's important to look at a couple of things. Manitobans who use their own renewable energy, like solar panels or wind turbines, within the grid system are provided with a credit for energy they can sell back to Manitoba.

Net meters measure the difference between the energy consumed and the energy delivered to the consumer. So while net metering would decrease

costs for people, the shape that the PCs left Hydro in is relevant in this context, right?

We want to talk about making solid business decisions, making sure that the Crown corporations that we have, the businesses that we own as Manitobans, are structured in an appropriate way; that they're set up for success. Net metering puts that at risk, so it's important that we're able to talk about the context in which Manitoba Hydro now finds itself.

So there was mismanagement—that's clear—of Manitoba Hydro by the previous government. It's been left in significant debt, but we're still committed to delivering affordable energy. We've done a number of things in that regard to address the specific that this bill is hoping to provide, and that is a little bit of affordability relief for Manitobans. And we thank the member for considering that.

So, for example, we're bringing in a \$1,500 homeowners affordability tax credit, which helps 84 per cent of Manitoba homeowners; something the PCs voted against, okay? We're also looking at a number of other avenues. We've got, again, on the environmental side something that's very important to my residents in River Heights. We're looking at—or we've introduced the EV rebate for both new and used vehicles—incredibly important. Manitobans will make the correct energy decision when it's the affordable choice, and we're helping them to do that, okay?

Our government is creating an addition as we pursue that clean energy future, as we try and make sure that energy costs are more affordable for Manitobans. We're also able to do additional things; there are opportunities here as we pursue that clean energy future around the economy, around employment for people. We're looking at creating far more blue-collar jobs as we emphasize that clean energy economy through strategic investments and clean technologies, sustainable energy and critical mineral development, okay?

So it's important as we look at these things that we've got the big picture in mind, that we're looking at the health, the financial health of Manitoba Hydro, and we're making sure that we're making things truly affordable for people at the home level, in their own homes with their own bills, and net metering puts some of those factors at risk.

I know that my colleague from Burrows wants to put a few words on the record, as well, so I will conclude my comments with that.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** It's NDP in power, the sun is shining. This reminds all of us, including the Progressive Conservatives, to talk about sun, the light, after seven and a half years of darkness in this province.

So when we talk about light and darkness, it reminds me that I must offer my greetings to all Manitobans about Diwali. Happy Diwali, and Happy Bandi Chhor Divas today. Because when we talk about Bandi Chhor, we talk about sacrifice and doing something great for the people of our province and our society.

We are talking about Bill 214 today and I want to say thank you to my friend and colleague, member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), who brought this bill forward and the bill is titled, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements). So I appreciate every single word in this title because we would be talking about Manitoba—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

In accordance with rule 25, and as previously announced, I am interrupting debate to put the question on second reading of Bill 214, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** A recorded vote, please.

**The Speaker:** A recorded vote has been requested. In accordance with rule 24(7), the division will be deferred until 11:55 a.m. this morning.

#### House Business

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that

the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter). The title of this resolution is Crime and Public Safety.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that pursuant to rule 34(8), that the opposition official House leader announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Borderland. The title of the resolution is Crime and Public Safety.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Johnson:** Can you please call Bill 203.

#### Bill 203—The Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will now call Bill 203—resume debate on Bill 203, The Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act and it's standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, who has nine minutes remaining.

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources):** I'm really glad to have the opportunity to put some words on the record here. I remember last time when I was speaking on this bill, I only had a minute and so I'm really looking forward to the opportunity to dig into the bill and get a chance to put the words on the record and make sure that we are focused on the people and the priorities of Manitobans.

You know, I am very, you know, thankful for the opportunity to not only be back in the Chamber in this spot, but to continue to represent my community by being in this Chamber, being engaged in debate and being 'relly'—ready to talk to members from all parties and all sides about the priorities of Manitobans.

Now we know with Bill 203 that it's important for us to not only understand the context of the bill, but to understand its impact and what the impact of the bill would have in both the short-term and the long-term context. And when I think about the bill, I think about the people in my neighbourhood when I go door knocking every summer, when I connect with them on a real level.

Every summer it's been a tradition of mine to go out in my neighbourhood in St. Vital and hear from folks, and go to their doors, walk up to their—up their steps, on their sidewalks, knock on the doors, ring

their doorbells and say, look, how are you doing? What are things—what the issues that you're hearing and feeling?

And I understand from that experience and from the experience that people on—my constituents have going around their community as well and being engaged on each other's property. And how that is a reality that many people might be concerned about. But also the reality is that many of those people also tell me they're very concerned about health care. They're concerned about education, and they're concerned about affordability. And so as I go onto their property and engage them, we're, you know, talking about a variety of issues that impact their lives.

\* (11:00)

**The Speaker:** The hour—[interjection] when this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have seven minutes remaining.

The hour—[interjection] Order, please.

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 26—Removing the Land Transfer Tax for the First-Time Home Buyers

**The Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m. and the time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on, No. 26, Removing the Land Transfer Tax for the First-Time Home Buyers, brought forward by the honourable member for Selkirk.

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** I move, seconded by the MLA for Agassiz,

*WHEREAS according to the "Royal LePage 2024 Demographic Survey: Next Generation of Buyers", 94% of Manitobans aged 18-38 believe that home ownership is a worthwhile investment, and 86% of those who do not currently own a home say it is a priority for them and a milestone they hope to achieve in their lifetime; and*

*WHEREAS despite the desire to own a home, Manitobans are finding it increasingly challenging to purchase a home due to the increased cost of living and increased housing prices; and*

*WHEREAS the land transfer tax adds an additional cost to purchasing a property in Manitoba and can be a barrier to home ownership for first time home buyers; and*

*WHEREAS on the average detached single-family home, the land transfer tax can cost in excess of \$5,000; and*

*WHEREAS according to the 2024 CMHC Mortgage Consumer Survey, the top two concerns for first time homebuyers included paying too much for a home and unforeseen housing costs; and*

*WHEREAS residential homebuyers pay the bulk of land transfer tax collected in Manitoba; and*

*WHEREAS it was an NDP Provincial Government that introduced the land transfer tax, and the current Provincial Government, has not done anything to help with the affordability of owning a home for a first-time home buyer; and*

*WHEREAS in Ontario, British Columbia, and Prince Edward Island, there are first-time home buyer incentives that include rebates on land transfer tax.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to remove the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers to assist more Manitobans with achieving their goal of owning a home.

**Motion presented.**

**Mr. Perchotte:** I'm very proud to rise and talk about removing the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers.

As the opportunity comes forward for people to look and the dream of home ownership has slowly slipped away from the grasp of the children that are entering our work force, who have been working hard for many, many years.

There was a time when the opportunity to own a home was an achievable goal for all people in Manitoba; all people who wanted to work hard, save a little bit of money along the way. But now with the restrictions that are put forward, and the ability to save becoming less and less, the affordability of first-time home buying is becoming an unattainable goal for people who are doing all the right things.

In an area where we have people renting and not having the ability to save money, is very concerning. The dream of being a homeowner is a dream that should be attainable to everyone in our province, not just the elite few who have resources available to them.

The land transfer tax, which was brought in by a previous NDP government as a luxury home tax, was never indexed in value. So ultimately, year after year,

the percentage of taxes paid for first-time home buyers on that land transfer became increasingly more and more and more, as the prices of homes went up in value.

I can remember when I was looking at purchasing my first home. I had an opportunity to convert some RRSPs I had at the time, and I was able to purchase my very first home at 19 years old. That was a big opportunity for me to have some real estate property under my belt where I was not paying for huge rent that I had no stake in.

Having the opportunity to be a homeowner, to build equity, to transfer that equity to my next house and subsequently, my fourth house that I bought, that I reside with my wife now, was a tremendous opportunity.

But we've removed that opportunity for a lot of people who believe in the opportunity of the home buying. They take a look at—there's a path forward that can help them become independent, help establish roots.

And there's so many barriers to home buying, especially for first-time home buyers, that having the opportunity to have your mortgage secured with CMHC is no longer enough.

And about half the population doesn't have the resources of family to assist. My two children, at—each at 21 years of age respectfully, purchased their own homes that they lived in. And that was done because they worked very, very, very hard and saved money. But it was also because of my wife and I assisting in the purchase. We were able to provide a little bit of funds to our children to offset the costs they would have in the land transfer tax, the legal fees that are coming up, the number of searches that are required to do.

So the land transfer tax is a barrier, and I've talked to many members of the community about the barriers. The Manitoba real estate board has indicated that this barrier that's increasing in value year after year is deterring a lot of first-time home buyers from entering the market.

The president of the Manitoba Métis Federation has created a phenomenal incentive program for their first-time home buyers to allow them a path forward for homeownership, recognizing the tremendous barriers that people have in obtaining homeownership. The MMF's plan and demonstrated path has put well over 1,000 first-time home buyers in homes through their program. This—absolutely, that is something to

be very, very proud of for the Manitoba Métis Federation and their vision.

Now, first-time home buyers that are not part of that Manitoba Métis Federation need some assistance. They need the government to step forward and follow what President Chartrand has done and give them a path forward, remove the obstacles in the way. And I know that we don't have the funding at the moment to give that same dollar value towards a first-time home buyer, but removing the land transfer tax would be a huge step in the right direction. It would be a major step forward, allowing people's dreams to actually come true.

Where we have an average rent, in the area that I am, for a two-bedroom apartment, approximately \$1,800 a month. An average mortgage for a two-bedroom house would be about \$1,300 a month. That family could save \$500 per month if they had the ability to establish homeownership.

Without that ability of homeownership, they don't even have the ability to save the funds. You tack on all the cost that people are facing in today's society, not just the rent cost but we just talked about the tuition fees going up at our universities. We've got taxes going up. We have property tax creeping up. We have the 50 per cent tax rebate that was done by the PC government being removed under the NDP government. We need to find a way to get more people into homes.

Once people have an opportunity for first-time homeownership, they take pride in their homes. They establish gardens, they cut their grass, they establish community, they raise their families, they build roots in the communities that last for generations.

I recently talked about how I went back in Tyndall Park, an area that I was at very, very young, and I was amazed to see the number of families that were still there. The kids that I went to school with are now grandparents in those areas. And that's what homeownership does. Homeownership gives the abilities for communities to survive and thrive.

\* (11:10)

The land transfer tax was never meant to stop homeownership; it was a tax grab by the NDPs on luxury homes. But the average price of a home today of close to \$400,000 is not a luxury. That's the starting point of many, many houses in our province. And then you take a look at the tax on that—another \$5,000 of property tax. That would have a young couple saving for years just to pay the tax portion.

And only then, if they meet all the criteria established by the banks and the regulations, that they may be able to get a mortgage. This legislation that we're bringing forward has an opportunity to create personal wealth for people to establish first-time home buying, give an opportunity to establish equity building in that home, gives an opportunity for families to raise their children in a community with neighbours that they know are safe. And it has an opportunity to bring Manitoba closer together and let them know that they are valued in our province.

Please help me—

**The Speaker:** Time has expired.

### Questions

**The Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held and questions may be addressed to—in the following sequence: First question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties. Each independent member may ask one question, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds. The floor is now open for questions.

**MLA Billie Cross (Seine River):** The PCs have no leg to stand on when it comes to affordability. Manitobans know this. There were rising costs under their watch and they cut supports for those who needed it the most. It wasn't until they were desperate, during the election period, that they introduced back-of-the-napkin plans to lure Manitobans to vote for them.

My question for the member opposite: Why did his failed PC government keep taxing Manitobans for seven and a half years?

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** I appreciate the member bringing this question forward because under the PC government, we introduced the largest tax cuts for working Manitobans ever in the history of our province, increasing the personal tax exemption to \$15,000, something that the NDP would never consider. And we did that while indexing it going forward.

So, and I have mentioned several times—and the first time in the history of our province, cheques went bigger under the Province by people not even needing a raise.

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** As a critic for Housing, I've had a chance to talk to quite a few young people, people who are buying their first homes, and the affordability is a problem.

So one of my questions is: How does the land transfer tax affect the affordability of homes for first-time home buyers?

**Mr. Perchotte:** That is an absolutely fantastic question. And as I was mentioning in my earlier statement, the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers is a penalty on them for trying to do all the right things. It stops affordability at the door. They can't get past that front door. It stops them from generating the down payment required to have homeownership. It's debilitating for them and removing it opens up that avenue.

Thank you for the question.

**MLA Cross:** Everybody knows that by 2020, the failed Stefanson PC government was desperate to distance themselves from their record on health care and frankly, the way they treated workers in this province. So they mailed out cheques that nobody asked for, which cost us taxpayers millions of dollars.

By the 2023 election, they made more back-of-the-napkin plans that would leave Manitobans worse off.

My question for the member opposite, who just talked about those large cheques: Would he be willing to waste millions of dollars, mailing out cheques, to bribe Manitobans?

**Mr. Perchotte:** If the member opposite thinks that giving homeowners a tax rebate on money that they spend is bribery, then I would be absolutely in favour of supporting Manitobans and giving them a tax break every single day that's possible.

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** I just think that's some pretty shocking comments coming from the member for Seine River, saying that returning Manitobans' hard-earned tax money to them is somehow bribery, is a shocking revelation about the opinions of the NDP government and their opinions on who tax dollars belong to. They don't belong to the member for Seine River; these are the dollars that Manitobans earn, and it is absolutely right for government to return those dollars back into the pockets of Manitobans.

So can the member for Selkirk please put more words on the record outlining our Progressive Conservative beliefs that Manitoba tax dollars should be returned back to the pockets of Manitobans.

**Mr. Perchotte:** Thank you to my colleague. The comments that he was shocked—and maybe he was shocked, but I'm not shocked. This is a government

that continually tax and spends people's money on a daily basis. They have—they haven't met a dollar that they don't want to spend of somebody else's.

When it comes to the PCs' record, we have made life affordable. We have made—indexed the tax savings for everybody in the province and every dollar that they earn. I see it in the employees that work for me on a daily basis. I've seen a government hard at work bringing down the PST of a former NDP failed government. I see people in this House, on this side of the House, holding the NDP accountable—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**MLA Cross:** You know what, the PCs just can't help contradicting themselves when it comes to supporting affordability measures for Manitobans. I'm glad the member from Spruce Woods stood up because now I can say, you know, they're all flip-flopping like they always do. They've been against our gas tax cut, and this week they voted against our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit, which helps 84 per cent of Manitobans.

My question for the member opposite and frankly all of his colleagues: Do they see the hypocrisy of their intentions this morning?

**Mr. Perchotte:** The member opposite is trying to put some words on the record when we are talking about making life more affordable for people on a daily basis. We're trying to remove the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers.

The PC government continually looks at opportunities to make sure that we stand up for all the people in our province; to make sure that people looking for opportunities that are moving forward, that we stand there and we say: these are the pathways for that opportunity. Taking that land transfer tax off of for first-time home buyers is one step.

I can't wait for another three years when we form government and we can put out more steps.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** I have a young person in my constituency that I discussed—bringing this motion forward, and they said this could be the difference between them being able to afford to buy a home or not. It's a big affordability—especially for the young—issue for young—for the young people who want to buy homes, and we have a housing shortage. Let's get this available for people that need to buy a home.

What incentives will removing the land transfer tax for first-time buyers have for young Manitobans and the affordability of buying that first home?

**Mr. Perchotte:** Thank you to the member of our caucus for that great question.

Removing that first-time tax, the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers, has the ability to get people into the houses quicker; to have their mortgage payments smaller because they don't have a huge balloon payment of an additional \$5,000 tacked to a 20, 25 or 30-year mortgage. You're not amortizing that cost over decades; it just simply will not be there. There are opportunities to get into that home, first-time home, will happen very, very quickly.

\* (11:20)

**MLA Cross:** Manitobans know that the PCs were and continue to be desperate to get back in their good graces after years of cuts, rising costs and a horrible campaign. One of their biggest failures was giving Manitobans hard-earned dollars to out-of-province billionaires when it should've been in the pockets of Manitobans.

My question for the member opposite: Was he okay with the failed PC Stefanson government sending cheques to out-of-province billionaires?

**Mr. Perchotte:** I don't know why the member said—member opposite does not want to talk about the land transfer tax. It's very important—this is a pathway forward for people to get into homeownership. It's an opportunity to get people from paying rent and being stuck in poverty to an opportunity where they can have homeownership and start building some equity.

Please get on board.

**Mr. Jackson:** You know, it's really, really ironic today. We've got the member for Seine River (MLA Cross) accusing us of hypocrisy. I think she wrote the book on hypocrisy because you've got us, here, advocating for property tax rebates and the removal of the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers. Meanwhile, her government has raised property taxes for the education property taxes on home buyers and homeowners.

So will the member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte) please outline the problematic stance for the member for Seine River and her NDP government on raising education property taxes on home buyers and how this piece of resolution will give first-time home buyers a little bit of relief from this NDP government and their tax hikes?

**Mr. Perchotte:** Honourable Speaker, I really want to thank my colleague for that question. We watched in a very short period of time that the NDP government



went out and attacked Manitobans by allowing property tax increases as much as 17 per cent—17 per cent tax increases. And the hypocrisy of them standing there and saying that they're not looking at affordability—well, we certainly have.

We gave 50 per cent tax rebates on property tax, looking at 100 per cent tax rebates right across the board. We will make life affordable for Manitobans every single time.

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

### Debate

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

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources):** I'm glad to be standing up on debate here on this bill.

You know, it's really important that we talk about affordability, and I understand, you know, member opposite had brought this bill forward today with the intention of trying to make life more affordable for Manitobans, and I can understand that sentiment. And as I get into debate, I want to talk about the affordability challenge and I want to talk about, you know, the housing stock that people—issues people are facing around housing, both in Manitoba here but are right across the country.

But really, I mean, we have to talk—when we talk about the housing, we really need to be backing up to understand the problem, we can understand how we want to solve the problem moving forward. And so when we look back at, you know, over the past several years about why it's important to—why we're in the issue where it is so difficult to—for young people, for new homeowners to try to buy their first home, we have to understand that there has been a short supply of housing of all kinds for many years.

Now, you know, I think we're in a position many years ago where there was—where we weren't kind of in the same challenge around housing and the housing stock wasn't as tight. But the housing market is like many other markets around where it is very dependent on supply and demand.

And as the past, you know, decade or so, at least particularly in the last eight years, what we've seen is an increased population, an increased demand on housing, but we haven't seen the housing builds keep pace with this sort of effort. And so I think it's very important to understand that there has been this crunch, this, you know, this issue here where the

housing stock hasn't kept pace with the demand for housing.

Now the demand for housing has been in many levels, right? Certainly there has been a demand for affordable housing and that addresses the affordability challenges that the member opposite is trying to raise by bringing forward this land transfer bill today.

And so that goes right through, from those who are looking around housing in terms of shelters, very temporary housing, people who are trying to get out of the houselessness issue that they may be facing. It goes to people who are looking for very short-term temporary housing; those who want to then build up and get into the rental unit availability, to get into the renting system with some assistance from programs like EIA, from Rent Assist, to help them be able to afford some of those places to live.

Then people who want to go and have the ability to actually get into the full rental stock system. And this system certainly is, Honourable Speaker, as I'm sure you'd be aware from folks in your own constituency, it can be challenging to be in that rental unit system and understand how we now understand people living in that system and living in an affordable way.

So our government takes that very seriously and we have initiatives to actually decrease rent for taxes by decreasing—increasing the renters tax credit. That's our government's solution and approach to making life more affordable for people throughout different spheres of, you know, homeownership or rental units.

So, Honourable Speaker, as these people then look at ways to progress from their rental units into home ownership and see whether that is a, you know, fiscally viable opportunity for them or something that would make their lives better for themselves and their family. You look into people who are then looking into becoming first-time home buyers. And this goes right to the—you know, directly to the challenge that we're seeing today.

But again, that stock of housing needed to have been built for many years to keep pace with the demand for housing. And sadly, we've seen that the former government didn't really meet that challenge when it came to building housing stock. We saw, for years after years, that they did not actually build up the Manitoba Housing stock and oftentimes were selling off Manitoba Housing units. That was to the detriment of people who were trying to get into, find a place to live.

They also, at that same time, made it more difficult for people who were looking to transition maybe perhaps at an older, a later stage of life, getting out of homeownership and going into long-term-care facilities. And the number of long-term-care facilities actually dropped under their watch for seven and a half years. And now that had a real impact on people right across the system who were looking to have affordable places to live, Honourable Speaker.

And so as we continue to understand the impact of the decision to not invest in housing and in housing stock and in housing affordability by the failed former government, we are now even more burdened with this reality of challenges around affordability for peoples' places to live.

And so as we continue to—thank you—as we continue to understand this, you know, we see as a government—we work very closely with communities and with people to address this issue and to address it in a more meaningful way. You know, when we came into office, we looked at some of the affordability challenges. We certainly wanted to address affordability for Manitobans.

Removing the gas tax was, you know, chief among those initiatives for making life more affordable for folks. Had a real impact on the day-to-day life of Manitobans who drive, particularly those folks who drive a lot in the rural communities. But it also had spill-off impacts. One of them is on the side where, you know, consumer goods cost less, groceries cost less because transportation costs are down. That meant that inflation right across the province, while it was the lowest in Canada; something we're very proud about—having that positive economic impact on the country.

But further to that, we also looked at the affordability for homeowners and we saw that the regime that was set up under the former government to do a percentage base tax credit for homeowners, you know, going to a 50 per cent rebate, was a regressive tax. It allowed more people with wealth, with larger homes and more expensive homes, to recoup more of that tax break.

\* (11:30)

And so we saw—why not set up a system where we could still give Manitobans an affordability break on homeownership and on their ability to afford their home, and provide a good life for themselves and their families?

But how can we do so in a way that (a) impacts more Manitobans and more Manitobans who really need that support?

And so we looked at setting up a system that is more progressive, instead of the regressive approach that was pushed on Manitobans by the Heather Stefanson and the failed former PC government. So what we did is we brought in the \$1,500 home affordability tax credit. This program is one that allows Manitobans who own homes to receive a flat \$1,500 tax break.

That means that many Manitobans won't pay anything on their education portion of their tax. That means that many Manitobans will get far more than the 50 per cent tax break, and it will make sure that more Manitobans, overall, more households, are benefiting from a tax break. This is what we want to do to bring true affordability to Manitobans and to Manitobans who need it the most.

You know, this is very important because we know that the issues around housing and the challenges around housing are only going to get more significant over the many years to come as more and more people—as our population continues to grow. I understand that Manitobans might be approaching the 1.5 million mark or thereabouts, right?

More and more people appear to be coming to Manitoba now that we have such a progressive and listening government, as we saw the incredible out-migration that existed under the PC government. I think it was their regressive taxes that had something to do with that.

But now that Manitoba—that more and more people are seeing the economic opportunities here, the wonderful educational opportunities, the improving health-care system, more people are coming here and seeing the value of Manitoba and the Manitoba advantage. We're very proud to—happy to talk about the Manitoba advantage.

Part of that advantage is affordability; the fact that we have some of the lowest hydro rates anywhere in the continent, the fact that we have some of the lowest car insurance rates through MPI, the fact that we continue to have some of the lowest post-secondary rates in the country. This makes Manitoba attractive.

But also, the ability to own a home, own an affordable home, is very attractive. I talk to people in the tech industry where, you know, you could work distance, work any part of the country. They get hired in Vancouver. I said, you can stay there if you want.

But no, people want to come to live in Manitoba because it is more affordable, because their paycheque goes further.

Our home affordability tax credit is directly a part of that affordability solution that our government is putting forward. It goes directly to make sure that homeowners have a better quality of life, a more affordable life. It's all thanks to the hard work of our entire government and our entire government's team and I want to thank each and every member of our caucus.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** Thank you to my colleague, the member from Selkirk, for introducing this important resolution here today, and thank you to my colleagues for those great questions.

And I'm proud to stand here and put a few words on the record in regards to this resolution, the removal of the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers in Manitoba. This will enhance housing affordability and stimulate the local economy, and it's important for so many Manitobans. And it is a proactive approach to support these first-time home buyers.

Removing this tax will lower the upfront costs that are associated with purchasing a home, making it easier for these buyers to save for their down payment and afford their new dream home.

It can stimulate the housing market by encouraging more people to buy homes, potentially leading to increased demand and a boost for the local economy. By eliminating this extra cost, is making the homeownership more accessible for young people and families to invest for their future.

This tax can be a significant expense, obviously, for many buyers, adding thousands of dollars to those closing costs. By eliminating this, like I said, it will be easier to manage their finances, allowing families and folks to allocate more funds toward their down payment, moving expenses or those home improvements.

This policy will also encourage more individuals and families to enter the market affordably. Many of the younger people believe that ownership is a worthwhile investment, and at the same time, these young buyers understand homeownership is expensive, and many would like to save for such an investment.

Many young buyer hopefuls say they have delayed or eliminated travelling in order to save for a

purchase of a home. Stats Canada reported that core housing costs in Manitoba are up 4.7 per cent year over year. Rents are up 6 per cent while the cost of owning a home is increasing. Removing this tax would increase home purchases and have a ripple effect throughout the economy. When people buy homes, they often spend on renovations, furniture, services, which also stimulates job growth in construction, retail and, of course, other sectors, and will be particularly beneficial for all local businesses.

In summary, Honourable Speaker, the removal of the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers in Manitoba is forward-thinking initiative, aimed at making homeownership more attainable for many folks and families looking to buy their first home. This resolution is a positive move creating a meaningful benefit for Manitobans looking to enter the housing market, purchase their first home and make their dreams come true.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen). No—[interjection] Radisson. Sorry.

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** I don't blame you for a second for mixing that up; I get it in community all the time, and honestly, it's an honour to be mistaken for the member for Fort Richmond from time to time.

Before I begin my remarks on this, I do want to take issue with a couple of the things that were mentioned earlier on. I find it appalling that the member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte) can stand up on a bill that claims to make strides in affordability while talking about how, you know, people wouldn't struggle with affordability if they just pulled themselves up by the bootstraps. And then pointing immediately to a very meaningful initiative under the Manitoba Métis Federation and saying something that is offered to Métis peoples should also be offered to everybody else. Ignorantly—just ignorantly stating that, meanwhile there is generational trauma, generational barriers to creating and fostering generational wealth that this MMF initiative accommodates for—and only accommodates for in fraction, may I say.

And further to that, Honourable Speaker, my family came here to Manitoba. They may not be as generous as the member for Selkirk because they do not have as much to their name upon having me as their daughter. Though, you know, what they did give me is an opportunity to be here in Manitoba. In

Manitoba, a province where we have an NDP government, but in Manitoba, back in 2019, a place where, across Canada, we led the nation in homeownership—in youth homeownership.

Manitoba in 2019, Honourable Speaker, had the highest share of young home buyers. The lowest median rate—lowest median age in Manitoba was 39 years old. Further, you know, over a third, 36.6 per cent, were younger than 35 years old. This is also the youngest average across Manitoba, and so while there are strides to be made in affordability and homeownership and access to having a roof over your head across the country, in Manitoba, I am really lucky to be a 24-year-old and to be dreaming of my first home and to be, you know, surrounded by young people who have made it, and have made it because of the sacrifices of those before us and have made it because of sustainable government investments, like the ones that we're making today as an NDP government. *[interjection]* Thank you.

You know, many of my colleagues in this Chamber, when they were my age and much younger, upon graduating high school, even, you know, the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham) has shared with me that upon graduating high school, he moved out, moved out of his parents' home, hit the road and joined the school of rock and roll.

\* (11:40)

I, unfortunately—you know, my generation wasn't—it wasn't that lucky. Gen Z, you know, I am so thankful that as a member of Gen Z, I have access to this platform and have been trusted by the people of Radisson and, you know, have work that I am motivated to come to every single day, but many of the other members of my generation can't say the same.

Now, Honourable Speaker, this—the first whereas clause in this resolution states that:

Whereas according to the Royal LePage 2024 demographic survey: next generation of home buyers, 94 per cent of Manitobans aged 18 to 38 believe that home ownership is a worthwhile investment, and 86 per cent of those who do not currently own a home say it is a priority for them and a milestone that they hope to achieve in their lifetime.

And now this is one of the few things in this resolution that I agree with because, as a young person, it is ridiculous to me that I had to become an MLA, that I had to make a six-figure salary, in order to move out

of my parents' basement. And that's the climate that we live in.

And so, as someone who aspires to put a down payment down on a home one day, that aspires to move out with my partner, I would much rather have an annual \$1,500 tax credit that our NDP government is making happen than something that is a one-time bribe and a last-ditch effort from the previous government before an election.

And when it comes to that language, I know that members opposite took issue with using that word, but that's what it was. That's why they take issue with it.

And, Honourable Speaker, another thing that was said earlier on this resolution was that, you know, this resolution would motivate folks to give—or motivate the government to give their tax dollars back to taxpayers. And you know what? Manitobans proudly elected our government because they trust us with their tax dollars. They trust us to do the big things that individual people can't do alone.

And those big things include, you know, taking that tax credit away from out-of-province billionaires, like Galen Weston. That includes ensuring that that tax money ends up going to people who need it. That includes, you know, cutting the gas tax and establishing a gas tax holiday that can save all Manitobans who use—who rely on mobile transport to get to work, to get to school, who ride transit to, you know, save 14 cents a litre, and point to those savings when they aren't being passed down to the consumer.

Honourable Speaker, it's because of this work that our incredible Finance Minister has done that our interest rates are—that inflation is at an all-time low in Manitoba. And our approach is working, Honourable Speaker, and that's why members opposite are offended by what we have to say.

As a young person, I am proud that our government has been able to have, you know, the lowest inflation rate across the country, the third—and currently the third lowest in the country too. In January 2024, our initiative brought inflation down to 0.8 per cent in our province compared to 2.9 per cent in the country; in February 2024, 0.9 per cent compared to 2.8 per cent in the country; and in August, the—just this recent August, 1.3 per cent compared to 2 per cent in our country.

And it's because of this initiative that we have been able to earn the trust of creditors, earn the trust that was broken by the previous government, and

rebuild that similar trust with Manitobans; the Manitobans who put us here to represent them today.

Honourable Speaker, it's an honour to talk today about housing and affordability, again, as a young person. In my home constituency of Radisson, Habitat for Humanity is doing some incredible work. They—just this past September, I joined our Minister for housing, homelessness and addictions and the Minister responsible for Mental Health (Ms. Smith), at the Habitat for Humanity's largest project launch to date, right here—or right at home, in Radisson.

Now, just to take a quote from a public Free Press article: Situated on three acres of land, the Pandora Avenue West development will include 11 blocks of five townhouses once it's completed in 2026. Another 40 families will move into the development at that point. All told, approximately 275 people, including 175 children, will call the area home.

Now each of those people will receive a tax credit every single year that they would not have gotten under the previous government. Now, Honourable Speaker, another thing: When it comes to the 175 children that are living in those homes, the Pandora-Plessis stretch is particularly interesting to me because there are a community of children that live within that area that are ready to, you know, pursue their dreams. And they are able to do so because they have a roof over their head. And I am so excited that our government has, you know, the astute mandate and the astute vision to ensure that as many of them as possible make it to their 18th birthday.

So, Honourable Speaker, as I end off my remarks on this resolution before us, again, as a young person, I am very thankful to be here in the Legislature, but there is so much more work to be done, and I hope that all members of this Chamber can acknowledge just how that work should be done well.

**MLA Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** Before I put any comment on the resolution put forward by the member from Selkirk, I'd also like to wish all Manitobans a happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas. This is an important day in the Sikh and Hindu communities, especially Indian communities.

And I also want to send a message out to my constituents and also all Manitobans. I know I love—we love to enjoy this special day with the firecrackers, fireworks. Please follow the rules. City of Winnipeg's rules say that you cannot have fireworks after 10 o'clock. You must have a permit before you do any fireworks at your house.

And again—once again, happy Diwali, Bandi Chhor Divas.

And now, coming back to do this resolution that was put forward by the honourable member from Selkirk: removing land transfer tax for first-time home buyers. Manitobans deserve the freedom of living in an affordable home. Our NDP government has made significant investments into social and affordable housing, as well as measures to help Manitobans afford a home.

By investing in families and neighbourhoods, we are helping more Manitobans raise a healthy family in safer communities. For seven and a half years, Manitobans were left to their own devices while the failed PC government sold off social housing stock and allowed housing to reach new levels of unaffordability.

They waited until they were losing the 2023 election to bribe Manitobans into voting them back in. It didn't work. They voted a government that cares about Manitobans. They voted a people who care about the other Manitobans.

Our government—our new government's approach is building more housing and supporting Manitobans' freedom to build a home. And an NDP government is committed to helping more Manitobans afford a home. Our budget is bringing in a \$1,500 Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit, helping 84 per cent of Manitoban homeowners.

\* (11:50)

This is one of the 21 ways to help Manitobans have affordability. This is one of the incredible things our Finance Minister has done, undoing the damage done to the province's social housing stock caused by the PCs by investing in maintaining, creating social and affordable housing.

Our budget is also introducing a new Rental Housing Construction Tax Credit to help keep rentals low. Looking toward ending chronic homelessness is—in Manitoba in two terms by ensuring more Manitobans have a support and access to affordable housing.

Honourable Speaker, by investing in families and neighbourhoods, we are helping more Manitobans raise a healthy family in safer communities. For seven and a half years, the failed PC government raised costs for Manitoba families, limiting their economic freedom.

Honourable Speaker, even they cut renters tax credit by \$175. Honourable Speaker, who live on

those apartment blocks or who access these rental tax credits are newcomers, people who are older folks, and also people on low incomes. So this is, again, an attack on the people who really need the support.

With our new approach, we are building more housing and supporting Manitobans' freedom to afford a home. Our NDP government is putting in the work to make life more affordable for Manitobans. Honourable Speaker, this includes creating a fair rebate program that helps Manitobans who need it most. As I said earlier, a \$1,500 affordable—a \$1,500 Homeowners Affordable Tax Credit to help Manitoban homeowners save money.

This new tax credit is removing the regressive tax scheme that the failed PC government put into place which saw millions of dollars benefit out-of-province millionaires. We have all seen it where folks from Polo Park mall, which are not owners who are living in Manitoba, getting millions and millions of dollars of tax credit while in our province, folks were having a hard time with affordability.

So, Honourable Speaker, with this, I once again would like to thank for giving me a chance to put few comments on this PMR, which is brought forward by the MLA from Selkirk, and once again, happy Diwali, happy Bandi Chhor.

Thank you.

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** It's a pleasure to stand today and I just want to take a moment to shout-out my colleagues on this side of the House. The diversity of experience and understanding of the journey to homeownership is pretty phenomenal.

I appreciated the sentiment from the youngest member here and her experience with her journey towards homeownership. MLA from The Maples and his notes about the importance of making living in apartments affordable. And, Honourable Speaker, I want to reiterate that on this side of the House when we talk about affordability, we're talking about affordability for everyone.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

As previously announced, I'm interrupting debate—my mistake.

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

## DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

*(Continued)*

### Bill 214—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements)

*(Continued)*

**The Speaker:** As previously announced, I'm interrupting debate to conduct a recorded vote on the second reading motion of Bill 214, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements).

A recorded vote having been requested to call in the members.

#### Recorded Vote

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 214, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements).

#### Division

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

#### Ayes

*Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Pivniuk, Wharton, Wowchuk.*

#### Nays

*Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wiebe.*

**Deputy Clerk (Mr. Tim Abbott):** Ayes 17, Nays 29.

**The Speaker:** The motion is accordingly defeated.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** The hour now being past 12 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands—recessed. You almost got a break.

We're recessed until 1:30 this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 31, 2024

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