

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 27, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 8—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 8, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: I'm pleased to introduce the bill today. The Pension Benefits Amendment Act will modernize the legislation while maintaining its integrity, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: Based on the Pension Commission recommendations and the feedback from the online consultation, the department is proposing changes that will modernize the rules and reduce red tape without compromising the security of pensions.

These amendments permit changes and—locked-in rules, solvency deficiency funding rules, division of assets on relationship breakdown and small modernization measures, Madam Speaker.

These amendments will ensure a strong framework for pensions for people in the province of Manitoba.

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

Further introduction of bills?

Bill 17—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Claim Dispute Tribunal)

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke), Bill 17—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Claim Dispute Tribunal), be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wharton: Madam Speaker, this bill amends the Manitoba Public Insurance act to establish a claims dispute tribunal. The tribunal will be created as an independent body to settle physical damage claim disputes between MPI and its customers. Decisions of the claim dispute tribunal will be binding on both parties. The tribunal will reduce the number of auto accident-related cases from court dockets, freeing up court time and resources for more pressing matters.

Thank you.

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

Bill 200—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley): I move, seconded by the member from Riding Mountain, that Bill 200, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Reyes: It's my pleasure today to introduce Bill 200, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, to this House.

Madam Speaker, this bill will amend The Municipal Assessment Act to exempt the veteran associations from payment of municipal property taxes in Manitoba, except for local improvements.

I would like to thank all the guests that have joined us today from the Royal Canadian Legion, and the army, navy and air force veterans in Canada, and many others that have made such a huge contribution to our province and our way of life in Canada.

Thank you for being here today. Most of all, thank you for your service. I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Training): Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to table Assiniboine Community College 2019 Financial Statements.

I also want to table—my pleasure to table Community Economic Development Fund quarterly financial statements.

It's my pleasure to table Industrial Technology Centre 2018-2019 annual financial reports. Thank you for that assistance.

It is my pleasure to table the Co-operative Loans and Loans Guarantee Board Annual Report for 2018-2019.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): It's my pleasure today to rise in the Assembly to table the Public Service Group Insurance Fund valuation.

I'd also like to rise today in the Assembly to table the Vital Statistics Agency 2018-19 Annual Report, as well as the Entrepreneurship Manitoba 2018-19 Annual Report.

Madam Speaker: And in accordance with section 30(6) of The Advocate for Children and Youth Act, I am tabling the annual report of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth, including the 2018-2019 Child Death Review Roll-Up for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2019.

Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Norbert Collegiate Football Champions

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): It has been a victorious year for Manitoba football teams. I would like to take a moment now to congratulate the Winnipeg Blue Bombers for bringing home the Grey Cup. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize an important football victory in my constituency.

On November 8, 2019, after a lengthy wait, Collège St. Norbert Collegiate Celtics football team became B-side Division 2 Manitoba High School

Athletic Association Bowl city champs. They defeated the West Kildonan Wolverines with a final score of 13-10.

In the past 10 years, the Celtics made the championship game three other times and unfortunately lost all three. Those of those championships were against West Kildonan Wolverines. Defeating the Wolverines this championship was truly an amazing moment for all the players.

The Celtics this year had 29 players on the team made up of students from grades 9 to 12. The key ingredient in their formula for success was the players' never-quit attitude which paid off and led them to victory.

* (13:40)

This attitude helped them overcome difficult weather conditions of heavy snow, which needed to be removed so the yard lines could be seen, and it also helped them go from their halftime score of being down 10-nothing to winning the game.

The game was a nail-biter right until the very last play, when quarterback Brett Murphy scrambled out the pocket and threw the ball to receiver Noah Cornborough, who caught the ball in the end zone. This catch made the score 13-10 in the Celtics' favour and sealed the win.

I congratulate St. Norbert Celtics' coach, Adrian Huntley, his team staff and all the players on their hard-won Manitoba High School Athletic Association Bowl championship victory.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Seine River.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I ask for leave for the names of the football players and coaches to be entered into Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow those names to be placed in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

St. Norbert Collegiate Celtics 2019. Players: Sam Badru, Ryan Blanco, Mason Campbell, Noah Cornborough, Cole Einarson, Damien Galbichka, Jesse Hildebrand, Ethan Hoepner, Evan Horn, Chase Johnston, Rylan Keith, Ethan Loxton, Notin Macintyre, Elie Mawu, Moke Mawu, Nicholas McCormick-Mayer, Nolan Moroz, Ade Mudasiru, Brett Murphy, Brandon Palichuk, Brent Purcha, Chase Ransom, Shayne Ransom, Zephyr Senff, Cyrus Sinclair-Romaniuk, James Thomas, Sukhraj Toor, Andre Weekes, Josiah Wolanski.

Coaches: Cole Coyston, Connor Forrester, Adrian Huntley, Steve Kaban, Troy Laden, Gaganjot Mavi, Ronny Singh; Dave Branton, Corinne Del Rio, medical.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Vital—or, sorry, the honourable member for St. James.

St. James Assiniboia 55+ Centre

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Madam Speaker, we can all agree Manitoba seniors and elders have helped build this great province and continue to contribute to the social, civic and economic life of our communities.

Madam Speaker, today, I rise to recognize the St. James Assiniboia 55+ Centre. It's a great community organization focused on helping seniors in West Winnipeg to enhance their dignity, increase their independence and grow their involvement in and with the community.

Described as one of the hidden gems in St. James, the 55+ senior centre has been in service to our community since 1992. The centre provides vital recreational, educational, health and social opportunities for persons 55 years or over to improve their quality of life.

The centre offers education programs such as Fun with Flowers, which allows members to engage in themed flower arrangement workshops. They also have a choir group called the Singsationals, which gives wonderful performances throughout our community.

The centre also provides fitness programming including yoga, line dancing, Zumba, circuit training and others to improve the overall physical and mental health of its members. Their food and friendship program invites people to gather, prepare simple recipes, to eat and to learn about various topics, and the list goes on.

However, in order to maintain these great services, the 55+ senior centre needs more funding and community support.

Manitoba's aging population deserves to live with dignity and know that the services they count on are there for them. Preserving an organization like the 55+ senior centre is critical to honouring their contributions and ensuring those who are aging continue to lead active, socially engaging and independent lives.

We are joined today in the gallery by the centre's executive director, Meaghan Wilford.

So please join me in thanking her and the entire St. James Assiniboia 55+ senior centre team for their hard work and dedication to improving the lives of aging Manitobans.

Tribute to Veterans' Poppy Memorial Blanket

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to constituents from my riding of McPhillips and indeed throughout the province.

The poppy has been a long-standing symbol of remembrance across the Commonwealth. On June 30th, 1948, on behalf of the people of Canada, the Royal Canadian Legion was given the responsibility to safeguard the poppy as a symbol of remembrance, a symbol of sacrifice.

Today in the gallery, I've invited Sheilah Lee Restall. Sheilah was inspired when she saw how a community in the United Kingdom came together to pay tribute to veterans, as many Canadian veterans paid the ultimate sacrifice to protect our rights and freedoms. Sheilah reached out to the Handmade Winnipeg Facebook group community to help her fulfill her artistic vision.

Sheilah and her team were granted permission by the Legion to honour our veterans through this project and to use the poppy trademark.

In one year's time, the community came together and made a blanket more than 85 feet in length, with over 8,000 handmade poppies and thousands of dedicated ribbons. Knitters and crocheters from all over Winnipeg and area assisted.

In some cases they produced a few dozen poppies, in some cases several hundred, as was the situation with two individuals from my area, Jordan Dearsley and Surinder Dhanjas.

Each individual poppy was made to represent the individuals who made our—that—their sacrifice for our freedom. I would also like to acknowledge the tireless effort and support received from Devi Sharma, councillor for Old Kildonan, who did an incredible amount of work behind the scenes to promote, invite others and participate in the project, all with unending enthusiasm and energy.

It is also important to acknowledge other friends of the blanket, including Canadian Goodwill, Seven Oaks School Division, Garden City Shopping Centre

and Kildonan Place, for all they did to make this a success.

The blanket proved so popular that its display here at our own Manitoba Legislature was extended to accommodate public interest. The bright red poppies in contrast to the marble of the grand staircase will have a lasting memory for those of us who were here to pay homage to those that fought so we may be free.

Thank you.

Strathcona School Provincial Governance Classes

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Today, I acknowledge a very special group of students in the gallery. This fall, Daniel Orlikow's 6th-grade class from Strathcona School, a school I also attended, has been learning about provincial governance.

During the most recent 2000 provincial–2019 provincial election, the class learned about each party's platform, the leaders from each of the parties, and the candidates in the Point Douglas area. The class practised voting by holding their own mock election, which was—the result of me being elected by the students.

After the election, I was honoured to receive an email from Mr. Orlikow's class letting me know how much seeing indigenous people represented in prominent roles in government means to these children. I also received letters from each student, which the Leader of the Opposition and I read, requesting a visit to the Manitoba Legislature and, of course, some suggestions for the government, which included making our province safer; more investments in education, health care; and of course, every kid's dream: a bigger play area in their school.

It is critical that young Manitobans see themselves reflected, their values reflected and represented in these very institutions. I am thrilled to be able to stand here today as a role model for the future generations of Manitoba leaders.

Miigwech to the teachers of Point Douglas, and beyond, who stress the importance of participating in our democracy. Citizens who start voting in each mock election young are likely to continue voting.

I hope that each and every one of you from Mr. Orlikow's class continues to be engaged in what is happening in your city, your province and your country.

I want to say some final words to Mr. Orlikow's class: All of you have it in you to be leaders and to do great things. Your voice matters. Your opinions matter. Your experiences matter. I am so proud of each one of you for taking time to participate in writing letters, coming here today and to engage in the political process. I look forward to seeing what each of you do in your future endeavours.

Miigwech.

Guests from Strathcona School: Xavior Belanger, Dylan Bercier, Hannah Berens, Aliyah Gurniak, Louis Keeper, Halle Kennedy, R.J. Lorteau, Kianna MacDonald, Nickolas McKay, Heidi Mousseau, Daniel Orlikow, Dion Peebles, Katie Prince, A.J. Reyes, Wilson San Miguel, N.J. Shingoose, Alayah Twoheart Sinclair, Matthew Smith, Hope Spence, Lee Tavares, David Worall-Cabral, Corbin Young

Hope in the City Breakfast

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Madam Speaker, today is the third day of action against gender-based violence, and on November 13th, the Minister for the Status of Women, as well as myself and many of my other caucus members, joined the Salvation Army at their annual Hope in the City Breakfast.

There we heard Victoria Morrison tell her story. Victoria Morrison grew up in Ontario. After getting involved with a bad crowd and drug and alcohol addiction in her hometown, Victoria began a romantic relationship with the man who would eventually become her trafficker.

The relationship became more and more abusive, and eventually Victoria was kidnapped and taken to Winnipeg, where she was prostituted and beaten. After suffering months of abuse, she found a way to contact police and received help from the Salvation Army. Her horrific story made headlines across Canada.

What angered me the most about her story was hearing that dozens—dozens—of Winnipeg men actively participated in her abuse and exploitation, and I hated them for it.

But then I heard the voice of my father in my mind. See, he was a parole officer and, perhaps, unlike most others because he would invite his clients to our family home. We hosted thieves, murderers, rapists and human traffickers all at—around our kitchen table. And after they left, he would often say: There, but by the grace of God, go I.

He would remind me that we all fall short. We all need forgiveness. We all need grace. That's not to excuse, much less to justify, the actions of these abusers or any other criminal, but it should keep us humble.

* (13:50)

So my prayer for Christmas is that they and all Manitobans would repent and experience forgiveness, grace and love. My prayer for Christmas is that they and all Manitobans would show compassion and kindness to each other, and especially to those less fortunate. My prayer for Christmas is that we may all receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

God bless.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

Seated in the public gallery from Chancellor school we have 63 grade 6 students under the direction of Christine Young, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Waverley (Mr. Reyes).

On behalf of all members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith).

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Can I ask leave to have the names of the students that were in the gallery today added to Hansard?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include the guests for the member in Hansard after her statement?
[Agreed]

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipal Grants Request for Public Funding

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, municipalities across the province are suffering, and it's residents who are feeling the pain. We know that this Premier has frozen grants to municipalities for three years now, and many of these communities are now put into difficult situations and contemplating cuts to police

services, to libraries, to snow clearing, to garbage pickup and so on down the list.

Now, this week at AMM, delegates voted for an end to the funding freeze. They are clearly calling on this government to start beginning to fund grants for municipalities at the rate of economic growth or better.

Will the Premier end the freeze and will he commit to adequate funding for municipalities in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We have—all of us here, I know, have tremendous respect for local representatives, who are at the front line and providing important services to people of Manitoba, congratulate all who stepped forward to represent their areas at the municipal government level.

That is why we maintain some of the most generous funding for our municipalities in the country of Canada.

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

Public Safety and Crime Request for Summit to Address

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): There seems to be a difference of opinion from the municipal leaders themselves, and that's why this week they called on the provincial government to begin increasing the grants to municipalities.

Now, one of the issues that was very prominent on the floor, and, really, all of the discussions that I was a part of at AMM this week, was the issue of public safety and, in fact, even delegations today—they're lobbying both us and the government—raising the issue of public safety as well.

Certainly, all of us in the Chamber have been moved by videos, by media reports, and in some cases among our colleagues, first-hand experience with these recent events in the province of Manitoba. Many community members are asking for a better response from the part of the government.

Will the government today commit to convening a summit that would bring together politicians, business, labour and community leaders, as well as law enforcement to address the current crisis?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I would agree with the member's topic. Concerns for public safety, I believe, are heightened by recent tragic events not

only at liquor stores, but surrounding the tragic deaths of young people in our province, and so naturally these are concerns that are uppermost in all our minds.

I would say that the time for dialogue never ends, but the time for action is long past due, and we are ready to and continue to take action in respect of numerous aspects of improving public safety. Policing and public safety strategies have been initiated, gang suppression strategies, Illicit Drug Task Force recommendations are being acted upon and we look forward to implementing the recommendations of the Asper commission's report in the very near future.

These things being done, well thought out and reasonable, and hopeful, as we all are, that they will result in improvements in the public safety of all our citizens in this province.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, we would certainly welcome some action on the part of the government, but in order for this strategy to be successful it will need constant communication with the community so that community members can be apprised and informed of any future direction that this government may take.

That's why calling a summit is so important, because this government has been absent to date from the various community safety meetings that have been held here in the province of—Winnipeg.

And now it's not just us talking about calling a summit. There is numerous organizations such as—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —the Canadian federation for independent business, the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Retail Council of Canada. Many of these organizations are saying it's long past due for this government to begin immediately to bring together community stakeholders, law enforcement officials, provincial leaders, as well as representatives from business so that we can strategize on a response together.

Will the Premier commit to such a meeting today?

Mr. Pallister: The people of Manitoba deserve not only to feel safe, but to be safe. They deserve far more than another meeting.

It was numerous meetings and numerous consultations that led to our policing and public safety strategy. It was numerous meetings and team consultation that led to our gang suppression strategies. It was numerous meetings and consultations that have led to the implementation of the recommendations of the Illicit Drug Task Force.

We are acting, and the member opposite is proposing another meeting.

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

AMM Resolution on Climate Change Request for Government Plan

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just a reminder to the First Minister, it's not me calling for the meeting, Madam Speaker.

This is—*[interjection]*—the Premier received a letter last week—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the Premier received a letter last week from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, from the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, from the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, from many organizations. This follows on similar calls from labour and community leaders to call a summit.

So he can gnash his teeth all he wants, but he's simply ignoring voices from the community. We say that's irresponsible.

It's also irresponsible to ignore the climate crisis, Madam Speaker, and this week on the floor of the AMM resolutions portion many important resolutions on solving the climate crisis were raised.

Will the government commit today to stopping their strategy of inaction when it comes to the climate crisis and bringing forward real solutions?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate the member segueing to our climate strategy, which was a result of consultations with over 10,000 Manitobans. The NDP strategy was a result of consultation with no one, and as a result didn't do anything. Our climate change plan's been acknowledged as the most ambitious in the country. We'll continue to act.

But I remind the member that the NDP record is not one of listening. That's why we had the highest child poverty after 17 years of NDP government.

We're now middle of the pack and moving in the right direction.

That's why they moved to forcefully amalgamate rural municipalities without a word of consultation, and I wonder who they consulted with when they decided to raise up the PST, Madam Speaker, after promising not to. Zero consultation.

Multiple level consultations and, more importantly, Madam Speaker, thoughtful, focused, well-reasoned action that will achieve results for Manitobans.

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

AMM Resolution on Lake Winnipeg Aquatic State of Emergency

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Wow, the Premier sure doesn't want to call that summit, does he, Madam Speaker? Nor does he appear interested in real climate action or solving the current climate crisis.

Now, there was a very important resolution passed this week at AMM, passed with 95 per cent support. Again, across all partisan affiliations and all political leanings, 95 per cent of delegates at AMM supported a resolution to call an aquatic state of emergency with respect to Lake Winnipeg.

Now, we all know the importance of the lake both to our way of life, but also to our economy and to many communities both around the lake and upstream.

Will the Premier respond to this resolution today and, in fact, declare an aquatic state of emergency so we can save Lake Winnipeg?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the member has me at a bit of a disadvantage. The NDP position is so unclear—they've got four different positions on fighting climate change in the last four months—that nobody can attack them on a position that is not solidly stated.

Ours, on the other hand, is consistent. We have said we will challenge a rising federal carbon tax. We will reform recyclable—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —waste regulatory frameworks, develop a provincial water management strategy, reverse the damage to Lake Winnipeg with real measures that should have been undertaken 20 years

ago while the NDP ignored the problem, and many more initiatives I will elaborate on given the other opportunity the member will immediately provide me with here.

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

* (14:00)

North End Sewage Treatment Plant Request for Provincial Funding

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, the Premier is quite astute in anticipating that there would be a third question in this series, and, in fact, yes, we are very curious about the concrete steps that this government is willing to take with respect to Lake Winnipeg.

Now, this resolution that passed with overwhelming support calls on this government to take immediate steps to address the phosphorus being injected upstream of Lake Winnipeg, but also to act on the construction of the North End water treatment plant.

Now, we have certainly been calling for this move. It was a prominent part of our election platform.

We would like to hear the Premier commit today that he will support the provincial share of funding for the North End water treatment plant and he will take—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —immediate measures to address the introduction of phosphorus into Lake Winnipeg. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I'm surprised, Madam Speaker, the member wants a meeting on public security but he wants action on green. We're taking action on both. The NDP took none.

Seventeen years, nothing done with respect to Lake Winnipeg. Seventeen years critically endangered the sustainability of our big game natural resource in this province by encouraging night hunting and the killing of innocent animals under the NDP. Lake Winnipeg, the most endangered—named the most endangered water body on the planet. No record to stand up for.

I appreciate any question the member has emanating from the NDP's pitiful record when it

comes to defending green. We'll continue to develop green strategies, then implement them to make sure that Manitoba is the cleanest, greenest jurisdiction in the country of Canada.

AMM Resolution on Lake Winnipeg Aquatic State of Emergency

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, the AMM along with many Manitobans are deeply concerned about the growth of blue-green algae and the health of Lake Winnipeg.

An overwhelming majority of 95 per cent of delegates at the AMM meeting passed this resolution calling on the Province to declare a state of aquatic emergency on Lake Winnipeg and take immediate, new action to deal with this issue.

I've heard no willingness on the part of this government to take responsibility for the environment, but will the environment listen to Manitobans and declare a state of aquatic emergency?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): I do appreciate the questions and some of the comments from my members opposite.

It's curious that we're hearing a lot of this concern over the green that we're finding in the lakes—which was allowed to happen under the previous NDP government—and all their concern while they were in government was taking green out of the pockets of Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard: Madam Speaker, our plans are real, our goals are achievable and we will work with our partners to get there.

Thank you.

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

North End Treatment Plant Upgrades Request for Provincial Funding

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, AMM further urged the Province to seriously address point sources contributing to nutrients in Lake Winnipeg. We all know that one of the most significant sources in the North End treatment plant—sorry—is the North End treatment plant in Winnipeg.

With another terrible year of algae blooms on Lake Winnipeg, it's clear that the upgrade to the plant needs to happen now. This is about taking responsibility today.

Will the Pallister government commit to fully funding its share of this project and ensure its timely construction?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): Again, I do appreciate the questions, and I would like to clarify here that there were many extensions to licensing given under the previous government to delay this project. So if this was a priority for the previous government, or even the members who claim to support their idealistic views of how to achieve these goals, I would suggest that the member do a little bit of homework and then wait and listen, because she's going to see some real action in the coming months and years.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, 95 per cent of municipal government leaders, through the AMM, has asked the Pallister government to develop a plan of action to address this issue. Those members and all Manitobans deserve an answer. An overwhelming majority of delegates support this action, and it's clear what needs to be done.

Will the minister commit today to funding the North End sewage treatment project?

Mrs. Guillemard: Thank you for the question, to my member across the way.

We absolutely do have a plan. It's not based on idealistic views. It's based on realistic goals.

So, Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the member read through our Climate and Green Plan, which includes addressing all the issues that she has raised and concerns, and she's going to see some real action and I'd love for her to join us in achieving our goals.

Northern Manitoba Justice System Review

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): We're on day three of trying to get questions from this minister. Now—or answers, answers. Good one. Now—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Sorry, Madam Speaker. Now the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys are raising their voice. They explain there's been a—significant staffing shortages in northern prosecutions with crushing workloads. They requested a meeting with

the minister to discuss the challenges prosecutors face in northern Manitoba.

Why won't the minister meet with prosecutors simply to hear their challenges, and why won't he call an independent and comprehensive review today?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do appreciate another question on this topic from the member opposite.

Certainly, we believe in justice for all and timely justice for all. That's why the previous Progressive Conservative minister of Justice brought forward the criminal justice modernization strategy. We are moving on that strategy to address the issues in northern Manitoba.

I do have one question for the member opposite, though: Where was the NDP for 17 years on this topic?

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Fontaine: I appreciate the question, but it's the minister that needs to answer to northern Manitobans that—why have positions in Court Operations, sheriff operations and Prosecution Services all seen reductions in the last three years under his ministerial leadership?

According to the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys' president, Jennifer Mann, many prosecution positions in northern Manitoba are vacant and eight job competitions in the last two years resulted in not one single person being hired. Now northern bail hearings are no longer allowed via video conferencing. This is a recipe for disaster.

What are the immediate actions the minister is undertaking to rectify the—justice in northern Manitoba?

Mr. Cullen: The action we've taken? Well, we've hired four full-time court clerks; we've trained those, ongoing training. We've brought in staff from other court centres across the province, including Winnipeg. We have a full complement of Sheriff Services in Thompson and, certainly, we just hired another Crown attorney and, Madam Speaker, we're moving further on a fundamental change to an integrated case management system. We'll modernize criminal justice for the 21st century.

The next question for the member opposite: Why didn't she and her government bring our justice system

up to the 21st century when they had 17 years to do it?

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Fontaine: The situation has gotten worse, not better under this minister's leadership. Now video conferencing for bail is no longer permitted.

* (14:10)

We now have a Court of Queen's Bench judge calling for the minister to conduct a comprehensive, extensive review of northern justice, and Crown attorneys can't even get a meeting with the minister to lay out their concerns. It's a crisis that needs immediate attention and leadership from this minister.

Will the minister commit today to a comprehensive and independent review in northern Manitoba on justice?

Miigwech.

Mr. Cullen: I had pointed out we are making changes, certainly, within the justice system in northern Manitoba. We are going to five days of bail processing early in the new year. We certainly have made changes. We've brought new staff in. We just hired another Crown attorney.

I will say we've had a working group involved in this for more than a year and, certainly, the Crown attorneys were at the table during all this consultation; and certainly, to the member's point, we are consulting with all agencies that are involved in providing justice in northern Manitoba.

So we're making concrete improvements and there'll be more concrete improvements to make sure that Manitobans all across the province have timely access to justice.

Southern First Nations CFS Database IT System Improvements Needed

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): The southern First Nations entire IT system has been breached. They have no access to any of their computers. This means that the majority of the child-welfare records in Manitoba are no longer accessible. It's—this is a very serious issue.

At this point the minister cannot assure us about whether confidentiality has been breached, whether any of these records can and will be restored.

What are the steps the minister will be taking to address this matter?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I thank the member for the question; it gives me an opportunity to give an update.

Provincial officials met with the acting CEO and board chair yesterday of the south–Southern First Nations Network of Care to discuss the situation and address operational planning.

Madam Speaker, as we shared earlier this week, the Province has offered IT support and our senior IT staff are now in direct communication with IT staff at the authority. Our primary concern is, of course, the continuity of service for children and families serviced by the southern authority.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas–Kameesak, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Lathlin: IT issues in CFS were just identified by the auditor as an area that needs additional attention and investment from the Province. Unfortunately, I haven't heard any such commitment from the minister.

The current crisis needs much more substantial response and is also—makes clear that the Province's record management system for CFS is simply inadequate.

What is the minister actually going to do to address the ransomware attack in southern network, and will she commit to new resources to improve the database?

Mrs. Stefanson: The member opposite will know that her party had 17 years to update that system, Madam Speaker, and, of course, they never took action to do so.

We did take action. In fact, the authority itself, their leadership has assured us that—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —current IT issues will not impact services—I would assume that members opposite would be concerned about the impact of services and may want to listen to this—that the authority leadership has assured us that current IT issues will not impact services and that the day-to-day activities of CFS agencies are occurring and that workers are using all means possible, including in-person visits, to ensure children are safe and supported.

And, Madam Speaker, we should also note that the RCMP continue to investigate the security breach and the Province continues to offer our support to the authority.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas–Kameesak, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Lathlin: The minister not only reports the numbers of children of care by referencing the database, yet now the records of half the children in care in the province have been made inaccessible.

Will the minister abandon her new approach to the reporting of children in care and ensure that agencies get the support they need and the—and what the auditor called for?

Ekosi.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I want to thank the member opposite for the question, and, of course, I'm glad that she did bring up the number of kids in care, which doubled under their watch, Madam Speaker, and, of course, we continue to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government in many areas of government.

But, certainly, we are making some headway when it comes to the number of kids in care. Last year we saw the number of kids in care decline for the first time in 15 years, and then we had another decline this year, Madam Speaker. We're moving in the right direction. We've had a 4.3 per cent reduction in the number of kids overall.

We're working with communities to ensure the safety of children and that they have the ability to live with loving families, which is where children should be, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Municipalities Provincial Funding Request

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, AMM communities including Portage la Prairie, Dauphin, and even the NDP stronghold of Winkler sponsored a resolution calling on the Pallister government to ensure that provincial funding recognized the rising costs of inflation and a growing population. There's no doubt, however, that communities left the AMM convention disappointed. The Pallister government's promises are far less than what they need to address even the most basic service demands in their community.

I simply ask: Will the minister reconsider these cuts and restore funding to our communities across the province?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Municipal Relations): I was very pleased to attend AMM along with many of my colleagues, and we took meeting

after meeting after meeting with municipal leaders who said how refreshing it was to have a government that respected their autonomy, a government that respected their authority, unlike the former administration that forced amalgamation on municipalities and caught them off guard. Our government respects them. We give them fair—a fair voice at the table, and we're willing to work with them.

I'm really pleased. I want to congratulate all the municipal leaders for their hard work in helping us grow a better Manitoba.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Municipal leaders may have been at the table, but they certainly weren't being listened to, apparently, by this minister.

Because they are saying to us, AMM communities want to be partners in a province and to grow our economy, but they can't do that when the partner at the other side of the table doesn't recognize the rising costs of their operations. A three-year freeze in operating funding forces harder and harder choices on these communities, and we continue to hear how those are impacting citizens across this province.

Will the minister start listening to AMM communities and restore funding to cities, towns and municipalities?

Ms. Squires: I was very pleased to hear from municipal leaders across the province who were very pleased with our basket funding and having a fair say with their provincial government.

I did also notice that there were an increased number of women. We know a lot more women ran in municipal elections in the last election. A lot of women—voices were heard at the AMM, and under the leadership of the previous minister we started the process of ensuring that they have a safe workplace throughout the entire province of Manitoba, and we're committed to seeing that through and working with all municipal leaders and—very pleased to see the number of women at the table.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wiebe: Undercutting every single one of this government's promises at this AMM convention was a fundamental budget cut for every single municipality across the province, and that's why AMM delegates overwhelmingly voted to condemn

this government's cuts and the funding freezes they've seen now for three years.

The minister wants to talk about fair say; we want to talk about fair share.

Will they start to listen to Manitoba municipalities like Portage la Prairie, like Winkler, like others across this province who are asking this government to ensure appropriate provincial funding?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, municipal leaders in Winkler and Portage and those other communities that my member opposite critic has mentioned, were very dismayed that the former administration were buying parts on eBay for a public safety communications network, sending front-line workers into work without the proper tools to keep them safe.

Our government is investing \$380 million in a public safety communications network. We're also paying the operating fees of \$20 million a year on behalf of all municipalities. We also offered \$45 million the other day for climate resiliency initiatives on the landscape in Manitoba.

* (14:20)

Our government is working hard to rebuild the province after 17 years of neglect under the NDP.

Child and Family Services Counting Children in Care

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): In the last week there have been a number of very concerning reports about CFS in Manitoba. We would like some clarity around the numbers. The minister is claiming significant improvements, which we question because we know that this government has changed the way they count children.

In 2016, when the NDP changed how they counted children in care, the PC member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) called it, quote, an exercise in public relations.

On page 93 of the Families report the actual drop in children in care is 70, or seven—or 0.7 per cent, because the government is not counting 420 own-home placements. This exactly matches the change of the number of hours in care on page 96.

Why is this government playing games with the number of children in care, and how is any of this different than the NDP?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Madam Speaker, we would never play games with

Manitoba children. That is simply not the right thing to do, and the member opposite should apologize for that statement.

What I will say, Madam Speaker, it's very clear under the previous NDP administration, they more than doubled the number of kids in care. We are moving in the right direction. In the last two years we have seen a reduction in the number of kids in care: a 4.3 per cent reduction overall.

Madam Speaker, we recognize that there's still work to do and that's why we're working with communities to ensure that those children can remain with loving families, where they should be.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a supplementary question.

Provincial Funding Inquiry

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, I table the documents from the minister's own department that contradict her statement.

This government thought so little of CFS and children in care, they left it out of the Throne Speech entirely, and on page 21 of the Auditor General's report Awasis Agency talks about the new block funding model. They say the provincial shortfall means federal funding has to be used for provincial responsibilities. I quote: Agencies have not yet been advised what funding they will receive six months into the fiscal year or how the Province is determining core funding.

Why don't agencies know what their funding will be?

Mrs. Stefanson: And the member opposite should know that we did embark on a pilot project with block funding to eight agencies in Manitoba, Madam Speaker; and I am pleased to report that as a result of that funding, as a result of that pilot project there was an 18 per cent reduction in the number of kids in care within those areas and they were able to free up the extra money to be able to have preventative services put in place to prevent the apprehension of children.

And so we recognize that there's still more work to be done, but as a result of some positive results there, that's why we have decided to embark on a province-wide block funding model which we know and we hope will reduce the number of kids in care.

Youth Suicide Prevention Inclusion in Case Planning

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, it is of concern that the children's advocate reports 32 suicides in those up to age 20 last year. Indeed, the number of suicides in those up to age 18 has increased by 60 per cent in the last two years compared to the previous four years, as the data I table shows.

I note the child death review shows a deficiency in 53 of 57 case plans. Problems in case planning have been highlighted many times in recent years.

My question to the minister: What's her plan to prevent suicides? Will she ensure that the deficiencies in case planning are addressed and ensure suicide prevention is included in future case planning?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Appreciate the member raising the concern; it's a concern for every member in this House.

What should be also of utmost concern is the federal government's attempt under Bill C-92—an Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families—to proclaim—to move ahead with legislation on January 1st of 2020, legislation that is the most comprehensive change to child welfare in Canadian history, which has been put forward without any consultation whatsoever with any of the provincial agencies, with any of the provincial governments or ministers, legislation which no one seems to have any idea how it will work, including the federal members who are putting it forward from the Liberal Party.

There is no plan for the implementation of this legislation, and so we face major challenges and we face them head-on in Manitoba, but the challenges of Bill C-92—premiers will be addressing this, and I understand in a unanimous way on the weekend. I would encourage my Liberal colleagues to do the same.

Winnipeg River Bridge Completion of Reconstruction

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): For years now, residents and visitors in Lac du Bonnet have been patiently awaiting the completion of the upgrades for the PR 313 bridge, known locally as the Winnipeg River Bridge and also formerly known as the Skinny Bridge.

The Winnipeg River Bridge is a vital link for Lac du Bonnet residents, business owners, our first

responders and, of course, those who spend the summers at their cottages in our beautiful constituency.

Madam Speaker, last Friday I was joined by the Minister of Infrastructure and local dignitaries as we officially opened the Winnipeg River Bridge.

Can the minister please tell the House why it was so important that this project was completed under our government, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Lac du Bonnet for that excellent question.

Under the last 17 years of the NDP mismanagement the bridge over the Winnipeg River deteriorated to the point that only one direction, one lane of traffic could go over that bridge at any given time. The member mentioned that, then, the bridge was referred to as the Skinny Bridge.

Well, the member for Lac du Bonnet rolled up his sleeves and he worked hard on behalf of his constituents. Two years ago, we announced the reconstruction of the Winnipeg River Bridge, or the Skinny Bridge.

Madam Speaker, on Friday we opened up a new, dynamic, brand new bridge across the Winnipeg River. I am pleased to report the Skinny Bridge is no more.

Congratulations to the member for Lac du Bonnet. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Changes to Agricultural Crown Lands Impact on Manitoba Producers

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Madam Speaker, beef producers from across the province have attended meetings to express their concern with the radical change to leases for Crown land.

They're opposed to a sudden 300 per cent increase in their rent. They're opposed to the 'uncertainty' that has been brought to their operations. The minister's changes will make it harder for them to get ahead.

Will the minister reconsider?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): Madam Speaker, I am so glad that member asked that question, because under the modernized Crown Lands Act, this very morning—this morning there was a public auction on six pieces of ag Crown land that were put up for public auction.

All of six pieces were bought up on an auction process, including several young producers who were successful to—in getting those pieces of Crown land who would have been shut out under the old system, which what—is what the NDP want to go back to.

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

Request to Delay Lease Auctions

Mr. Brar: Talking about the auctions today, the first auctions of Crown land lease auctions, as said, are set to begin today. It's really not fair that the government would push ahead on these auctions while at the same time promising that the system will see further changes.

One producer, Karla Crandall, told, in a recent meeting of producers, that the government still doesn't really know what they are doing yet.

How can the minister allow these auctions to continue when producers don't even know what the final rules will be? Will he delay them today?

Mr. Pedersen: Breaking news—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: Breaking news, Madam Speaker: The auction was this morning at 10 a.m., and it happened very successfully. So I suggest the member upgrade his notes.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows, on a final supplementary. *[interjection]*

Order.

Mr. Brar: Madam Speaker, the Pallister government previously said they were going to further amend the regulations, but we see no evidence of that. Producers are really concerned that they will be pushed into competition with out-of-province corporations to secure the continued viability of their family farms.

* (14:30)

When will the minister begin consultations for this change, and will he wait until the regulations are changed before he starts conducting auctions?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, yesterday at the AMM convention, my department and myself had many successful meetings with municipal officials who had a lot of questions about the information about the Crown land modernization act.

What we had to do was correct the mis-information that the NDP has been putting out there,

and once we corrected that misinformation municipal officials were very happy with the renewal of The Crown Lands Act and they're going to go back to their own municipalities and give the good news to the producers about what these effects—how these effects will really encourage young producers in their communities.

WRHA Spending on Salaries Government Position

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, the WRHA cut its spending on salaries last year by \$16 million according to their own financial statement. Again, that's the largest cut in the history of the WRHA.

Administrative positions like those involving patient care were disrupted. Well, that's not actually the whole story. Hundreds of 'flont'—front-line care positions were deleted and, ultimately, there were many that were left vacant last year. The minister can consult his own reporting to see that this is the case.

Why did the minister direct these cuts at the WRHA?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, again, if there is one thing I must give the NDP credit for, it's the ability to spend more and get less from it.

What they fail to recognize in continuing to advocate for spending against concerns about results and better services for Manitobans—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —is where the money that they spent for 17 years comes from.

For example, when they jump out onto a picket line in the midst of a labour dispute and take sides against Manitoba farm families, they are ignoring the fact that the very money that Manitoba farm families struggle to earn goes to health care. They are standing in the way of supporting and sustaining health care. They are—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —ignoring the hardships facing real Manitoba families.

Shame on them, Madam Speaker, and thank goodness the CN strike is resolved.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Personal-Care Homes

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Manitoba Legislature.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba elders and seniors have built this province and should receive a high level of support, having earned the right to be treated with due respect, dignity, understanding and compassion as a fundamental human right.

Seniors who reside in personal-care homes have more diverse and complex physical and brain health issues today than those who were in similar homes even just five years ago, yet the staffing formula, or minimum personnel requirement, is over 20 years old.

The issue of the changes to and more complex nature of care is being exacerbated by the provincial government policy of discharging people out of hospitals more quickly, leaving many residents still in need of a high level of care.

Manitoba does not have enough health-care aides and nurses specifically trained to care for seniors with high and complex levels of physical and mental issues such as those with dementia coupled with multiple chronic conditions.

The added complexity of care with such residents is putting additional stress on doctors and family members, as it may take six to eight weeks for a doctor to see a resident in a personal-care home.

Unfortunately, the lack of quality care received by many residents is not unique, causing one person to say that it was easier to watch my dad die in a personal-care home than to watch him live in a personal-care home.

Staff are so overworked that they are forced to tell senior elders and residents in need: Go in your diaper; I can't help you; or: You will get food eventually.

Relatives are also being told that residents in care should not ever expect to walk again after hip or knee replacement surgery because care homes are not set up for rehabilitation.

The provincial government has allowed personal-care homes to serve food that is warmed from frozen instead of being freshly cooked, depriving seniors the taste of good food, which is one of the few real

pleasures that would—they would be able to enjoy at this time of life.

Although residents enter personal-care homes to have the best possible quality of life in their last few days, weeks, months or years, relatives repeatedly hear the words: He came here to die; and: She came here to die.

Relatives are regularly angry, frustrated, disappointed and shocked at the care their loved ones now receive in Manitoba's personal-care homes.

Administrators in personal-care homes respond to complaints by stating they need more, better-trained staff.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase training and staffing requirements for personal-care homes in Manitoba to ensure residents receive high-quality, nutritious food as well as compassionate care.

Signed by Angel Coutu, Erica Châtelain, Melanie Johnston [*phonetic*] and many, many others.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Announcing that we are interrupting the debate on the Throne Speech to call the government resolution that appears on the Order Paper, brought forward by the First Minister, entitled Religious Freedom of Citizens.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will debate the government resolution this afternoon entitled Religious Freedom of Citizens.

GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION

Religious Freedom of Citizens

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I move, seconded by the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard),

WHEREAS diversity, inclusion and the protection of minorities are fundamental values in a free and democratic society; and

WHEREAS the promotion and protection of the rights of all persons, and including public servants, to

exercise their freedom of religion, conscience and expression, in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, are essential to human dignity and individual flourishing.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba strongly oppose passing any law that seeks to unjustifiably limit the religious freedoms of citizens, including passing a law that unjustifiably denies an individual's right to wear religious clothing or symbols of one's choice.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pallister: Manitoba has always been and will always be the home of hope.

Le Manitoba a toujours été – et sera toujours – la terre d'espoir.

Translation

Manitoba has always been—and will always be—the home of hope.

English

We attract people from all over the world to our province.

Nous attirons des gens du monde entier dans notre province.

Translation

We attract people from all over the world to our province.

English

We attract them for many reasons: economic opportunity, social security, peace of mind. But we attract them also because of our consistent defence of the rights and freedoms of all who come to our province and our nation.

What is Bill 21? Quebec's Bill 21 is a threat to these rights and these freedoms. It is a Quebec law that bars government employees from wearing religious symbols such as head coverings or crosses while on the job.

We have all seen news reports about Muslim women being denied jobs as teachers in Quebec because of Bill 21. And the situation is likely to get much worse in the weeks and months ahead.

Some would argue that this resolution is simply a response to Bill 21. Some would argue that this is just one province taking on another province and, really, what does that matter. But it is much, much more than

that. Our resolution today is a reaffirmation of the values that are important to us as Manitobans and also as Canadians.

Ce projet de loi est une réaffirmation des valeurs qui sont importants pour nous, Manitobains.

Translation

This bill is a reaffirmation of the values that are important to us as Manitobans.

English

Important to us as Manitobans who are Canadians first and foremost. Our country matters to us in Manitoba, and our reputation globally for defending the rights and freedoms of all citizens is essential to our Canadian identity.

In short, Madam Speaker, Manitobans care less about what is on your head than what is in your heart.

I am a farm boy. I have always disliked erosion—the erosion of our natural resources, erosion of the quality of our water, of our air. It is a threat to us and all who will follow us. We are stewards of the environment in every respect. The erosion of our soil is critical to us as we are an agricultural province. That soil is literally and figuratively the root of our economic and social progress.

The problem with erosion is that some erosion begets even more erosion, and so measures to protect against the loss of rights are important because without those measures the situation will only worsen.

* (14:40)

Manitoba was the first province to speak out against Bill 21 and in defence of the freedoms that it threatens to erode. Many years ago, Edmund Burke wrote that no one made a greater mistake than they who did nothing because they could do only a little bit.

The Premier of Quebec says that his province finds his Bill 21 popular. It would be my sincere hope, Madam Speaker, this Chamber finds Bill 21 dangerous.

What has been the reaction of Canadians overall thus far? Somewhat muted, I would say. Others across the country have said, just be quiet; don't make waves. Some have said, we want more trade with Quebec; just be quiet. Some have said, we need a pipeline across Quebec; just be quiet.

But we, today, have the chance to say that threats to personal rights and freedoms are more important

than achieving economic or political advantage, and I would sincerely hope that in this Chamber we would not do nothing.

I love Quebec.

J'aime le Québec et les Québécois.

Translation

I love Quebec and Quebecers.

English

I love its glorious beauty, its culture, its arts, its industry. I draw the line at its hockey team, but I do sincerely love its people. And, while I served Manitobans for almost a decade in the Canadian Parliament, my wife and I made the choice and we chose to live in Quebec. We raised our children in Quebec.

Nous avons élevé nos enfants au Québec.

Translation

We raised our children in Quebec.

English

We respect Quebec.

Nous respectons le Québec.

Translation

We respect Quebec.

English

I studied the French language in Hull, in Chicoutimi, in St. Johns and Richelieu. I chaired the finance committee of the House of Commons using my hard-won new language.

I worked with members of Parliament from across Quebec and I learned about their ridings, and over many years we worked together for Quebecers, but for Canadians, and together we strengthened and empowered children and women and indigenous Canadians and the disabled and senior citizens. And I do not recall, Madam Speaker, anyone ever asking what the people we were helping together wore on their heads or around their necks.

Quebec is strong.

Le Québec est fort.

Translation

Quebec is strong.

English

Quebec is good for Canada.

Le Québec est un atout pour le Canada.

Translation

Quebec is good for Canada.

English

And Canada is good for Quebec.

Et le Canada est un atout pour le Québec.

Translation

And Canada is good for Quebec.

English

Quebec is too strong for Bill 21.

Le Québec est plus grand que le projet de loi 21.

Translation

Quebec is too strong for Bill 21.

English

Quebecers are too good for Bill 21.

Les Québécois sont plus généreux que le projet de loi 21.

Translation

Quebecers are too good for Bill 21.

English

Quebec is better without Bill 21.

Le Québec se porte mieux sans le projet de loi 21.

Translation

Quebec is better without Bill 21.

English

Because Quebec is better than Bill 21.

Parce que le Québec vaut mieux que le projet de loi 21.

Translation

Because Quebec is better than Bill 21.

English

A recent editorial in the Globe and Mail said this: The victims of Bill 21 don't need a friend who only shows up in court many years too late. What they need is for those who sit in Parliament to acknowledge that something ugly and unjust is happening right now in

Quebec and to find the political courage to stand up to a law that all can see is discriminatory.

What they need is Canadians walking beside them, not skulking around in the shadows behind them, secretly taking pictures of their children and what they wear.

I agree with the Globe and Mail. Something ugly and unjust is happening right now in Quebec. Some may think this is a Quebec issue, that it does not matter to us. They would be wrong.

Some may think this is just about head scarves and crosses. You would be wrong.

Some may think that not defending belief systems that are different from their own is okay. You would be very wrong.

If you're not willing to defend another's rights, if you are not willing to defend another's freedoms, do not expect them to defend yours. Our individual rights and freedoms are cheapened and, in fact, threatened if they come at the price or at the expense of the diminished rights of our fellow Canadians.

Canada has always been strengthened when we have advanced the causes of freedom: on the ridge at Vimy, on the shores at Normandy, in the deserts of Afghanistan, in the Parliament of our country. And today, here in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, we have the chance to stand together for freedom—not for some, but for all; not just for Manitobans, but for Canadians; not just for today, but forever.

Madam Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable member for Burrows, I would like to indicate that I have been advised by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) that he has designated his unlimited speaking time for the government resolution on Religious Freedom of Citizens to the member for Burrows.

I would now recognize the member for Burrows.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Shukria [*thank you*], Madam Speaker. Miigwech, Madam Speaker. Salamat po [*thank you*], Madam Speaker. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I sounded different. Did I? Yes. I look different. That does not mean that all the human race is not one. We are all one.

Any policy, any legislation, any ruling that is based upon how you look like or what faith you practise is not right. It's discriminatory. All of us

should stand together against such moves, such laws, such regulations and such schools of thought.

Bill 21 is unfortunate not just for the minorities, not just for the residents of a particular province, not just for Quebec, not just for Manitoba, not just for Canada. It's unfortunate for everyone on this earth. It's almost 2020 and we are spending our valuable time discussing these things, learning about not to discriminate, learning about how harmony, peace, multiculturalism is important.

At this point of time, we should be speaking for human rights. We should be talking about the environment. We should be talking about educating, mentoring our kids, our next generation. We should be spending our time, our energy, our vision to make this earth a better place to live.

* (14:50)

But look, we are caught into negativism. We are just not prepared to recognize, embrace or love people. We have started hating people because they look different. Well, if two persons look different, they look different to each other. That doesn't mean that this fact should promote hatred. We should learn to respect all ethnicities, all faiths. We should not be discriminating people based upon how they look like, based upon gender, based upon their language. All languages are sweet. All folk dances are great. All cultures have great values.

Some people could be negative. Some people could be promoting hate, but their faith or their practices are not the reason behind it. If a particular person from one faith or one community makes a mistake, that does not mean that it's her community's fault for her act.

Back to Bill 21. I appreciate this government bringing up this issue, and talking about religious freedom of citizens, but I would have appreciated if the resolution itself contained the words Bill 21. It's very easy to spell; it's very easy to say. Even a grade 1 student can say Bill 21; so simple.

So, when we got to know about this move, we were happy that something good is going to happen in House, and I still appreciate that it happened, but a step forward could have been that if we would have done this above the party levels, I requested the First Minister to allow me to second this bill.

What would that mean is if we get together on a particular issue which we all condemn, and we stand against wrongdoings happening around, it makes our

position as human rights defenders stronger, but, unfortunately, my request was denied.

They wanted to stand for religious freedom of citizens. They wanted to stand against discrimination. I'm not sure if they really wanted to stand against Bill 21. They, as I said earlier, didn't mention Bill 21 in the resolution itself.

Minority—minorities have their own issues, their own problems, but when we start basing our decisions based upon a thought which is supported by 51 against 49, then something goes wrong.

Just imagine a situation where there is a single person in this province who looks different or who decides to wear their articles of faith. What that means is, if we go by numbers, she will be defeated. What that means is her human rights would not be protected. So we should not base our decisions on the numbers or the surveys that just involve the number of people supporting that thought.

It's not easy to immigrate and start your life all over again. There are many challenges that you have to face. There are people in this House who have never immigrated, but maybe their previous generations did. They must have heard stories of hatred and discrimination, but they didn't experience those pains, those comments themselves. But the ones who did, they have fresh memories about that discrimination. We—as Manitobans, we stand together against Bill 21. That's what I want to say.

I have worked in a number of countries—rather, a number of continents. And I have made friends from different faiths, from different cultures, from different parts of this earth. And their faith did not lower the mutual respect or love between that connection.

It feels so good to know about each other's values, each other's dresses, cultures, folk songs and folk stories. Basically, what I think is: Diversity is a strength. Can we just close our eyes for a few seconds and think about a garden where all the flowers are red. That won't be a natural garden; we have to destroy all other colours to make it feel red or yellow or white. Nature itself, it's diverse and we must respect that diversity. We must look at that diversity in a positive manner. It's time to get together against those who promote hatred.

In my recent assignment as opposition critic for Agriculture, I've been meeting with producers in Manitoba. In Ste. Rose, one of the participants had a compliment for me: Wow, I like your headgear. Isn't it wonderful?

I felt so positive, so welcomed because of that friendly approach. My turban was never a bottleneck towards my performance. It doesn't stop me to speak for my producers in Manitoba. It doesn't stop me to talk to people, to have coffee with them, to learn about a topic, to serve at a counter, to speak in the Legislature. It does not. Why should it bother anyone else?

* (15:00)

We must be looking at the human resources, not just human face or body or their dress or their height or their weight or their colour. Why should we?

It's time to think broader. We should not be basing our decisions on our narrow thinking and, once again, I want to emphasize that we should not play politics on such issues. Just go and ask those people who had to leave their home because of discrimination or because of how they look like. It's not easy. They are leaving their homes to find a place where they feel safe, where they feel welcome, where they could work with their articles of faith on them.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

We should speak loud against Bill 21 or other such moves, and I would invite everyone who is listening to this speech today to come together and stand against all discriminatory practices on this earth—not in Manitoba, not in Quebec, not just in Canada—on this earth.

This is a priority. We should not just act that we care; we should actually care about these things. Discrimination hurts a lot. While your articles of faith do not interfere with your performance or your organization's performance, discrimination does. It discourages you to perform. It makes you feel guilty. It makes you feel small.

Wearing your articles of faith is not a crime. If I am a teacher, I'm teaching math—two plus two is four. An article of faith doesn't make it two plus two—3.5—it does not.

In this country like Canada, we feel proud that everyone is allowed to practise their faith, their values, their culture.

I've been to many Folklorama pavilions. I've been to many communities who speak other languages and I have tried to learn a few words, and I feel a connection. I feel a connection that tells us, signals us, that we are all one.

I was in a Ukrainian community and I heard a word: baba. And I was told that means grandma. In my language, Punjabi, baba means grandpa. How close are they? Ukraine, India, Punjab, northern part of India.

There is a connection and language is the strongest bridge that goes across cultures, goes across faiths, goes across ethnicities. Let's use that bridge to create harmony, to create peace.

In 2007, I had a chance to go to Australia and my older son was little. He was just over three years and he used to go to the daycare. He did not know English. There was a language barrier, and the daycare officials, they invited me to assist him to connect to his teachers.

I had to attend that little kids' daycare for 15 days. I was the only adult attending that with the students. It was wonderful. I got to know people and, during coffee breaks, I used to chat with his teachers, and they had this question: What is this? Nice hat.

Then I had to explain them that this is not a hat; this is called turban, and it's not just a piece of cloth. It has values attached to it. It has a history and it does not belong to a single religion. I have seen people across the religions wearing this turban. It goes beyond religions. It goes beyond ethnicities. Because people living in a society, in a same community, they share values, even across religions.

Just, for example, I want to like—I want to share this—I'd like to share this with you all. My community knows, now my kids know, that if you find your dad's turban on a table, and you have to pick it up and move to another place, you are using two hands, not a single one. This is disrespectful. That's a value. You cannot move the turban. You cannot push it using your foot. You have to take it up respectfully and leave it at a place where you want it to be. There are stories—people have fought wars without a helmet, just with this turban. It goes that long.

We cannot simply follow our prejudice. We cannot simply follow our assumptions.

The other day I was talking to one person who was saying that, well, Bill 21 is okay to some extent because when you go to an office and you see a person that looks different, it indicates that they belong to a different faith. It separates you from others.

Well, so what? As long as that faith, that regional look, does not interfere with what they do. We cannot

force somebody to change the way they want to live. We need to get above these things.

* (15:10)

The people who justify Bill 21 and similar legislations should pause and think again. They need to empathize. The concerned people—the need to empathize for those who had to leave their homes and move to new places where they're not discriminated against.

This is the time when we need to raise our voice against all those genocides that were based upon hatred towards other faiths, that were based to end generations of the minorities and people have experienced their kids, their parents being burned alive because they look different. It's not justified to punish somebody because they look different. And that pain stays for years, for decades, for hundreds of years. If we do not speak out loud against such practices today, it would be too late.

Sometimes we do not feel the pain unless someone hits you in the head. It's our duty to protect the rights of people around us. And I would say here—I would say this: It should not be just the minorities who should be speaking against Bill 21. Being silent towards discriminatory processes, rules, practices means consenting to them. Why would we not stand up against such practices?

And we have tools. We have tools to connect across the communities, and we have opportunities to connect across the communities. Sometimes, when I look at this caucus, it reflects diversity. And it feels good. We ask questions to each other about their practices, about their history, about their language. And it adds to your knowledge, it provides you a foundation for harmony, peace, multiculturalism.

I would strongly condemn all discriminatory practices, including Bill 21. And I fear that such bills and practices—they're not replicated, multiplied anywhere on this earth. If we let it happen, that would be suicidal for humanity.

This is not the time to build your provinces according to the faith or religion or ethnicity you belong to. It's the time when we need to realize once again that all the human race is one.

There are examples in this history. I would like to mention a name, Bhai Ghanaya Ji. He was the guy who was serving water in a battlefield to whosoever needed it, even the soldiers who were wounded and was fighting against his community.

You know what he said when somebody complained against him that he is serving water to the enemies? He said: I don't feel they're different. I feel that all humans are one. It's us. Let's rise above you and me. Let's talk about us. Let's get together against which is not good; otherwise, it would be too late, and the damage done would not be undone automatically.

We need to realize our responsibilities. I would appreciate all people listening to this speech and all my friends in this House that let's condemn Bill 21, not just on duty, but at every chance you get. You're talking to your kids; you're talking to your friends; you're talking to your relatives at dinners, at parties, at marriages, at sports tournaments, at various occasions. You should be talking, let's build an opinion around us that this is not right. It's our duty. And, if we kept sleeping, then we would realize when it's too late.

I want to appreciate the City of Winnipeg who spoke against Bill 21, and Winnipeg School Division that is tabling a motion against Bill 21.

In Manitoba, I see so many diverse people around me, and I have always enjoyed that diversity. It's Friendly Manitoba and let's keep that friendship on.

Diversity in sports teams, diversity in the Legislature, diversity in the cultural groups, diversity in the schools—that is our strength.

About the resolution that has been presented today, I once again appreciate that it happened, but I would like that it be amended.

* (15:20)

I want to move, seconded by honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that the resolution moved today regarding religious freedom of citizens be amended by adding

THAT the resolution be amended by adding the following:

(a) as the new first WHEREAS clause:

WHEREAS in 2019, the Province of Quebec enacted Bill 21, colloquially referred to as Quebec's secularism law, which bars public servants from wearing hijabs, kippahs, turbans, crosses and many other such religious symbols; and

(b) as the new last WHEREAS clause:

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba has a responsibility to stand firmly against discrimination, intolerance and biased governance structures by publicly condemning Quebec's Bill 21

and supporting, in principle, constitutional challenges to Bill 21;

(c) at the end:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to all Canadian provincial and territorial assemblies, premiers, as well as the federal Parliament and the Prime Minister.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar), seconded by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe),

That resolution be amended by—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense? Dispense. So—and ordered.

The amendment is in order. The debate is open.

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): C'est un honneur d'appuyer cette résolution de notre leader, le premier ministre du Manitoba, et de notre gouvernement. Je voudrais répéter quelques mots dans la résolution.

Translation

It is an honour to support this resolution from our leader, the Premier of Manitoba, and our government. I would like to repeat a few words found in the resolution.

English

Therefore be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba strongly oppose passing any law that seeks to unjustifiably limit the religious freedoms of citizens, including passing a law that unjustifiably denies an individual's right to wear religious clothing or symbols of one's choice.

The member from across the way gave a wonderful speech. However, highlighting that we didn't just focus on one province's discriminatory laws passed, he fails to realize that our focus is not solely against Bill 21, it is against all forms of restrictions to religious freedoms and personal expression. It speaks not only to opposition to that one bill, but to all potential future assaults on personal freedoms.

Cette résolution affirme le droit de chaque citoyen de porter les symboles religieux ou les vêtements de

son choix et souligne notre opposition à l'utilisation de l'autorité de l'État pour restreindre ces libertés.

Monsieur le Président Député, la suppression de l'expression personnelle des citoyens d'un pays libre n'est pas honorable. En fait, c'est la première étape afin de contrôler la vie de ceux-là même qui nous élisent pour les servir. Ce n'est pas une démocratie et cela ne reflète pas le Canada que je connais et que j'aime. Supprimer le droit d'une personne d'exprimer sa foi démontre une peur de la démocratie, ce qui menace l'essence même des valeurs canadiennes. Tous les députés ont le devoir et la responsabilité de renforcer leur engagement en faveur d'une société libre, de rejeter l'oppression et d'encourager la croissance à travers l'acceptation de nos différences.

Garder le silence alors qu'un de nos gouvernements partenaires discrimine envers son peuple reviendrait à consentir à la fin de l'autonomie personnelle et à céder à la peur. Les Manitobains ne céderont pas à la peur. Ils la confronteront et la vaincront.

Je suis fier de faire partie d'un gouvernement qui n'ignore pas son devoir éthique et son obligation morale de s'exprimer lorsque des atteintes à la liberté sont exprimées par d'autres juridictions ou pays. Je remercie notre premier ministre d'avoir dirigé les discussions et les actions visant à montrer que nous sommes unis dans la voie et la vision de notre province et de notre pays.

Nos croyances font partie de ce que nous sommes, en tant que personnes, et la liberté de pratiquer cette foi est la liberté d'être soi-même. Les sikhs ont le droit de porter les turbans. Les juifs ont le droit de porter un kippa. Les musulmans ont le droit de porter un hijab. Les chrétiens ont le droit de porter une croix, et ma baba a le droit de porter son baboushka.

Translation

This resolution affirms the right of every citizen to wear the religious symbols or the clothing of their choice and underlines our opposition to the use of state powers to restrict those liberties. Mr. Deputy Speaker, suppressing the personal expression of the citizens of a free country is not honourable. In fact, it is the first step in controlling the lives of the very people who have elected us to serve them. It is not democratic and it does not reflect the Canada that I know and love.

To eliminate a person's right to express their faith shows a fear of democracy, which threatens the very essence of Canadian values. All members have the

duty and the responsibility to reinforce their commitment to a free society, to reject oppression and to encourage growth through accepting our differences.

To remain silent when one of our partner governments discriminates against its people means accepting the end of personal autonomy and giving in to fear. Manitobans will not give in to fear. They will confront it and overcome it.

I am proud to be part of a government that does not ignore its ethical duty and its moral obligation to speak up when attacks against freedom are made by other jurisdictions or countries. I thank our Premier for having led the discussions and the actions showing that we are united in the path and in the vision of our province and our country.

Our beliefs are part of who we are as people, and the freedom to practise our faith is the freedom to be ourselves. Sikhs have the right to wear turbans. Jews have the right to wear kippas. Muslims have the right to wear hijabs. Christians have the right to wear crosses, and my baba has the right to wear her baboushka.

English

Canadians have these rights, Manitobans have these rights and Quebecers have these rights. All Quebecers and Canadians, regardless of faith, should know that they have a friend in Manitoba.

Tous les Québécois et les Canadiens, sans distinction de religion, devraient savoir qu'ils ont un ami au Manitoba. Les Canadiens devraient savoir que lorsque leurs droits et leurs libertés sont menacés, cette Chambre ne restera pas silencieuse.

Merci beaucoup, Mr. Député.

Translation

All Quebecers and Canadians, without distinction of religion, should know that they have a friend in Manitoba. Canadians must know that when their rights and freedoms are threatened, this House will not remain silent.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It's certainly a real honour to speak to this resolution, and more specifically, to my friend and colleague's amendment to it.

This has been a powerful afternoon, one that I hope to hear more voices of this Chamber join in the

call and the unanimous call for action in speaking up against bills like the one we see in Québec, Bill 21. It is a non-partisan issue. It's an issue, I think, that speaks very deeply to many of us, especially those of us who have faith traditions, and bring those to Manitoba, to our society.

And that's why I think it was so powerful to have the member bring this forward in a spirit of non-partisanship to talk about his lived experience, to talk about how he experiences this every single day and how he is proud of his faith and proud of his journey to learn more about others' faiths and to truly be a Manitoban and a Canadian and somebody who respects all. And I know that he is somebody who does that.

It is unfortunate that this House couldn't show that non-partisanship more strongly. I know there was an overture from the opposition to have, you know, a member from our side of the House be the seconder to this motion. It isn't a political issue; it is a human rights issue and it's an issue that I believe all members can get behind. And so it is unfortunate that we weren't able to do that.

I also, again, want to commend the member for bringing forward this amendment, specifically calling out Bill 21, because it is important to speak out specifically against those laws which discriminate and which promote racism.

* (15:30)

It was quite frustrating, I have to admit, during the federal election, when pundits would get on TV and— or on the radio and start talking about the political fortunes of the different parties and different regions and different places, and often they would say, well, you know, the Leader of the NDP, Jagmeet Singh, well, he has no chance in Quebec because he wears a turban, and I found that absolutely disgusting, that we would just say that all people in the province of Quebec would make a decision about who they want to lead this country based on their religious affiliation.

I don't believe that the people of Quebec are—that's how they are, as a whole. I believe there are certain people within that province who want to inflame and further build divisions between people for political purposes, and I believe that, by speaking out specifically against Bill 21, it was an opportunity for this House to take a stand and to send that message very clearly, so I do invite members opposite to send that message very clearly, so I do invite members

opposite to, hopefully, join with us in supporting this important amendment.

As I said, I know that there are many members of this Chamber who want to speak to this resolution. I'm very proud to be seconding it here, and the reason why I just wanted to put a few words in the record is because, Mr. Speaker, this isn't the first time that this House has debated this particular issue. In fact, it was in November of 2013, when a bill just like this one, just like Bill 21 in Quebec came forward, at that time called Bill 60, that sought to limit the displays of religious freedom in the province of Quebec by the party that is now in party-in power in Quebec.

And so it was our government at the time that brought a resolution, believe it or not, and I was proud enough to be the one that brought that resolution as a private member's resolution to this Chamber. Many members that are here now were also members at that time, and may remember that morning when we spent time talking about this very issue. We all brought different perspective, but, ultimately, what we talked about is our own—in many cases, our own faith traditions and our own respect for faith.

I talked about my own particular faith community, the Mennonite people, who came to Manitoba specifically to escape religious persecution; specifically on a guarantee, on a promise from the federal government that if we came to this province, that we would be protected, that our language rights would be protected, that our faith traditions would be protected, and we saw that as an unbreakable pact between ourselves as a people and the government of Canada.

And so, when this bill, Bill 60 in this case, came to Quebec, I took it very personally, and I know that many others stood with me at that time and, you know, unfortunately, it was spoken out that, as sometimes happens with private members' resolutions, there wasn't an opportunity to vote. I would have hoped at that time that members opposite would have voted with us on this, but at that time, and I just want to quote what I said that day, almost exactly six years ago in this House, that I think all members can support.

We're here—we're taking a stand. We're standing with those who want to practise their faith openly and proudly. We want to stand with those who want to speak out about how their faith has shaped them, has made them better people, and I believe that faith is not something that we need to hide away, not something to not be talked about or to be ashamed of. I believe it's an essential element for many that shapes us and

makes us who we are, and the ability to practise that faith is a—is fundamental to how we see ourselves as Canadians, and I know that it is for me and for my family. As a Mennonite, we came to this country to escape persecution. My family died simply for having their own culture, simply for speaking their own language, and simply for practising their faith. We were driven out of their homes, they were driven out of their country, and they became refugees, Mr. Speaker, because of their faith and because of their wish to express that openly.

Now, I have the ability to choose who I share my faith with, that if you see me on the streets you don't know if I'm a Mennonite, if I'm of Ukrainian background. Maybe some can discern my background just by looking at me, but it is my choice when and how I can express that faith to others.

For so many in our society, for our brothers and sisters in the Sikh faith and the Jewish community and the Muslim faith and so many others, it isn't their choice. Their choice is to simply abide by their faith, and for that to become the subject of what defines them, and—especially in a negative way, as is happening in Quebec, simply sickens me.

So I hope that this afternoon we hear more personal stories, we hear more examples of how we need to stand together as Manitobans to condemn this, and I just want to thank our caucus for bringing this important amendment to the resolution forward. I hope that all of us can stand united to support the resolution and to support the amendment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I am honoured and humbled today to speak to this important resolution, Religious Freedom of Citizens, introduced by our Premier, the Honourable Brian Pallister.

The religious—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the member that please use either their title or their constituency.

Mrs. Cox: I apologize. The honourable Premier (Mr. Pallister).

The Religious Freedom of Citizens resolution reinforces the fundamental values, religious freedoms and rights of our newcomers, our pioneers, our clergy, our LGBT community, our indigenous and Metis communities, and the millions of immigrants from the past to the present who chose to make Canada their home.

It represents my baba and my gigi—my granny and my grandpa—who immigrated to Canada with the hope and a dream for a better future. And when my baba, Marie Palsat, arrived from Ukraine in 1905 and my gigi, Nicholas Sawula, in 1906, they were poor immigrants, often referred to as Galicians.

They arrived with nothing but their rosaries, their Bibles and a few well-worn clothes. They chose to make Canada their home as they knew it would be a safe and welcoming place where they could worship publicly in their own language without fear.

My gigi, Nicholas Sawula, helped establish St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Winnipeg's North End, while my grandpa, Peter Swistun, was the founding member of Holy Eucharist Ukrainian Catholic Church in East Kildonan.

Church was important to them, Mr. Speaker. It represented their Ukrainian community and helped fill the loss of the family members they left behind in Ukraine.

My baba and gigi were hard-working and uneducated, yet they recognized their church was a place where they could seek guidance from God and practise a religion without fear of retribution.

Church was their community. It was their family and it provided them the comfort and memories of their homeland, Ukraine, which they loved but were forced to leave for a better life here in Canada.

Their prayer rosaries were visible signs of their Ukrainian Catholic faith, and I am so honoured to have with me today my baba's rosary. It is simple, unassuming, like my baba, but it provided her comfort, hope and connection to her God. I cherish her rosary, as it reminds me of my baba—a quiet yet strong determined woman who so bravely chose to leave her homeland for Canada, a country of hope and opportunity. And these are rights that every Canadian deserves.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly wear my crucifix every day as a sign of my personal conviction to God and the Ukrainian Catholic church, and I am proud of our Premier (Mr. Pallister) for introducing this resolution which will ensure that not only I, but millions of Canadians can continue to practise their religious—their religion or exercise their freedoms without fear of reprisal or penalty.

* (15:40)

I support this resolution that ensures that I can publicly display my conviction to God and the Ukrainian Catholic Church. And it provides me the right to display my religious conviction regardless of where I work.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians fought for a democratic right to publicly practise their religion and exercise their freedoms of religions, conscious and expressions without fear. We must never forget those, like my father, Michael Sawula, who served with PPCLI in the Second World War to protect our rights and freedoms. We must never forget all of those individuals who fought, and some who made the ultimate sacrifice, to ensure that all of us in Canada had those civil rights and liberties and the ability to practise our religion regardless of where we lived across the country.

Canada is a land of ethnic diversity and Manitoba is home to over 250 ethnic communities. All of those individuals chose this wonderful country, our Canada, and our province, Manitoba, knowing that they could practise their religion or carry on their traditions in harmony with all Canadians.

I'd like to thank our Premier for standing up for our rights as we celebrate Manitoba's 150th anniversary. We know that we must remain resolve in standing up for our freedom of religion, expression and rights. All Canadians must stand together, side by side, hand in hand, to oppose discrimination. All of us were created equal and we all deserve to be treated equally, regardless of our colour, race or religion.

I'm so proud of our government for bringing forward this resolution. We know that all Canadians deserve to be able to practise their religion, continue their traditions and enjoy the liberties that we have here in Canada each and every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I am proud to stand here today to speak to Bill 21 as an indigenous man. There is a number of thoughts that first came to my head when I read the bill, when I read the proposed responses, what it means.

Fear and hate. Those are the most common words that are being said about this—about Bill 21. And it brings me to a quote: Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

When I see what's happening in Quebec, I'm not speaking in opposition or of condemning Bill 21. Indigenous people have lived this hatred and we are still living this to this day.

First Nation people were denied their culture, their right to practise their religion, their—denied their right to live simply as Canadians. Indigenous people are the first people of Canada. But we are also victims of genocide. We are persecuted for speaking our language, being told that we can't practise our religion, we can't beat our drum, we can't wear our clothing, we can't speak our language.

So, for that, we lived in the shadows. We practise beating the drum. We practise our language. We wore our clothing in the shadows, in hiding—not for fear of being told not to do it; not for fear of being yelled at; not for fear of being ridiculed; not for fear of being beaten; not for fear of being assimilated; but for fear of being exterminated.

We have lived colonization and we have lived through hatred and we have lived through the wording of what Bill 21 is all about.

When I think to exactly what it means, it's just a gateway. It's just a first step to eliminating a certain group of people based on their religion, based on what they wear, based on how they practice. It's an—important to cite this as Bill 21. Not just to talk about the issue, but to also condemn the architects, the governments, the organizations and the people that are in fact drafting this hatred.

First Nations people are very resilient, and we're still here to this day. We've lived through the exact effects of what Bill 21 is all about. We're recovering. It's been taking generations, and it will take many, many more generations to recover from this. And we'll—we will not ever wish that on any ethnic group based on who they are, where they come from, what they wear, what they speak, what they practise as their religion. We live in a very diverse, multicultural country, and for that we are extremely grateful.

We are unified on this issue, but I believe it's important to call it out as it is. And that's why we have the amendment to refer to it as Bill 21. It can't be glossed over, it can't be hidden behind just different wording. Otherwise it's just going to reinvent itself as something else. And we'll see this—we'll have this discussion again.

Our people have had this discussion many, many years ago. And we're not sitting here to point blame at opposition members in this Chamber. I believe we are very unified on this front. And when I speak to the amendment, the amendment we've added and we want to see added is simply to refer to this as Bill 21 and be able to acknowledge and recognize the fact that there

is an architect behind this bill. There is a group of individuals, a group of people that are behind this bill, that are hoping to incite hatred, to eliminate, to discriminate and ultimately to extinguish people from being able to speak their mind, live their lives and be grateful to live in a country where we pride ourselves on 'multiculturalism', pride ourselves on being open.

You've heard many, many times over many, many years there—effects of—on indigenous people when it comes time to exactly what Bill 21 is referring to. And we talk about how wrong that was. Not just indigenous people, but people in this whole country are talking about how wrong it was to First Nations and indigenous people. Yet here we are today having a recycled discussion on that same thing on a different group, a different organization, different Canadians. And for that, we should be ashamed that we're still not taking a stronger, stronger unified voice on this.

I speak as an indigenous person having spoken to my grandparents, my great grandparents—people that have lived through this exact situation. And, like I said in my first quote, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Well, here we are repeating it. And that tells me we haven't learned from the history. We're not listening to the people that are—have lived through this, have gone through this, have experienced this and have survived this.

I think as Canadians—I stand here as an indigenous person—a proud indigenous person, a proud Manitoban, a proud Canadian. Do we always see eye to eye on different issues? Of course not. And that's one of the great things about this country and about this province.

But, on this issue in particular, Bill 21, we are very unified on this because we have lived through this; we have survived through this. We will not wish this on anybody at any time and if you truly want to see what these effects are and what this effect could have on our country, just look at our indigenous people today and how colonized we were when we were restricted from being able to practise our religion, live our lives, live our culture. We were almost exterminated, but here we are today, and if the lawmakers at the time did something similar to what we are trying to do right now in condemning Bill 21, indigenous people would be a lot better off today. We would be stronger today.

* (15:50)

But we're still there, still resilient, we're still fighting. We're still trying to get back what was taken

from us, and my hopes and my prayers are—the people that this bill is intended to kick down, to beat, to exterminate will never have to live through that, and I hope they learn from the experience of indigenous people, and I ask the government, I ask the opposition to consider the amendment to Bill 21 that we have proposed here today, just for the simple fact of the matter it needs more attention. It needs to be raised as a stronger issue and is something that, collectively, we can defeat, collectively we can persevere, and collectively we can thrive.

Miigwech.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to this motion. It's clear that Quebec's Bill 21 sets out to exclude people of faith from positions in the public service. It's an unacceptable and discriminatory bill because people of faith, especially people of faith who demonstrate their faith through dress, are excluded from jobs in the Quebec public service. It is a bill that runs contrary to the principles of a free and democratic society.

Canada and Manitoba have always been diverse, and people of faith—Sikh, Jews, Muslims—have always been part of the Canadian fabric in Manitoba, in Quebec, and across the country. People of all faiths, and people without faith, have fought and died together on battlefields around the world for Canada. In World War I, Indian soldiers, many from the Punjab, fought side-by-side with Canadians at Flanders Fields, and when we look around this Chamber, it isn't based on a single idea, but based on world ideas.

Behind the Speaker are the figures of Confucius, Lycurgus, Alfred, Justinian, and Manu—Confucius from China, Lycurgus from Greece, Alfred from Britain, Justinian from Rome, and Manu from India. This is a Chamber which is based, not in a single code, but on recognizing the wisdom around the world and inclusion around the world.

This is a prompt—I will actually—and I will absolutely agree with the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew)—the one thing that is missing is indigenous people and indigenous wisdom from recognition in this Chamber.

This is a province that was also founded on the principle of religious freedom and diversity, and next week it will be marking the 150th anniversary of the list of rights crafted by Louis Riel and the Métis. When the Métis negotiating committee went to Ottawa, it carried with them a list of rights which

included the following items: that the people have the right to elect their own legislature; that the legislature have the power to pass all laws local to territory; that a portion of the public lands be appropriated to the benefit of schools, the building of bridges, roads, and public buildings; that the English and French languages be common in the legislature and courts, and that all public documents and acts of legislature be published in both languages; that the judge of the supreme court speak the French and English languages; that treaties be concluded and ratified between the Dominion government and several tribes of First Nations in the territory to ensure peace in the frontier; that we have full and fair representation in the Canadian Parliament; that all privileges, customs, and usages existing at the time of the transfer be respected. It set out guarantees of elections and democracy and language and religious rights.

These were commitments to great hope, but how often, over and over, have we fallen short? As the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) has said, Manitoba and Canada have denied First Nations basic rights—rights to worship, rights to speak, the right to life. We should not sugar-coat our history of internment camps of Ukrainians and Japanese Canadians and forced sterilization laws. And there have been laws in Manitoba and across Canada that consistently deny people rights and that refuse to recognize people as full human beings and as persons under the law.

The story of progress is one where people are recognized as being individuals with full human rights, and it is always a struggle because these rights have to be defended against the risk of being rolled back. And First Nations and indigenous peoples are still having their rights continually denied.

It is easy for this House to stand up and pretend that this is only happening in Quebec. It is not. We just finished a very ugly federal election campaign: a campaign which was based, in so many ways, on disgust, anger and no shortage of hate.

It is easy to condemn Quebec and a party which no one in this Legislature belongs to. That being said, it is important that we take this stand. And for years, there has—and—but also acknowledge that for years, there's been a drum beat of hate, especially against Muslims, in Canada.

We need to remember that the truth is not decided by a majority vote, that we have to stand together as a Legislature to condemn hate, not just in Quebec, and to condemn the loss of right and the discrimination

against people, not just in Quebec but here in Manitoba and across Canada and around the world.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Je lutte contre le projet de loi 21 du Québec. Ça fait à peu près 50 ou 60 ans que la Révolution tranquille a avancé le projet d'un État laïque au Québec. Et c'était un processus qui était dirigé contre le grand pouvoir de l'Église catholique dans la province du Québec, et c'était un projet d'avancer les droits de la personne dans cette province-là.

Mais l'effet qu'on voit aujourd'hui de l'avancement de la laïcité a changé un peu. Maintenant, le projet de loi 21 est, en effet, un projet de loi qui supprime les droits de la personne au Québec maintenant. Alors, je trouve que cette évolution du discours public des Québécois est un processus que je regarde de très, très proche.

J'espère que notre travail aujourd'hui dans le palais législatif, que notre travail comme dirigeants des travaux publics ici au Manitoba pourrait contribuer ou avancer la réalisation que, quand on construit un État laïque, on devrait sauvegarder les droits de la personne.

C'est une question de sauvegarder les droits des peuples minoritaires contre l'avancement d'un État religieux, mais c'est une différente question d'avoir un État qui se présente comme un État laïque, qui dirige son pouvoir contre les droits de la personne gardés par les peuples minoritaires.

Moi, j'espère que la plupart des Québécois aujourd'hui trouvent que les pensionnats autochtones dans le passé de notre pays était une faute. Ce n'était pas correct ce qui est arrivé dans les pensionnats autochtones.

Et puis, j'espère aussi qu'il y a beaucoup de monde dans le Canada qui savent qu'une des choses qu'ils ont fait dans les pensionnats autochtones était de couper les cheveux des enfants qui étaient amenés là, pris de leur parents.

* (16:00)

Alors maintenant, je me demande, comme une personne autochtone qui porte mes cheveux longs, si ce projet de loi serait, en effet, une forme de discrimination contre moi-même, si les mêmes politiques du passé pourrait être recréées aujourd'hui dans notre pays, même si c'est dans une autre province.

Alors, je trouve que cette résolution aujourd'hui est un projet important, et oui, je suis d'accord avec nos collègues de Burrows et puis aussi de Keewatinook, que si on veut vraiment avancer la conversation, si on veut vraiment engager avec la question de comment est-ce qu'on pourrait avoir un Québec laïque qui respecte au même moment les droits de la personne, qu'on devrait nommer le projet de loi 21 dans notre résolution aujourd'hui.

Alors, je demande à tout le monde de l'autre côté de la Chambre de donner de l'appui à ces changements-là.

Translation

I stand against Québec's Bill 21. It has been nearly 50 or 60 years since the Quiet Revolution started the project of a secular state in Québec. This process was directed against the great power of the Catholic Church in Québec, and it was a project aimed at advancing human rights in that province.

But the effects we see today of the advancement of secularism have slightly changed. Today, Bill 21 actually suppresses human rights in Québec. Therefore, I find myself looking at the evolution of public discourse in Québec very, very closely.

I hope that our work today in this Legislative Assembly, our work as leaders of public service here in Manitoba, can help or advance our understanding of the fact that we need to safeguard human rights when we build a secular state.

It is one thing to safeguard the rights of minorities against encroachment by a religious state, but it is another thing to have a state presenting as a secular state and using its power against the rights held by minorities.

For myself, I hope that most Quebecers today consider that Indian residential schools were a mistake in our country's history. What happened in Indian residential schools was not acceptable. And I hope that there are many people in Canada who know that one of the things that was done in Indian residential schools was to cut the hair of children who were brought there, who were taken from their parents.

Today, I wonder, as an Indigenous person who wears their hair long, whether this bill would actually be a form of discrimination against myself, whether the same policies of the past could be recreated today in our country, albeit in a different province.

I consider that this resolution today is an important project and I do agree with our colleagues from Burrows and Keewatinook that if we really want to advance the conversation, if we really want to discuss the issue of having a secular Québec that still respects human rights, we should name Bill 21 in our resolution today.

Therefore, I ask that everyone on the opposite side of this House give us their support for these changes.

English

So in short, just translate a few of my thoughts, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, we know that the quiet revolution in Quebec was founded on a desire to stand up for the human rights of individuals against what was, 50 to 60 years ago, a very religious state, and to create a secular state in its place.

However, it seems to me as though this process has resulted today in a fundamentally different proposition with Bill 21, and that is where a so-called secular state is not standing up for the human rights of religious minorities, but rather is infringing on those very same human rights. We're all born with the freedom to be able to believe in the religious beliefs that we choose, and we're also born with the freedom not to practise any religion as well, should that be our path.

So I stand in this place today, as a person who practises a religion, who teaches my children to pray to God, in accordance with the religious tradition that was banned in this country from 1880 to 1951, and in spite of that ban, and in spite of the fact that, you know, my ancestors were carted off to jail for practicing our religion, for practicing the sun dance, you know, we kept that tradition alive, and so I dispute the, I guess, policies of the past, but I demand answers as to why some governments today would continue with policies like this that seem not to have learned from the mistakes that our people stand as living witnesses in testimonials too, in this country's history.

So, I'd hope that Quebecers, other Canadians, Manitobans would recognize that the residential school era of the past was a mistake, and we should also recognize that one of the hallmarks of that era, the residential schools, was that they brought indigenous children into those residential schools and they cut their hair, not just as a matter of enforcing uniformity, but also as a way of cutting ties to the religious, social, and cultural connections that they had with their own communities and indeed their own parents.

I stand before you today as an indigenous man who wears his hair long, and so I wonder whether I myself would be excluded from a job in the public service in Quebec, being that I have this very public display of my religious, cultural, and community affiliation.

And so if Quebecers, Canadians, Manitobans do want to learn from the lessons of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the inquiry into the missing and murdered women and girls and two-spirit folks, to the numerous inquiries and historical studies that have examined other mistakes and dark eras that we as humanity have visited upon each other in the past, then I suggest that we call into question and examine that debate on how we can advance the project of a secular state that separates church from state, but also continues to stand up for the rights of the individual, and human rights, that all of us, under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, are presumed to be born with in this country.

And so, with those few words on the record, I would encourage members on both sides of the House to adopt the resolution as amended. It is a good thing to engage in this debate, but is it a missed opportunity—it is a missed opportunity if we don't call out the specific piece of legislation that every single person speaking to this bill is, in fact, speaking of.

And so I am hopeful that we can come together across party lines, but perhaps more importantly, across divisions of faith, community and background, and stand together as one people under God or not, so as we might choose, and send a powerful message to the 'brest' of Canada that Manitobans stand united against discrimination and are willing to stand up for the rights of minorities, including by intervening in any constitutional challenge to Quebec's Bill 21.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Municipal Relations): Merci beaucoup de m'avoir donné l'occasion de parler de cette résolution importante.

Translation

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about this important resolution.

English

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise in the House today and put some thoughts on the record on this very important subject.

What this resolution comes down to, ultimately, is the concept of freedom: the freedom to be who you are and to express that identity, whether it involves

your sexuality, your culture, your language or your religion.

I think that most of us here in the House today can confidently say that living in Canada, for the most part, we do possess those freedoms, and we should all feel truly lucky to live in a society that enshrines and protects those freedoms for its citizens.

We're also proud to live in a country with a huge variety of religions, all of whom enjoy the same rights.

Nous sommes fiers de vivre dans un pays avec une grande variété de religions qui jouissent toutes des mêmes droits.

Translation

We are proud to live in a country where a wide variety of religions all benefit from the same rights.

English

Sikhs have the right to wear turbans. Jewish people have the right to wear a 'kippan'. Muslims have the right to wear a hijab, and Christians have the right to wear a cross. Canadians have these rights, Manitobans have these rights and Quebecers have these rights.

I really want to impress on this House that these freedoms aren't optional: they are a basic human right. I also want to remind the House that on—December 10th is the International Human Rights Day, which commemorates the universal—United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It is so important to take this day to reflect on this subject, because despite advances over the past decades, we know that people's human rights continue to be violated around the world.

I think of the horrific situation in 'minamar' the past couple of years, and the persecution of the minority people in that country. I think of ISIS and the targeted ethnic cleansing of the Yazidi people in Iraq. I had a chance, a couple of years ago, to hear directly from some young Yazidi girls who were held captive by ISIS, some of who are now living in Manitoba, and the trauma these young women are dealing with is unimaginable.

These situations are horrifying, and the violence that these people have faced is something no woman, man or child should ever have to endure. But it's also important to remember that human rights violations encompass more than atrocities happening on the other side of the world.

While we have to engage with what's going on in other countries and do the very best that we can to protect people's rights there, we also have to open our eyes to the acts of discrimination that people right here in this country face every day because, as far as we've come, there is still discrimination in this country.

In recent years, we have seen in North America a rise in anti-Semitism, a rise in Islamophobia and a rise in hate crimes. Now we are seeing an attempt to restrict individuals' rights to express their religion, and this is simply unacceptable. These attitudes don't reflect Canadian values, and they don't reflect who we are as Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is a diverse society. We have a vibrant francophone community. We have a large Jewish population. We have immigrants from all over the world.

Manitoba is the home of hope, a place where people from all over the world come to build a life that is free, where they can practise their faith and pursue their hopes and dreams. We value diversity of thought, culture and religion. Rather than our differences being divisive, they make us stronger.

We are a proud—we are proud to be a province where people of all religions come to build a better future for themselves and their families, knowing that they are coming to a place that will respect their rights and freedoms.

So I want to make myself very clear: this government will always stand up for the rights and freedoms of people in this country, and we will speak out when we see them being threatened. A law that diminishes protections for minorities, that disrespects an individual's right to self-expression and that infringes upon their freedom of religion ultimately enshrines the violation of a basic human right.

This is something that we won't stand for. In Manitoba, the freedom to express your religion is not up for debate. This shouldn't be a question for the rest of Canada, either.

* (16:10)

I'd like to close, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by putting one of my favourite quotes on the record, a quote that I'm sure many of us in this House have heard: First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist; then, they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist; then, they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew; then, they

came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me. That was a quote from Martin Niemöller.

Manitobans will speak up. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I think I'd like to start by sharing a little bit about my own experiences, a little bit about my background.

So, as I mentioned, as some people may already know, certainly, folks in our caucus are aware, and I mentioned it in my Throne Speech response, I grew up—I'm a first generation Canadian, grew up south end of the city, and was one of the very few black families in the community. And, you know, it was the kind of thing where I'd go to school or an event in community and, you know, all the other black people there I was pretty much related to or, you know, there was two other families; we were all friends; we all knew each other.

One other family happened to be Nigerian—two other families, actually. That was pretty cool, but, you know, for the most part, there—at that time, anyway, there wasn't a whole lot of other folks who looked like me in our community, and I did experience racism growing up. I was bullied as a kid because I was someone who didn't look like the majority of the kids walking the school hallways and in the classrooms.

But in all of that, I was raised by parents and in a community to be very proud of who I am, and that's Nigerian. It was common for us, it was typical for us to wear our traditional clothing, well, anywhere, so the grocery store, church, special events, holidays, and it's pretty common, culturally, for us as Ibos for families to wear matching traditional clothing, so, you know, the women, the girls wear certain ties on their heads. The men/boys wear caps and the patterns were always very similar.

So I always felt amazing wearing our traditional clothing. I felt powerful; I felt proud; I felt dignified and fundamentally, for me growing up, that informed the way that I would walk in the world as an adult. It's part of the reason why, on our swearing-in day, I wore traditional clothing for that ceremony because it's a very special occasion and it was really important for me to honour my heritage, to honour my family and communities and identity on such a special occasion by wearing something that I knew my whole life to be how you present yourself on special days, and it was wonderful to be able to share that with everybody who was there and it was wonderful, I think, for many folks in our community to see that.

Over the last few years, we've definitely seen, and I've definitely felt and seen a difference, a shift, in the way that some folks are expressing their perception and beliefs in regards to religious symbols, in regards to folks who are immigrants, in regards to folks who some would like to claim are not as Canadian as others in the country, and that's a false—obviously a false narrative.

I—a few years ago I got a phone call, actually, from my mother, and I'm sharing this so that folks in this room and in this Chamber and beyond can really understand, because I don't—I know that not everybody here has personal experience actually with what the implications of a bill like the bill out of Quebec, Bill 21, actually means for many.

I got a phone call from my mother who had received a letter at her daycare centre that she helps run, and this letter was from somebody who was condemning the amount of racialized folks who were working at that daycare centre. And this was the first time that I—it wasn't the first time I knew my mother had experienced overt racism. It was the first time I heard my mother express fear in regards to that experience.

My mom, who chooses not to drive—she stopped driving as soon as the rest of us could drive. She had no interest in it. Driving makes her anxious. She has anxiety. So she gave it up as soon as she had to stop driving us to sports and events and things. But my mom walks everywhere and takes the bus. She's super comfortable that way. For the first time ever, my mother told me she was afraid to walk home from work. She worried about who this person was, what they might do. And that created something I actually still cannot articulate in me, in terms of, this is the lived reality for somebody in my family, not just myself, not just in community, but my own mother.

The significance of Bill 21 is experienced more greatly in some than others in terms of the negative impact of it. And it would have been wonderful to see partisanship put aside in order to have our 'membo'—member for Burrows (Mr. Brar) be the person to second the resolution today. The reality is that some people are more greatly impacted by discriminatory pieces of legislation and discrimination and racism in general than others.

And it would have been, I think, a really—it would have been something that all folks in our communities could have looked at and seen as inspirational, that he would have been included in that way. And it certainly would have been an acknowledgement of the reality

that—the fact that he even has to process that this bill in Quebec exists, that folks have to process that this bill exists, is an unfair burden that some folks have to carry more than others.

I hear from folks in the constituency I represent, Union Station. I heard during the campaign, I heard it recently, I heard it at an event in community I was at just this past weekend. Their experiences in regards to racism, which is alive and well in our communities, which is alive and well in Manitoba, and we all have a responsibility to push back against. But I hear—I've heard specifically from Muslim women who wear hijabs that they are afraid. They fear leaving their homes at times to go do things like go to the grocery store, take their kids to school, go to their classes for education. And this has been increasing since, you know, this piece of legislation in Quebec was passed.

It is so important, not only that we collectively—collectively—talk about how harmful that type of legislation is, but it is critical that we don't shy away from naming it, that if we want to ensure that people understand what actually genuinely inspired the introduction of this resolution today, that we actually name—we name that source. I certainly—I don't think that, you know, members opposite, that this government was just inspired to bring this resolution forward out of nowhere.

Obviously, it was based on, you know, what happened in Quebec, and what's going on there. And it's important to identify that and name that. Just as we identify and we name that and therefore, you know, member for Burrows (Mr. Brar) introduced a really important—what we identify as a really important amendment. And I would hope that we can all see the value and the importance and the significance of actually naming exactly where resolutions are inspired from.

*(16:20)

In Canada, we've seen a rise over the last few years. We saw, actually, a record rate of hate-specific crimes in 2017 but we've seen a rise over the last several years, and those crimes have specifically increased against Muslims, blacks and Jewish people. Those crimes are crimes that are solved at disproportionately lower rates than other crimes.

We're seeing more youth engaged in committing these kinds of offences, which is incredibly disheartening and concerning, and so it is so important that, you know, in spaces where youth can see people who have all kinds of identities, all kinds of religious

beliefs expressed, all kinds of experiences, whether it's in their classrooms, workplaces, political office, we need to make sure that we are loud and clear about the importance of that representation and so that we recognize and youth recognize that every person's identity and experience, religious belief, they all have tremendous value and that devaluing any one of those things is completely unacceptable and fundamentally not Canadian.

So, when we talk about responsibility, I think it's really important to talk about not only responsibility that we have as elected officials who bring bills forward and debate bills and, you know, sit in chambers and do community outreach, but it's actually things we do on a day-to-day basis.

And I think my friend and colleague, the member for Burrows, actually talked a little bit about that, but it's everything—we have responsibility in everything from, you know, what we put forward in terms of legislation, in our—and our messaging, but it's even little comments that are made in our day-to-day lives—jokes that are made that we may think are insignificant, flippant, you know, even little comments and jokes, one recently made in this Chamber—all of those things have an impact and all of those things have to be named and called out and condemned for what they are.

I walk in this world without the privilege of being able to hide aspects of my identity that some people insist on trying to make me feel uncomfortable or ashamed for or othered for, and I can speak to the significance, the impact—what we call the micro-aggressions or whatever it is, the impact of little passing comments, little remarks made, you know, in this Chamber by members. All of those things have a cumulative impact on individuals and communities and the thought process of people collectively.

And so when I talk about responsibility I'm not just talking about, you know, Bill 21 that we're here to obviously condemn in a resolution that was put forward that is important, but I'm also talking about the individual responsibility we each have in our day-to-day lives to do better to ensure that folks who experience oppression, folks who deserve every human dignity and human right afforded—that should be afforded to everyone, that those things are respected and upheld.

I'd like to thank the member for Burrows for his wonderful speech. It takes an emotional toll, I would imagine, a psychological and mental toll to have to bring issues like that forward and speak in such a

personal place, and I really want to commend you for that and thank you for sharing so much of your own personal experiences and story.

I want to thank everyone who was listening when my colleague was speaking and I really want to encourage—I really want to encourage folks to think about the bigger picture sometimes, like, think about what we can accomplish collectively if we don't just think of certain things as talking points, if we don't just think of certain things as political opportunities, if we really think and see one another as people.

We all represent very diverse communities and experiences and challenges, and we cannot actually leave this place and claim to care about all of those people and all of those issues and all of those voices if we can't care about them here. It is a contradiction that I don't actually believe to be correct, to be right, to be fair.

And so I really hope that members across the way, that members opposite will take very seriously this amendment, that they will take very seriously the lived realities of many people who are experiencing very challenging times right now in our country, in our province, in our city due to some pretty egregious pieces, in my personal stance, pieces of legislation even being tabled in the first place, never mind being passed. And I hope to see that folks can do a good thing and, you know, reach across and outside of their own maybe even comfort levels and acknowledge what somebody else's experiences—lived experiences actually are and learn some things, because that will inform policies that come forward, bills that are brought forward.

You know, it's an opportunity to to not only just learn and leave the information, but actually bring that information and knowledge with you and bring those relationships with you and do better in terms of how we serve our communities.

Lastly, I think I'd like to say that—maybe not lastly, last I actually really talk about, I'm going to keep going on for a little bit—I think I'd like to—I actually want to talk a little bit about our own caucus and say that I am really grateful. Somebody actually made a—I think it was the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) in her speech the other day—made a comment in it about diversity—diversity in this Chamber, in representation, in our caucus.

And somebody on the other—across the way—the member opposite laughed and made a comment about something along the lines of—well, anyway, made a

comment and—kind of minimizing the significance of that. And what I can say is, you know, when I look at our caucus—and actually, when I do look across the way and I acknowledge, you know, a historic—the historic past election provincially where, you know, member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon) was elected in the House—I know how significant that is. I hear and I see in community how important her presence in that caucus is.

But, when I look, you know, at our caucus and when I think on moments like our swearing-in ceremony is something that, when I reflect on that—and a constituent actually saved an article in the Free Press that had member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) and a couple other folks in this article—and in—they talked about how our swearing in ceremony was—I can't remember the exact language, but basically that indigenous ceremony sort of led our swearing-in, and how significant that is and how significant that was.

* (16:30)

And, when I look at our caucus, I'm so grateful to be a part of a party and a caucus here in the Chamber that really and truly does reflect Manitoba and reflect the direction that I think most Manitobans actually want to see their Manitoba Legislature move in.

I think most Manitobans really want the folks who are working in this building and working in public service—they want to reflect the communities that exist within Manitoba. And I'm really proud to be a part of this caucus. I'm learning all of the time from my colleagues, and I'm grateful for that opportunity.

It is something that I do hope to see reflected further in other caucuses that shall not be named and—just kidding, across the way—and that starts really and truly with collectively showing Manitobans and Canadians and well beyond that, because folks internationally are paying attention to Manitoba politics. I know that because I hear from them on a regular basis now.

It's an opportunity that we have to show people much more widely that, collectively, we want to ensure our communities and our policies are moving this province in a direction that serves all Manitobans equitably, and that means naming and condemning any bill, any policy that would damage opportunity to do just that.

And I hope that today we can all come together and ensure that this amendment to the resolution put forward today happens, and that we name, you know, where this resolution was inspired from, and ensure

that moving forward in future, we don't have to ever get up in this Chamber and speak on a resolution like this, because we're just collectively doing better and serving everybody fairly and equitably and with dignity and with the absolute most respect as Canadians.

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): A sad afternoon that we even have to debate such a topic in this House. I've listened to colleagues on all sides and am grateful to offer my own words.

The freedom of religion is a freedom guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and is thus deemed fundamental to a free society. It's not something that is tertiary, it's not something which is secondary, but fundamental.

When you look at the Charter, it is commonly acknowledged there is not a hierarchy of freedoms, there's not a priority of freedoms, but that these freedoms are unique, these freedoms are essential to a free society, and the removal or erosion of one is the erosion of them all.

It strikes me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the first freedom to go is the freedom to think something, and as soon as we say well, you can't believe a thing, then the other ones pretty quickly go after it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is this freedom of belief which is under attack in Quebec, and I would argue—I think many would agree with me—by being under attack in Quebec, it is therefore attacked—an attack on all Canadians. Quebecers are Canadians, and when our fellow citizens have their religious freedoms called into question, all of us should shudder, and I think it is that collective shudder which we have heard in this Chamber this afternoon.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

In my own constituency of Rossmere, I serve many Sikh people. I have Jewish constituents, I have Mennonite constituents, I have Muslim constituents, I have Christian constituents, and all of us are called to live together harmoniously. There are differences, but why not celebrate and allow those differences? Is that not what a free society is meant to be about?

Madam Speaker—I see you're in the Chair—anti-Semitism in our nation is on the rise. This is not the time to begin to curtail religious freedoms; this is the time to stand for them, tall and secure and with surety. This is the time to reinforce and bolster those

freedoms which, perhaps, we've come to take for granted.

I applaud the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and members who've spoken on this issue this afternoon. We can't assume that because it doesn't come here, it doesn't affect us; it affects all Canadians when, in one corner of our country, it's apparently acceptable to put some small restrictions on religious freedoms. This isn't just about a situation in another part of Canada, this is about a fundamental principle, a Charter right which is essential to our free society. Restrictions on freedoms, including religious freedoms, are not hallmarks of democracy; they're hallmarks of totalitarian states. We should shun those kinds of restrictions with everything within us.

I have met people who've been imprisoned for what they believed. I have friends who've been imprisoned for what they've believed. I've met people who've been tortured for what they've believed.

Madam Speaker, we all hope and pray that those things never come near us, but if we turn a blind eye to the small concessions here and there, we are slipping in a wrong direction. Canada has a long history of religious accommodation, and others can probably catalogue that better than I can. But it's commonly accepted that during a war, pacifists who oppose killing, as my Mennonite friends have often done—although some of them actually did fight—were accommodated. It's commonly accepted that although pork is legal in Canada, we don't force people who have religious concerns about eating or even touching pork to do so.

Madam Speaker, we must stand for the religious freedoms of those who wish to display a symbol, to wear a turban, to wear a cross or some other demarcation of an internal belief. This has nothing to do with the person's ability to perform the operation or to teach the classroom or to drive the bus. This is solely singling out what they choose to wear.

Madam Speaker, this infringement is not benign. This infringement is real, and it doesn't just affect someone who wears a turban because—and because I don't wear a turban, therefore it's not my business. It is my business and I'll stand for the rights of someone else to wear a turban—because as soon as that's not allowed, what is next?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members? Oh, there is one.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): The wearing of religious symbols is a fundamental right in the exercise of freedom of thought, conscious and religion, as written in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and does not in any way diminish the ability of public servants to fulfill their duties.

Quebec's Bill 21 explicitly targets religious minorities, perpetuating exclusion and legislating discrimination while blatantly violating the rights and freedoms afforded to people in Canada. Yet the government resolution makes no mention of Quebec's Bill 21, and I strongly endorse the amendment put forward by the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

Bill—Quebec's Bill 21 disproportionately impacts Muslims, Sikhs and Jews. It also disproportionately affects women. Bill 21 strategically stifles and limits civic participation by those whose voices have already been excluded historically from our government institutions and civil service. I think it's fair to say that Bill 21 promotes racism, misogyny and does nothing to promote secularism.

* (16:40)

As my colleague, the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie), said so clearly, this bill replicates the racist policies of the past that sought to extinguish indigenous people from this country. Forcing public servants to choose between devotion and their careers undermines the shared Canadian value of respecting diversity in a pluralistic society.

This bill is an opportunity for us to come together across party lines to work collaboratively to oppose Bill 21 and send a strong message of unity in the face of divisiveness.

I believe that all of us in the Assembly agree that banning the wearing of religious symbols sends the wrong message to everyone in our country, and it sends a bad message to our partners abroad, who see and count on Canada as a country with religious freedom. Diversity is our strength here in Manitoba, and I imagine that all MLAs, regardless of party affiliation, agree that we must protect our diversity and our human rights. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment to the government resolution proposed by the honourable member for Burrows.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

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

The question before the House is the amendment to the government resolution.

Division

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

Yeas

Adams, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Moses, Naylor, Sala, Sandhu, Smith (Point Douglas), Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Nays

Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Gordon, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Reyes, Schuler, Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 19, Nays 32.

Madam Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion of the honourable First Minister?
[Agreed]

Recorded Vote

Ms. Fontaine: A recorded vote, please.

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

The question before the House is the government resolution on Religious Freedom of Citizens.

Division

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

Yeas

Adams, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fontaine, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Gordon, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Kinew, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Moses, Naylor, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Sala, Sandhu, Schuler, Smith (Point Douglas), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wasyliw, Wharton, Wiebe, Wowchuk.

Nays

Clerk: Yeas 53, Nays 0.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

* (16:50)

Ms. Fontaine: Is there leave of the House to direct that a copy of the resolution be sent by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to all Canadian provincial and territorial assemblies, as well as the federal Parliament?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to direct that a copy of the resolution be sent by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to all Canadian provincial and territorial assemblies, as well as the federal Parliament? [Agreed]

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you canvass the House to see if members are willing to call it 5 o'clock.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to call it 5 o'clock? [Agreed]

The hour being 5 p.m., as that was agreed to, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 27, 2019

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<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>