

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

The honourable member from Tyndall Park.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I rise on a point of order.

Point of Order

The Speaker: On a point of order, the honourable member for Tyndall Park.

MLA Lamoureux: I'm very happy to rise on this point of order.

At the holiday party open house over the weekend in my office, we had a contest. People were able to bid on a large jar of chocolates. The winner of this large jar of chocolates was Jamie Wallwin, and he specifically requested that I share these chocolates with my MLA colleagues here in the House—just in reference, if you see the chocolates on your desk.

And note from the Speaker, remember, we're not allowed to eat them in the Chambers.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The Honourable Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): On the point of order.

The Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Jamie.

The Speaker: I would just like to point out that that is not a point of order. However, we appreciate the spirit that it was given in, and please pass our thanks on to the winner of the contest that you had, Jamie.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 201—The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone)

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I move, seconded by the MLA for La Vérendrye, that Bill 201, The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les emblèmes du Manitoba (désignation de la pierre provinciale), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House. *[interjection]* Or, first time. *[interjection]*

I know literacy, it's—I got it. It's good. It's okay. *[interjection]* Thank you, we'll be redoing that.

All right. Okay. Try that again. Take two. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: The honourable member from Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Ewasko: I move, seconded by the MLA for La Vérendrye, that Bill 201, The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les emblèmes du Manitoba (désignation de la pierre provinciale), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ewasko: This morning it gives me great pleasure to bring forward Bill 201, which we will be debating in the House tomorrow morning.

The Manitoba Emblems Act as to amend—to designate the mottled dolomitic limestone quarried near Garson and Tyndall as the official stone of Manitoba, which is more known as Tyndall stone, specifically. And as we sit in this wonderful building

called the Manitoba Legislature, it is absolutely made by the incredible stone called Tyndall stone.

I look forward to the debate tomorrow morning and unanimous consent moving the bill forward to committee.

Thank you, Mr. Honourable Speaker.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for the Manitoba public service): Honourable Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to table the Public Service Group Insurance Fund: Benefits Summary, Auditor's Report and Financial Statements for the year ended April 30, 2023.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families. Required notice—90 minutes' notice was provided according to rule 27-2.

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Gender Equity): December 6 is the Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, a day we acknowledge Manitoba women we've lost to violence. I honour two of our Indigenous sisters killed on November 26: Crystal Beardy and Stephanie Beardy of Lake St. Martin First Nation. My deepest condolences to their children, families and community.

December 6 remains a significant date for Canada; a day we recall the absolute horror that unfolded in Montreal at École polytechnique. On December 6, 1989, a man armed with a semi-automatic rifle and a hunting knife walked into a mechanical engineering classroom and instructed the male students to leave. He then methodically shot nine women in the room. He proceeded into the hallways and another classroom where he continued to stalk and target women. When he was done, he murdered 14 women, alongside injuring 14 other individuals.

* (13:40)

I was living in Montreal at the time and remember watching the around-the-clock coverage of the massacre. The whole of Montreal was in shock and in

mourning. It was devastating and incredibly scary for women across Canada.

The École polytechnique massacre was an act of misogyny. The shooter claimed that he was fighting feminism.

At the time, society struggled to accept this act as an act of misogyny. Acts of misogyny continue today.

Earlier this year, a man entered a University of Waterloo class, specifically, a gender-studies class, and stabbed two students and the female instructor. As a result, some universities now won't advertise the room numbers for these classes or have moved these classes online entirely. The accused is also charged with mischief for damaging a Pride flag.

We have seen the federal Conservative leader court very dangerous incel members online by using the hashtag #MGTOW. This group blames women for everything, including their lack of sex. Canada's own security intelligence service has identified this violent misogyny as a form of ideological extremism.

On November 28th of this year, a man in Ontario received a life sentence for an incel-inspired murder of 24-year-old Ashley Arzaga. The judge also ruled this as an act of terrorism.

Other forms of misogyny include using the murders of Indigenous women as political props to win a provincial election; calling the survivors of Peter Nygård—a convicted sexual predator—gold diggers; paying Canadian surgeons less for procedures that they perform on women, while paying more for surgeries performed on men; or how current studies show one in five men in Canada believe feminism is harmful; or constantly asking women to explain or pay for the actions of men.

Finally, it's important to note, research supports the link of misogyny to white supremacy, racism, anti-2SLGBTQIA rhetoric, online hate and other forms of gender-based violence.

I encourage Manitobans to continue to honour the victims of December 6, and to unapologetically call out and resist all forms of misogyny.

I ask leave of the House for a moment of silence once all the statements have been read.

Miigwech.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence once all members have spoken on this? [*Agreed*]

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to mark the national day of remembrance of violence against women.

Today, we remember the senseless tragedy that took place 34 years ago in Montreal, where 14 women were killed simply for their gender. Their lives were full of hope and potential and were cut short because of one man's hatred against women. This was the second deadliest of mass shootings in Canadian history.

For all Canadians, including those not born yet, for babies like myself, the national day of remembrance serves as a reminder that those young women whose lives were lost tragically. And while it is a difficult reminder, we must pause and reflect to ensure that we take action to stop violence from ever taking place again.

The Montreal Massacre was clearly an attack on women. The murderer deliberately separated women from men. This time in history has inspired new dialogue with all Canadians.

Today, it's vital that we acknowledge, reflect that gender-based violence still exists in our communities, our province, our country and around the world.

I believe that this is a non-partisan issue as we continue to see women targeted every day. I believe that we as legislatures have a shared responsibility to help end violence against women and girls by working together on awareness, prevention and combatting hate and misogyny.

Violence against women is sadly more prevalent than people realize. Often, we go about our daily lives not knowing the trauma and tragedies that are experienced by so many. Oftentimes, violence against women is happening within their own homes, and this is why it's important to recognize the impacts of domestic violence and empowering survivors. It was not okay 34 years ago, it was not okay 20 years ago and it was not okay last week.

Even the smallest actions by each and every one of us can make meaningful change. Speaking out against acts of hatred, violence or harassment of any kind, and teaching our children to be kind, respectful and compassionate.

Honourable Speaker, by taking action, we will remember the women who lost their lives in the 1989 Montreal Massacre, and the women in our province who have experienced and continue to experience gender-based violence.

So let us stand on all sides of this House and ensure women and girls are protected in our province.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

The Speaker: Does the member have leave? *[Agreed]*

MLA Lamoureux: Honourable Speaker, 34 years ago, there was a horrific act of gender-based violence at École polytechnique. On this day, a gunman walked into a classroom, separated the women from all the men and proceeded to shoot all the women. Thirteen students in their 20s and 30s and one administrator died that day because they were women.

This is why we take time today. It is an opportunity to build awareness and to rededicate ourselves to ending gender-based violence.

Honourable Speaker, these women who were shot had families. They had friends. They had built their own lives, and that is why on this day, from coast to coast to coast, tears are shed, candles are lit and roses are laid in remembrance.

Honourable Speaker, I want to recognize those who have done such important work in honouring and supporting victims and survivors. There is much to be inspired by but much more that still needs to change.

In closing, Honourable Speaker, on this day 34 years ago, 14 women died simply because they were women. Thank you for the opportunity to share a few words.

And I'd like to table the names of all the women who are—we are speaking about here today.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

All rise, please.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we move on to members' statements, I'd like to draw all members' attention to the gallery, where we have 50 grade 9 students from Neelin High school under the direction of Amy Lee. The school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Brandon East, the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Simard).

Welcome.

I would also like to draw members' attention to the loge on my right, where we have with us two honourable members—former honourable members. I'd like to draw attention to the Speaker's loge, where we have with us today Peter Bjornson, the former member for Gimli, and Drew Caldwell, the former member for Brandon East.

On behalf of all members, we welcome you.

Also, I'd like to draw attention to the loge on my right, where we have also with us former MLA, Gerry McAlcum [*phonetic*], who was the member for Sturgeon Creek. Gerry McAlpine, sorry.

* (13:50)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women

Ms. Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Today is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. On this day, over 30 years ago, 14 brilliant young women were murdered in their place of learning, École polytechnique de Montréal.

Women belong in all spaces of expertise, of knowledge and decision making, like blue-collar work, science, mathematics, business, education and politics. Though we do not only belong in these spaces, we excel in them.

The women we lost on this tragic day were future engineers, a future nurse and a financial clerk, each possessing a mind for innovation and many who were my age or younger. The world will never know how much better off we could have been as a society if they had still been with us today.

We owe it to them to dismantle gender-based violence in all forms and elevate women to all spaces of influence. Meanwhile, women still disproportionately struggle with access to basic human needs including child care, housing, food, employment, reproductive justice and other forms of health care.

In Radisson, the Plessis Family Resource Centre run by Family Dynamics works every day to reduce the impact of social inequity and systemic gender-based violence. Having made many friends at the centre and donated care packages in the past, their work is incredibly close to my heart.

Single mothers, women having fled abuse and families with young children are largely represented in the population that they serve from the adjacent

Manitoba Housing community. At the Plessis Family Resource Centre, community members in need benefit from babysitting, after-school activities, meal programming, a food bank, budgeting group and so much more.

In Manitoba, the rate of gender-based violence is higher than the national average. By uplifting the work of grassroots organizations like the Plessis Family Resource Centre, together, we can change that.

And so, I invite the Legislature to join me in recognizing their important role in eliminating gender-based violence and by applauding those who we have in the gallery here today.

The Speaker: The honourable member—sorry. The honourable member for Radisson.

Ms. Dela Cruz: I would also like to submit their—the names of the 14 young women, once more, as well as our guests in the gallery today for the record in Hansard.

The Speaker: Names are submitted.

Anne-Marie Edward, age 21; Maud Haviernick, age 29; Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, age 31; Maryse Laganière, age 25; Maryse Leclair, age 23; Anne-Marie Lemay, age 22; Sonia Pelletier, age 28; Michèle Richard, age 21; Annie St-Arneault, age 23; Annie Turcotte, age 20.

Plessis Community Family Resource Centre: Harshita Agnihotri, Mary Chiengkou, Erin Fluerar, Nono Ndlovu

Portage Learning and Literacy Centre

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Yesterday, we heard much talk about adult literacy, and it triggered my statement that I'm going to present today.

I am pleased to talk about a few organizations that are making a difference in the constituency of Portage la Prairie.

And one of those organizations is the Portage Learning and Literacy Centre. It provides immigrant settlement services, language training, a youth engagement program, a high school for adults wishing to obtain their grade 12, employment assistance and also the opportunity to have passport pictures taken. It's doubled in size over the last couple of years.

We have many new immigrants coming to Portage la Prairie, and the Portage Learning and Literacy Centre is a big part of that.

Another organization is the Portage la Prairie revitalization corporation, works with community to create a community. They empower citizens, enhance neighbourhoods and foster community spirit and build capacity of community organization.

I must also recognize the Portage Bear Clan that provides community-based solution crime prevention and provides a sense of safety, solidarity and belonging to both members and our community.

The community foundation of Portage la Prairie serves the charitable needs of local donors and grant seekers from all walks of life to provide funding for local community priorities for many, many years.

And finally, big sisters and big brothers of Central Plains creates mentoring relationships and has been there. This year is their 50th year anniversary.

'Orgation'—organizations like these and individuals who are devoted to them are really the glue that holds all of our communities together.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Thank you very much.

Westman Multicultural Festival

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): The Brandon East constituency is rich in diversity and culture, and nothing showcases our cultural mosaic better than the Westman Multicultural Festival.

This three-day event is hosted around the city and showcases the cultural food, beverages, dance, music, art and history of Brandon's population. This festival has been a pillar of the Westman and Brandon community for the past 19 years. Originally named the Lieutenant Governor's winter festival, this long-standing annual tradition has grown significantly since its inception.

Like many other community initiatives, the Westman Multicultural Festival was on a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. This year, the Westman cultural festival hosted a summer event to bring people back and welcomed over 5,000 patrons.

One of the great benefits of the festival is the amount of tourism that it generates. People from all over the province travel to Brandon to take part in events. In the past, 40 to 50 thousand visitors will come and bear the frigid winters with a lot of joy. This festival breathes life into Brandon, as it provides a fun learning opportunity for the whole family.

This festival so far has eight confirmed pavilions: India, El Salvador, Mexico, Philippines, Ukraine, Mauritius, Jamaica and Honduras.

Honourable Speaker, I encourage all members in this House to come out and experience the Westman Multicultural Festival. I'm telling you now because it's in February, the 8th to the 10th. With a variety of venues and multiple different pavilions, there is something at the festival for everyone.

Louise Dyck

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Today I rise to acknowledge the upcoming 100th birthday of constituent Louise Therese Anna Dyck, maiden name Bedard.

Louise was born December 12, 1923, in La Broquerie, the 10th child in a family of 13.

Louise spent her childhood and teenage years in La Broquerie, where she completed high school. In December of 1942, Louise married and together they had two daughters.

In 1946, Louise and her husband separated, and sadly, she was separated from her children for a number of years before she was able to be reunited. Louise married two more times later in life, but was left widowed both times.

As a single mother of two children, Louise worked hard and always looked to improve her way of earning a living to support her family. This resulted in many occupations over the years, such as waitressing; hairdressing; managing a restaurant, a salon, a sewing factory; and radio advertising for the Singer Sewing Machine Company on the French CKSB radio station. She also designed and modelled her own clothing line, which included sales to actresses across the US.

She eventually became a realtor. But not just a realtor; the first female realtor in Manitoba. Louise received many awards as a realtor, notably the top salesperson in Winnipeg. At age 70, she retired from her final career.

Louise was able to live on her own, do all her own shopping, clean and cook for herself until the age of 95. In July of this year, she moved to the Grunthal Seniors' Home, where she resides today.

Louise has made it her goal to live to reach the age of 105 years. I wish you the best in attaining your goal.

Happy birthday, Louise.

Philippine-Canadian Centre of Manitoba

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Mabuhay. Magandang tanghali po. [*Live. Good afternoon.*]

I rise today to congratulate the Philippine-Canadian Centre of Manitoba, which we all know as PCCM, who recently celebrated their 25th anniversary.

My colleagues from Burrows, Maples and Radisson were in attendance with me, where we heard from many board members and past presidents about the important role PCCM plays in the community.

* (14:00)

Honourable Speaker, PCCM, the hall itself, is used every day for socials, Zumba and special events like town halls and concerts. PCCM has brought hundreds of thousands of people together over the years, and it continues to grow through small businesses and restaurants within.

They also offer outreach programs, immigrant services and youth leadership training, just to name a few. PCCM provides a place for Filipino Manitobans to feel a sense of comfort and familiarity, and it has become a staple not just in the North End, but for a growing population of Filipinos.

There are over 1 million Filipinos here in Canada; 100,000 of them live here in Manitoba, making up 7 per cent of our population. This makes our province a better and more culturally diverse place to live and call home.

Honourable Speaker, there are 13 current members of PCCM's board, and I'll table their names this afternoon. Some of these members are school trustees, public health providers, leaders in Filipino associations and radio hosts. They serve as an umbrella organization to help keep their traditions, customs, values and identity strong.

In closing, Honourable Speaker, I want to congratulate PCCM on their 25th anniversary. I want to thank the entire board for their continued work. And I'd like to ask my colleagues to join me today in thanking and showing appreciation to Kuya Enrico and Kuya Dante, who have joined us here today in the galleries.

Thank you.

Virginia Gayot, president; Gerard Madarang, vice-president; Rodrigo Lopez, secretary; Lou Fernandez, treasurer; Maria Harper, assistant treasurer; Dante Aviso, auditor

Members: Efren Cabrera; Gigi Gacula; Eric Hernandez; Lucille Nolasco-Garrido; Christopher Santos; Enrico Tiglao; Paul Unciano

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Fiscal Forecast Tax Increase Concerns

Ms. Heather Stefanson (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier came out yesterday with junk math cooked up to make the books look bad in Manitoba. But there's a rule in politics that when you bring forward a problem, to be productive, you also bring forward a solution.

Of course, we didn't see anything from this Premier in the way of a solution. Three billion dollars worth of promises to Manitobans that he and his colleagues made in the last election. What is his plan to implement those commitments on behalf of Manitobans?

What is his solution?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to, with the greatest of humility, shout-out the wonderful people of this fantastic province for their wisdom and for their trust. The problem: \$1.6-billion deficit created by the outgoing PC administration.

The solution came on October 3, when Manitobans elected our government to fix health care, balance the budget and lower costs for families.

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

Ms. Stefanson: Still no plan or vision for this 1.6 million—or, billion-dollar deficit that has been made up by the Premier of Manitoba. Is it—why is it that he is refusing to let Manitobans know what his plan is?

Is it because he was afraid to reveal the real plan, which is to jack up taxes on the backs of hard-working Manitobans who are just trying to make ends meet in Manitoba?

Mr. Kinew: I want to point out, for the people across this province, that no serious person has questioned the fact that the PCs left us with a \$1.6-billion deficit as of September 30. Our team is hard at work to fix the situation that they created in their desperate final moments, in which they abandoned any pretext of fiscal responsibility.

Now, I'd also want to point out, for the member opposite, that throughout her time as premier—throughout her time as a Cabinet minister—she charged Manitobans 14 cents a litre every time they went to the pump, including during a period of the highest inflation rates for a generation.

We're bringing relief. On January 1, as one of our first major acts as government, we're cutting the provincial fuel tax to save you and your family money. There will be plenty more good news in the new year as well.

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

Ms. Stefanson: What we did, Honourable Speaker, was we brought in the largest income tax reduction in the history of Manitoba so that Manitobans could make ends meet.

Now, just a little while ago, the Premier said that he agreed with that, which was in our last budget. Now, maybe he is saying he doesn't agree with that, but, again, he brought forward this fake crisis in Manitoba.

Simply, what we want to ask him is, what is his plan? What is his solution? Will he not just admit that his solution for Manitobans is to jack up taxes on their backs to make life less affordable for them in Manitoba?

Mr. Kinew: We're cutting taxes; that's right. Starting on January 1st. Notably, it's a tax that the PCs insisted on charging throughout their time in office.

Beyond this, we are charting a course towards fiscal responsibility that will see us balance the budget within this term of government while also investing in health care, importantly, by cutting through the bureaucracy to reinvest in the front lines.

Perhaps the member opposite would like to explain when the PC Party began to oppose cutting bureaucracy, lowering taxes and delivering for the people of Manitoba.

But I will point out that this week, she is questioning this—with these actions, she is questioning officials within the Department of Justice, within the Treasury Board; that's where I draw the line.

2024 Tax Rebates and Credits Government Intention

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): The NDP government campaigned on keeping the tax reductions in Budget 2023—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jackson: The NDP government campaigned on keeping the tax reductions in Budget 2023 despite having voted against them just weeks prior.

Now, with their new junk math being released yesterday, many Manitobans are rightly concerned that they may flip-flop on these measures again.

Will the NDP be keeping the increase in the basic personal amount, raising it to \$15,000 and saving the average Manitoba two-income household over \$1,000 more?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I just want to repeat for the benefit of everybody watching along that no serious person, even to this very moment, has questioned the veracity that there's a \$1.6-billion deficit left to us by the previous administration.

Five hundred dollars—\$500 million in forgone revenue; \$500 million in increased expenditure; and, of course, a \$600 miss—\$600-million miss at Manitoba Hydro is a \$1.6-billion deficit.

That's real math, not junk math.

Does the member opposite care to explain why he supports a leader who dug us such a fiscal mess?

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

Mr. Jackson: No answer there, Honourable Speaker, on the basic personal amount, so we'll see what comes with the good news in January.

Budget 2023's fiscal framework, which the NDP committed to keeping during the campaign, contained other significant tax measures for Manitobans.

Will the Premier be keeping the tax bracket changes introduced in Budget 2023, set to take effect in the 2024 tax year when Manitobans will need even more relief?

Mr. Kinew: You know, our government has taken immediate action within our first days to save you money.

One of our first steps is to bring the provincial fuel tax on gasoline and diesel to zero. That helps consumers; that helps business; that helps the ag industry.

We also froze Crown land lease rates to help beef producers in this province. At the same time, we're making important investments in health care, led by

our Minister of Health. Every step of the way, however, we have been opposed by this PC caucus.

So I will repeat my question: What is it that they have against investing in health care and lowering costs for you, the people of Manitoba?

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

* (14:10)

Mr. Jackson: Well, Speaker, we've had the carbon tax flip-flop. We've had the fuel tax flip-flop. We've had the education property tax rebate flip-flop. We've had the Hydro rate freeze flip-flop or delay, we're not sure. Now today we've added the basic personal amount flip-flop and the tax bracket increase flip-flop.

Will the Premier come out and just admit that he never had any intention of keeping the tax reductions and fiscal framework brought in by this party in Budget 2023, despite committing to Manitoba-'tobans' that he was going to do so during the campaign?

Mr. Kinew: Our government is saving you money. We're cutting the provincial fuel tax on January 1.

And I just want to remind the people following along that, up to this very moment, no serious person has questioned the fact that the PCs left us with a \$1.6-billion deficit.

I will, however, point out that the member opposite is a former political staffer to that failed administration, which means that his presence here in the Chamber not only speaks to their lack of ability to recruit new candidates, but also is testament to the fact that the member opposite from Tuxedo—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —hid from every single other member the fact that she was driving—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —the Province's finances significantly to the red. [interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: The question is: Did anyone else notice?

The Speaker: Order. I would point out to the members that when the Speaker is standing, they should remain quiet.

Resuming oral questions.

Education Property Tax Rebate Government Intention

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Yesterday, the Premier answered, no, I won't, when he was asked a simple question about whether he would look farmers in the eye and tell them whether he will cut the education property tax rebate.

On this side of the House, we could hardly believe what we were hearing. We know that the NDP are planning on breaking their promise to freeze Manitoba hydro rates, but now they're flip-flopping again and saying they won't commit to farmers and keep the education property tax rebate.

So I ask the NDP ministers, is this another broken promise?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Perhaps the problem has to do with the double negatives used in the way that they posed their questions, but I'll say it crystal clear here. No, I won't be raising taxes on ag producers. No, I won't be charging you on marked fuel come January 1. And no, I won't be increasing Crown land rents as the PCs did every single year that they were in office.

My question for the members opposite is why are we doing so many good things for the ag industry today when all they have are criticisms? Perhaps it's because we have more farmers on our side of the House now, as of October 3rd.

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

MLA Bereza: I would like to point out the number of rural people on this side of the table. The Premier's words could not have been any more clear: no, I won't. He said he won't look people in the eye and commit to keeping the education property tax rebate. It's right in Hansard for everyone else to see.

This sounds a lot like they're preparing to break yet another promise.

Will this Premier look into the camera and tell Manitobans right now he will not break promises that Manitoba voted for just a short time ago?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): It's been a long wait since I've had an agriculture question, so thank you to the member 'opp' for bringing the question forward.

When we talk about the importance of agriculture—and I don't have to re-educate the critic from the other side of the House—9 per cent of the GDP is

produced by our agriculture producers, the importance of agriculture in this province.

And I'm very proud to stand here today in defence of all the agriculture producers in this province of Manitoba. And we work together.

I'm talking about working together, not like members opposite, pick and choose, cherry-pick who they want to support and who they do not want to support.

And let me say—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Bereza: Thank you for not answering that question, Ron. The Premier (Mr. Kinew)—

The Speaker: Order. Order. It's a long-standing rule that members are not allowed to use members' names. They have to use either their ministerial title or their constituency.

MLA Bereza: My apologies, Honourable Speaker.

The Premier plans to run a deficit more than \$1.3 billion higher than what was budgeted. He is rushing to spend money faster than a reckless spendthrift.

But what Manitobans and farm families want to know is whether their education property tax rebate will be a casualty, again, of the NDP's three-year deficit plan.

Will he go out and tell Manitobans that we—he will never raise taxes, and that he will keep the education property tax rebates for Manitobans?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I wonder if I could ask the member opposite, did he go to the Crown lands lessee and ask them, do you mind if we double up your—three times your lease rates and double bill you in the same year? Did you go out and do that?

I think it's very inconsiderate of the people that are working every day on the farms, doing—for the betterment of our economic development in our province.

We've actually had probably the lowest population of livestock since 1991, yet the two previous Agriculture ministers from that side of the House: we're going to increase the population of cattle in the province of Manitoba.

Did they? No they did not.

And I do have to say, it's unfortunate that you're going to take the cattle producers to pay back the \$1.6-billion deficit that that government—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

2024 Tax Rebates and Credits Government Intention

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): The audited public accounts showed that last—the last fiscal year had a \$270-million surplus. Our PC team showed regular improvement, with two surpluses in the last five years.

Now, the NDP Premier has directed his Finance Minister to run deficits for the next three years and said he won't look to—won't look Manitobans in the eye and tell them their education rebates are safe.

Will this Finance Minister commit today that his deficits will not mean a cut to the education property tax rebate for homeowners and farmers?

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): The PCs left Manitobans with a \$1.6-billion deficit. That's the facts.

I know that the members opposite don't want to accept that, but that is just simply the reality. And that is going to create significant challenges for our province.

But our team is up to the task. We're going to work together with Manitobans to ensure we deliver on the commitments that we were sent here to deliver on.

That includes ensuring we continue to fix health care, thanks to the great work of our incredible health-care minister; to fix education, thanks to the great work of our incredible Education Minister.

And we're going to continue to make life more affordable—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Agassiz, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Byram: Well, they might be struggling with the math on this, but the Manitoba families are struggling with high inflation and the cost of groceries, rents and home heating bills.

* (14:20)

Thankfully to our PC team here, we brought in real tax relief for households with renters tax credits,

the education rebate; January 1st, Manitobans will again get a tax reduction and bigger paycheques thanks to our PC team.

Will the Finance Minister commit today that he will keep all of the education tax rebates, income tax cuts and tax credits that are proving real relief and bigger paycheques for all Manitobans?

MLA Sala: You know, one of the most concerning aspects for Manitobans about this news of a \$1.6-billion deficit is that the members opposite knew about this before the election but failed to tell Manitobans about that. They knew that their cuts to health care were costing Manitobans millions in overtime. They knew that Manitoba Hydro water levels were lower than they were supposed to be, knowing that net income for Hydro was going to be significantly lower.

They hid this information from Manitobans. That's in keeping with their record, Honourable Speaker, lacking transparency, failing to be honest with Manitobans. Times have changed. This government will continue to be transparent. We're going to fix the mess they made, and we're going to make life better for all Manitobans.

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

Ms. Byram: Well, these are easy yes-or-no questions, but the NDP never want to give a straight answer.

Will the minister commit today to keeping all the existing tax credits: education property tax rebates and income tax cuts that they are taking—that are taking effect January 1, 2024? This will give Manitobans some needed relief and bigger paycheques in the new year, or will you be cutting these rebates and tax breaks?

MLA Sala: You know, I appreciate the question from the member. It gives me another great opportunity to talk about the mess that the members opposite left for us.

They budgeted—they released a budget in March that said we were going to have a \$363-million deficit at the end of this fiscal year. Only a matter of months later, in the end of July, they released a Q1 number that suggested that deficit number was holding the same. Suddenly, two months later, \$1.2 billion—poof, Honourable Speaker, up in thin air. That's approximately the value of the entire budget for the City of Winnipeg, the entire budget for the City of Winnipeg just gone in thin air.

That's the record that they have behind us, Mr. Honourable Speaker. On this side of the House, we're going to make sure that we do what Manitobans want to see, which is manage the books responsibly. We're still going to deliver on our commitments—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Education Property Tax Rebate Government Intention

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Honourable Speaker, it's like Chicken Little on that side of the House: the sky is falling despite inheriting a booming economy and the third highest GDP growth in the country. But it's creating a lot of uncertainty for Manitoba families who are trying to manage tight budgets.

The education property tax rebate saved the average Manitoba family nearly \$800 this year. And now the Minister of Finance is telling parents and families that they're going to have to tighten their belts and find that money and hand it over to the NDP.

Will the Minister of Finance give families the certainty that they need to manage their family budget and confirm that the education property tax rebate is not on the chopping block?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Here's what I can confirm, Honourable Speaker: Manitobans now have a government that actually cares about the affordability challenges they face.

For seven long years, Manitobans had a government that was not concerned about the challenges they were facing. That's clear because we saw for seven years they failed to act. Those days are over. We're bringing forward very important solutions that will help to improve affordability for Manitobans, including our fuel tax holiday, which will begin on January 1, and help Manitobans to save money after the holidays. That's in addition to other items, for example, our hydro rate freeze and our commitment to lower the cost of heating for Manitobans, through geothermal investments—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Roblin, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, the minister knows that the tax breaks that are coming into effect January 1, once cut, will effectively nullify any savings from the gas tax cut. The NDP have put forward zero affordability measures other than that,

and they're going to wipe it out by cancelling all the tax cut—tax breaks set to take effect January 1st.

I'll ask again, because we've asked this question multiple times: Will the Finance Minister commit that the education property tax rebate is going to go ahead?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, I think that the Health critic for the opposition would do well to take a lesson from the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) who's focused on questions about health care, one of the key issues that Manitobans are facing. That would be, I think, advisable—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Sala: In terms of affordability, we are doing the important work of making life more affordable for Manitobans. We're very proud to be bringing forward a fuel tax holiday that will benefit Manitobans in every corner of the province, including farmers, including Manitobans in our northern communities.

We're doing the real work of making life better for Manitobans, not what they did for seven years, which was make life more expensive.

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

Mrs. Cook: I think, as a member of this House, I have just as much a right as any other member to ask a question about accountability.

Yesterday the NDP began laying the groundwork for the massive tax hikes and broken promises that they're set to roll out, after realizing that they can't possibly pay for \$3-billion worth of election promises

It's creating a lot of uncertainty for Manitoba families who want to know: Can they count on the education property tax rebate in January or do they need to start budgeting hundreds of extra dollars to hand over to the NDP?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, I want to remind the members opposite that during their seven years, they focused on—in raising hydro rates on Manitobans in a way that no other government has done in this province's history.

In fact, they brought forward a bill, bill 36, that was focused exclusively on finding new and creative ways of raising energy costs on Manitobans as quickly as possible. And that's while they dismantled the traditional role of the PUB.

That's their record. Their record is making life more expensive for Manitobans. What are we focused on? Reducing costs of living so Manitobans can get ahead.

Budget 2024 Tax Bracket Increase

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): This NDP government is setting the stage to break their promises to Manitobans. They're fudging the numbers and putting their thumb on the scale to justify the massive tax hikes that we know that they're going to bring in.

Why won't this Minister of Finance commit when the Premier (Mr. Kinew) didn't answer my colleague?

So I will ask him: Will Budget 2024 include the increase in indexed tax brackets that they campaigned on?

The Speaker: Sorry—the honourable Minister of Finance. I didn't have my mic on.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Again, very pleased to have this opportunity to stand up to talk about this important issue of the massive fiscal mess that the previous government left for Manitobans to clean up.

Again, one of the most concerning things that we've revealed here is that the previous government knew about this. They knew about this before Manitobans went to the polls, and they failed to reveal that to Manitobans because they hoped to somehow hide this with the hope that Manitobans would possibly vote for them or that they would vote them back into government.

What we've seen, Honourable Speaker, is that Manitobans are deeply concerned about what's been revealed here. We know that they hid information; they hid the fact that hydro water levels were low; they hid the fact that health-care expenditures were going to go way over budget, all because of their cuts and their decisions.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, our PC team's measures took thousands and thousands of low-income Manitobans off the tax rolls and allowed them to invest in their own futures. We did this because we know that Manitobans can have their own budgets and know how to spend their own

hard-earned money. This NDP government wants to spend their money for them.

It's a very simple yes-or-no question: Can the Minister of Finance please tell Manitobans whether Budget 2024 will include the increase in indexed tax brackets that they campaigned on?

* (14:30)

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, here's what we can tell Manitobans: you finally have a government that cares about the affordability challenges you're facing.

You know, for years—again, for years—what did they do? They took creative measures to raise energy costs as high as possible, as quickly as possible on Manitobans. They even went as far as raising taxes on renters, Honourable Speaker. Raising taxes on people on fixed incomes, on seniors, on families with disabilities. That's their record.

What's our record? We're already coming in with solutions to reduce the costs of living for Manitobans, starting with our fuel tax holiday January 1.

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

Mrs. Stone: Affordability and cost of living is the No. 1 issue that Manitobans are dealing with. Angus Reid poll has said this is the No. 1 issue that Manitobans are dealing with.

Yet, this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the government refuses to acknowledge that this is the No. 1 issue that Manitobans are dealing with. And the only bill that they have introduced in this House is a temporary tax cut that won't go beyond June 30, because they don't think inflation is going to be a problem after June 30.

So, other than giving their own staff salary increases and swanky offices, what has this government been doing for the past two months?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, they made life more expensive. We're going to make it more affordable.

Health-Care Budget Government Intention

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Yesterday, the government announced the bleak fiscal outlook with a giant deficit of over a billion and a half dollars.

All throughout the campaign trail, this NDP government campaigned hard on a promise of no cuts.

Will this Premier stand up today and commit to all Manitobans that he will not cut any portion of its health-care budget in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to thank the member for Tyndall Park for once again bringing an important question forward on the No. 1 issue that matters to the people of Manitoba, which is health care.

Of course, the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus are choosing to ignore this, for good reason; they created a mess in health care, just like the mess they created with the \$1.6-billion deficit. But we know that because of their closures of emergency rooms, the cuts to health-care staffing, the disrespect for those on the front lines, it is going to take years to fix.

And actually, I think that the member's question gets to the heart of the matter: it is going to be a challenge, but it is going to be an achievable one that we are committed to doing, which is to fix the fiscal mess left by the PCs while creating new investments in health care to improve things for you, the patient, and the families across the great province.

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

Provincial Deficit Forecast Election Campaign Platform

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): This NDP government should have had some foresight into the state of the Province's finances before making such grand promises.

The fiscal update yesterday sounds like this government is setting the stage to announce budget cuts on services that Manitobans rely on.

Will this Premier share with Manitobans any campaign promises that he may not be able to fulfill because of the deficit?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I agree with the member for Tyndall Park's assertion that the people of Manitoba should have known about the \$1.6-billion deficit that the PCs had run up on their way out the door.

The Progressive Conservative caucus should have shared this information with the people before you voted. The leader of the PC Party should have shared this with the people—she probably should have shared it with her own caucus—prior to election day here in Manitoba.

But I want to reassure people across the province that in spite of the significant fiscal irresponsibility practiced by the outgoing administration, we are going to make good on our commitments, which are to staff up health care, to build new emergency rooms, to cut the fuel tax, to freeze hydro rates and to end chronic homelessness in the next eight years.

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

MLA Lamoureux: This government needs to be upfront with Manitobans and answer tough questions. Governments need to be held accountable, not only for their fiscal management, but as well as for their fiscal planning.

Did this government honestly and sincerely have no idea that the province was sitting in such debt prior to making their campaign promises?

Mr. Kinew: I'm as disappointed as anyone to learn of the fact that a \$1.6-billion deficit was hid from you, the people of Manitoba, by the outgoing Progressive Conservative administration.

I could share with the member for Tyndall Park what it was like for us after the election, on October 3. After about one hour of sleep, we went out and we started to do media responses, and then we made our way here to the Manitoba Legislature.

In the first briefing we received, a remarkable picture of fiscal irresponsibility at the hands of the last premier was painted for us. The good news is that since that moment, our team has been hard at work charting a course towards fiscal responsibility while making good on commitments to health care and making your life more affordable.

Gender-Based Violence Steps to Address

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): Today, on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women, we honour the lives of 14 young women who were murdered in the devastating act of gender-based violence 34 years ago today.

This tragic anniversary is a reminder that gender-based violence still persists today and that we must continue to condemn all forms of misogyny in our province.

Could the Minister responsible for Gender Equity please share with the House what action her department is taking to address gender-based violence?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Gender Equity): I want to say miigwech to my colleague for the very important question, particularly on this day of remembrance.

Our government is taking serious, tangible, immediate action to combat gender-based violence, in particular, against violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited. We are immediately reinstating the special adviser on Indigenous women's issues. We're establishing and working in partnership with community organizations for a 24-7 drop-in centre for Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited. And we are also working on a provincial data set to record all cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited.

Most in the Chamber and most outside the Chamber would know that Manitoba actually doesn't have a provincial data set on the actual numbers. We're committed to doing that so we have an accurate reflection—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

North End Water Treatment Plant Funding Inquiry

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): It's remarkable, Honourable Speaker, that in just two months, this NDP Premier (Mr. Kinew) and his bean counters have racked up the first billion-dollar deficit. It must be a Manitoba record. Add that to half a billion dollars in spending last month—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —and \$3 billion in elections promises that they will not keep, something will have to give, Honourable Speaker; tax hikes, program cuts, infrastructure cuts.

In light of the NDP's billion-dollar deficit, will the infrastructure minister commit to Winnipeggers and Manitobans today that the North End treatment plant won't be among the list of funding cuts in 2024?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): You know, never before in our province's history has an outgoing government left our province in such a bad position financially. A \$1.6-billion deficit caused by the former government. This will have an impact across government, and it is the responsibility of the outgoing government.

We also treat our public servants with respect, not with name calling. Despite a 30 per cent vacancy rate

in this department, our team works hard to continue to build the infrastructure of this province.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Red River North, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wharton: For 17 years, the NDP, including the former member from Gimli, the NDP MLA Peter Bjornson, did nothing to protect Lake Winnipeg, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

* (14:40)

Our PC government got this important work started. Shovels are in the ground and cranes are standing up, Honourable Speaker.

While the NDP minister commit—will the NDP minister commit today to the City of Winnipeg to continue funding their fair share of this very important project for Lake Winnipeg, yes or no?

MLA Naylor: I'm not certain if members on the other side of the House have a full concept of what \$1.6 billion means and what it means to an infrastructure budget. So I'm going to give a couple of examples.

Yesterday, I was asked about RTAC highways and about expanding a stretch of a highway to make it more RTAC. That's 889 kilometres of RTAC highway; that's what \$1.6 billion would pay for.

You know, it would—I was asked about bridges; \$1.6 billion would build 40 new bridges in this province.

And that's what this government threw away.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Red River North, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Wharton: Honourable Speaker, this project is a priority for Winnipeggers and Manitobans who care about our lake and our environment.

While the NDP abandoned their environmental sensibilities for well over two decades, including the former member from Gimli, who lives on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, finally stand up for Lake Winnipeg, make the investments and commit to Winnipeggers and Manitobans that they will protect Lake Winnipeg for generations to come so my grandkids, and maybe the former member from Gimli's grandkids, can swim in Lake Winnipeg.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I just want the members in the Chamber to just bear with us for a quick second so we can restore a modicum of respect and dignity here.

First of all, we are going to get the project built. But I want to say clearly the only way that we do big things like this is with the help of hard-working civil servants. And so we respect you, and we don't use time in the Chamber to disrespect you.

But the sort of attitude on display here is why the members opposite are sitting in the opposition benches, because they want to divide people. We want to bring people together.

And that's why I want to say to the retired members that we respect you as well. And it's the fact that we're bringing people together that is the reason we're getting more and more support, and so that even retired Progressive Conservative members are now standing with our team on the government's side of the House.

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

The Speaker is standing. That means there should be quiet in the room.

So, before I get to a ruling that I have, I'd just like to point out to members that a certain amount of respect should be paid to former members and not try and engage them in the question and answers that they place here.

Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker: And I have a ruling for the House.

Following the land acknowledgement on November 27, 2023, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Johnson) raised a matter of privilege alleging that on Friday, November 24th, 2023, during oral questions, the honourable First Minister deliberately misled Manitobans when discussing the firing of Michael Swinstun [*phonetic*] from the economic development board secretariat.

The member concluded his remarks by moving that this House condemn the Premier (Mr. Kinew) for deliberately misleading the Legislature and that the matter be immediately—the matter immediately be referred to a permanent standing committee of this House for investigation.

The honourable First Minister spoke to the matter before I took it under advisement.

For the information of the House, in order for a matter of privilege raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege, members must demonstrate that the issue has been raised at the earliest opportunity, while also providing sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached.

On the condition of timeliness, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Johnson) indicated that this was his first opportunity to rise on the matter after reviewing Hansard, and I would agree with the member on that point.

Regarding the second issue of whether a prima facie case of privilege has been established, it has been ruled on numerous times in this House that a member rising on such a matter of privilege must provide specific proof of the intent to mislead the House on the part of the member in question. Providing information that may show the facts are at variance is not the same as providing proof of intent to mislead.

Past Manitoba Speakers have ruled that without a member admitting in the House that they had the stated goal of misleading the House when putting remarks on the record, it is impossible to prove that a member had deliberately intended to mislead the House.

The procedural authorities also offer commentary on the issue of misleading the House. Joseph Maingot states on page 241 of the second edition of Parliamentary Privilege in Canada that allegations that a member has misled the House are, in fact, matters of order and not matters of privilege.

He also states on page 223 of the same edition that disputes between two members about questions of facts said in debate do not constitute a valid question of privilege because they are a matter of debate.

Finally, multiple rulings have been delivered on— from this Chair over the past 40 years regarding matters of privilege involving the alleged misstatements by members or the provision of misinformation or inaccurate facts by members. Speakers Phillips, Rocan, Dacquay, Hickes and Reid and Driedger have consistently ruled such situations to be disputes over facts, which, according to the procedural authorities, do not fulfill the criteria of a prima facie case of privilege.

Accordingly, I rule that a prima facie case of a breach of privilege has not been established in this case.

Thank you for your attention to this ruling.

* * *

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): A quick point of order.

Point of Order

The Speaker: The member for Tyndall Park, on a point of order.

MLA Lamoureux: I would just like to ask for leave to have the names I tabled during my member statement added to Hansard.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

The Speaker: The names can be added to Hansard.

* * *

The Speaker: Petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to waive rules 139(12) and 139(13) for Bill 4, the employment standards amendment and interpretation amendment act, Orange Shirt Day, and Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act, to allow them to be debated at concurrence and third reading this afternoon, despite the fact that they were reported back from committee yesterday.

The Speaker: Is there leave to waive rules 139(12) and 139(13) for Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day), and Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act, to allow them to be debated at concurrence and third reading this afternoon, despite the fact that they were reported back from the committee yesterday?

* (14:50)

Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

* * *

MLA Fontaine: I thank members opposite for granting leave for us to debate those bills today. That's much appreciated.

Honourable Speaker, would you please call for third reading and concurrence, Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day); and Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act, should we be finished with Bill 4.

Miigwech.

The Speaker: It has been moved that we will now debate Bill 4—It has been announced that we will now debate Bill 4, the Employment Standards Code and interpretation amendment act, Orange Shirt Day, followed by, if there's sufficient time, Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act, and have them debated at concurrence and third reading this afternoon.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 4—The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day)

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi et la Loi d'interprétation (Journée du chandail orange), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kinew: This is a significant bill, as it fulfills one of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. I note that this is a bill that has moved forward in different spaces at different times.

There has been first, of course, the movement from residential school survivors, who brought the issue to national attention and who started wearing orange shirts to honour the story of Phyllis Webstad at some of the TRC events and other community events that were taking place across Canada. Then we saw the Truth and Reconciliation Commission deliver their final report, which contained within it Calls to Action that we have a dedicated day to commemorate the experience of residential school survivors, the children who never came home and the families who were left behind.

We've seen the federal government move forward with a national day of recognition for truth and reconciliation on September 30, and my friend from Steinbach, during his time as premier, started the process of ensuring that this is observed with a day off at schools in Manitoba.

What we're proposing to do with this act that we're now bringing to third reading is to bring this project to its next logical step. Which is, of course, to ensure that all Manitobans can participate in Orange Shirt Day should they so choose, by ensuring that it is

a statutory holiday in provincially regulated workplaces. This will ensure that the children of all families, including those who work in construction and manufacturing and other provincially regulated sectors, will be able to participate.

But there's also an element of choice here as well. For Manitobans who choose to go to work, they are free to do so. We're now simply asking that their employer provide them with the holiday pay if they do decide to enter into such an arrangement.

This is an important step in fulfilling the next stage of our journey towards reconciliation, and I look forward to working with members from all parties and Manitobans from all walks of life to ensure that we have the necessary ability to commemorate Orange Shirt Day in all the relevant spaces and locations across the province of Manitoba.

On a personal level, I always like to reflect on the very important contributions of residential school survivors, and we've been very mindful in this Chamber these past few years of also honouring children who never came home, a phenomenon which is a sad part of our collective history as Canadians, but one that we have become more acquainted with in that time period.

At the same time, it's important that we honour the impacts on the families who were left behind during this era. As a parent today, I often reflect on what I would feel like if my kids had been a part of this era. Certainly it's not something that any of us as parents would want to have the experience of going through.

And yet here we are, as Canadians, each of us left to chart a positive path forward for our country, and to attempt to heal, to attempt to move forward, and attempt to address to find that time and that space to commemorate Orange Shirt Day.

There will be many opportunities to do so in the future. There will be many contributions to our provincial curricula. There will be many discussions in our public sphere throughout the calendar year which will allow us to continue on with this journey to reconciliation.

But it's important that we set aside one specific day. On September 30th, the day identified by survivors themselves, using the terminology, the language and the symbol that they identified themselves, and that, in so doing, by adhering to that image, by adhering to that date, by adhering to that language, that we commit to following in their steps,

magnanimous and graceful as they were, to not only honour the challenging parts of our history, but also to see fit to commemorate stories of resilience and, perhaps most relevant to the discussion here, and a bill that talks about education, is to engage in the constructive conversations of how it is we are going to build the society of the future that we all love and hold dear to ourselves.

And so it's important that we recognize the contributions of Indigenous people in getting us to this point. But I also feel compelled to share, paraphrasing the not always politically correct language of my late father, who was reflecting on, you know, the phenomenon of reconciliation in Canada, and who was remarking, you know, sometime when he was still around, prior to his passing in 2012, he reflected to me, you know, we never would have got the apology if non-Native people weren't also offended by residential schools and what happened during that era.

And so I offer those words from a residential school survivor himself into the permanent record here in the Manitoba Legislature so that we might recognize that while residential school survivors have been leading the way in this conversation of reconciliation, the fact that we have arrived at this point together is an indication that people from all walks of life here in Manitoba and across Canada have participated in this journey. And that it's people from faith communities; it's people from cultural communities, people from different geographic communities that have participated together in this important journey.

And while we still are confronted with many challenges, whether it's on reconciliation or any number of issues that we discuss here at the Manitoba Legislature, I am optimistic in having learned from observation the power of what is possible when we listen to the elders and work together as people from all walks of life as to what we're capable of together, what we're capable of doing collectively.

And so let this journey of reconciliation be one that sees fit to improve the lives of Indigenous people in Canada while ensuring that other Canadians are not made worse off. But let's also broaden out the conversation to ensure that the lessons we learn from this journey of reconciliation seek to bring all of us together in those great province-building and nation-building opportunities that present themselves to us.

Thank you.

Ms. Heather Stefanson (Leader of the Official Opposition): I am pleased to rise today to put a few

words on the record with respect to Bill 4. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) said himself that this issue has been before us for quite some time now, and it was really our government that started to put the wheels in motion, so to speak, when it comes to the recognition and the importance of Orange Shirt Day, bringing it into our schools, bringing it into governments.

And I know that we did extensive consultation with the communities with respect to what they would like to see on Orange Shirt Day, and what they would like to see moving forward in our province. And I think one of the great things about this is that we've been able to work together throughout that time, and we've been able to come to a point now in this Legislature where we are so privileged and honoured to have the rules that we do in this Legislature to allow for people to come forward at the committee stage and speak to the importance of legislation that is passed in this Chamber in Manitoba, and, of course, that took place on Monday evening.

* (15:00)

This bill was before committee Monday evening, and now it's before us today in third reading, and I simply just wanted to say thank you to all those individuals who participated over the course of the last number of years in the consultation process to get us to where we are today because they are the true heroes in all of this. They are the ones that spoke up very loudly, and they are the reason that I think that we are here. They're the reason that we made the changes that we did while we're in government and that there are more changes here before us today.

So with those few words, Honourable Speaker, I thank you very much, and we're prepared to move this on.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to put a couple of words on the record in respect of Orange Shirt Day, the bill.

I want to correct the record immediately that the Leader of the Opposition just put on the record. The Leader of the Opposition just put on the record that, in fact, it was their previous PC government that put the wheels in motion, as she stated, for Orange Shirt Day. That's not accurate; that's one hundred per cent not accurate, on a myriad of different fronts.

But let me just say this, and I've said this many, many times in the House: any type of actions or progress that take place in respect of acknowledging residential schools or '60s scoop or MMIWG2S,

anything, any awareness or progress is because of the work of Indigenous people, and, in this case, I want to set the record clear that in this case, it is residential school survivors that have brought us to this very moment, not the members opposite and even not on us—this—us on this side of the House.

We must not try to take political points for work that we did not do. The very fact that Indigenous folks survived residential schools and, you know, allowed Canadians, through their courage and determination, to understand what happened in residential schools, by sharing their experiences of residential schools is why we are here in this very moment. The—we are here in this very moment because of the brave Indigenous woman who survived residential school who shared her story of her own shirt on her first day of residential school. That's why we're here.

We're not here for anything other than the work, the blood, sweat and tears of Indigenous people that have brought us to this point and that have brought the rest of Canada with them, alongside them, in that courage and in that determination. So I want to make the record explicitly, unequivocally clear, that it is Indigenous people that we should be celebrating in this moment.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) spoke about, ever so briefly in the second reading of this bill, about the apology, the official apology, that was rendered by Canada, and, you know, the Premier, both in the introduction of this bill and today, as well, the Premier asked me to second this motion. And the reason why is because there's a picture of the Premier's father with my cousin, Phil Fontaine, the day of the apology, and I—we know the picture; I've seen that picture many, many times.

And so I think that it's quite extraordinary, all these years later, after that day that that picture was taken, after that historic moment of an apology to residential school survivors, that so many years later Manitoba is now—has an NDP government that is led by the first First Nations individual—man as Premier.

So many years later, this NDP government appointed the first-ever First Nation women to Cabinet. This NDP government has the most, in the history of this province, most number of Indigenous MLAs elected to this Chamber, to this House, to this Legislative Assembly.

And I'm honoured to be a part of that history in the smallest way that I am. I think that I am so grateful to all of my relatives and ancestors who came before

myself and the rest of us as Indigenous people in this caucus to allow us to be here for this very moment.

I hope that Manitobans can understand and can see the significance of this bill and what it means for Manitoba, what it means for that path to reconciliation. And I think that it's something that we can all be proud of.

And I know that, you know, on this side of the House we repeatedly talk about bringing Manitobans together on this path of reconciliation, but also bringing Manitobans together in building a province that we can be proud of and that building a province that is inclusive and equitable and is safe for all Manitobans. And I hope that they can see that this, today, and the Louis Riel bill, in many respects, is the manifestation of us all coming together and working together as a province, working together as a people, working together collectively to bring us on this path to reconciliation.

So, I know that for myself, I am incredibly proud of today. I'm incredibly proud of October 3rd and, of course, and everything that's happened since October 3rd and after October 3rd. But I, you know, I would suggest to Manitobans that we can all be proud of that, and that is all of our accomplishments.

And, you know, I think it bears saying officially on Hansard, and I haven't had the opportunity to really get up in the House and speak to this, but I think it's important to put on the official record of Hansard that it was only a couple of months ago that, as we were in the midst of a political election Manitobans, including Indigenous peoples, including Indigenous members of this caucus, had to drive around Winnipeg and across the province and see such racist, disrespectful, grotesque messaging, trying to divide us as a province.

I think I—and, again, you know, so much so that it made national news that other jurisdictions were talking about what was going on in the Manitoba provincial election and the strategy that the PC Party was undertaking, was knowingly undertaking, in order to win government, in order to elicit Manitobans for their vote.

They went so much—and, you know, there's a saying, right, like, you know, what you do to win government or what you do to maintain government or to maintain power is where you see some of the most grotesque actions.

* (15:10)

And that's what we saw. That's what we saw just a mere couple of months ago, endorsed and doubled down by the PC Party of Manitoba. Folks stood by while there were attacks on members in our caucus—Indigenous members in our caucus, trans members of our caucus.

And, you know, some would say, well, that's what you all sign up for. Meh, maybe. Maybe that's what we sign up for, but I would also submit that we can do things better.

Like, we don't have to, as a province, look to the US and the way that they do politics, which is so harmful and so grotesque, and kind of import that here. We can be better. We can do better.

So, yes, maybe we sign up for it as politicians—I would kind of disabuse that.

But you know who didn't sign up for that were the women that were murdered by a serial killer, or their families.

As if their families didn't have enough to deal with knowing that their mom, their sister, their cousin, their daughter is sitting in a landfill. Because again, that's how little Indigenous women are considered.

They didn't sign up for that. And yet, the PC Party of Manitoba thought that it was a good strategy and a good thing to, again, import US strategies and to use Indigenous women as political props to try and maintain government and to win votes.

But here's the thing that maybe they didn't anticipate: (1) They didn't anticipate that Manitoba is on a path of reconciliation, and that Manitobans rejected that; (2) They didn't anticipate that those women, our sisters, families wouldn't stand by and allow that to happen.

And so while the PC Party of Manitoba and members opposite stood by while that strategy was being executed day in and day out on billboards, bus benches, recycling bins, commercials, wherever. I went to a movie and there was a commercial at the movie that families would not stand by and let that happen and let their loved ones be disrespected in such an inhumane, grotesque way.

So much so that their work and their loved ones galvanized Manitobans to change a government. And so, while there are individuals that may not think much about those women, thankfully we have Manitobans who said no, we reject that.

And we know that those women deserve to be respected, that their lives mattered, that their loved ones matter, that their loved ones' work and words that they do in honour of their loved ones matter, and that we, as a province, are going to entrench that rather than—that love, that courage rather than that hate, misogyny, racism, and rejected it. And so much so, that we have a new government here in Manitoba.

And so today, you know, after having tried to introduce this bill several times in the House—two times—two, three times, I'm not sure—and actually having members opposite stand in the House and vote against this bill, that's why I reject when the Leader of the Opposition says that they started this and got the wheels in motion. Members opposite stood in the House. They stood up and they voted against this bill.

And so, you know, I'm putting folks opposite on notice that when you're going to try to stake a claim for something you rejected, for something that you stood up in the House and voted against, you will be called out. And the record will be made known. And again, Manitobans know that that's not true.

So all of that to say, that today is a good day. It's a good day that we're debating third reading and concurrence of the Orange Shirt Day bill. It's a good day that all of the residential school survivors that (a) survived and, again, shared themselves and that led to this moment, this is in honour of them. This bill is in honour of them; this work is in honour of them.

And it's in honour of all the little ones that—in unmarked graves across the country, it's in honour of them. But it's also, in my mind, it's in honour of all the little ones that are in schools now. Everybody, all little Manitobans, who I'm sure, you know—those of us that go and visit our schools and, I mean, I'm invited all the time to schools all over Manitoba who want to show me as an Indigenous woman, as an Indigenous MLA in this Chamber. They're always so proud of the work that they're doing in their schools.

And every school that I've gone to, they do really phenomenal, thoughtful, loving, caring work, projects to set the record straight. And so today is also about that next generation, that next generation and the educators that are supporting that next generation to dismantle colonization, to dismantle history—inaccurate history and are an active part of making this province all that it can be and certainly making Canada all that it can be. And so I want to acknowledge all of those little ones and their educators that do that phenomenal work.

I love visiting our schools. Most people know that I really do prioritize visiting our schools and just spending time with our little ones, because this next generation is absolutely phenomenal. And the things that they know, and the things that they say and the things that they're doing is so joyful and gives me such hope for the future. So I dedicate this to them as well.

I want to just take a moment to acknowledge my—our colleague, the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie), who brought forward this bill several times and actually, I think it was under his name that the members opposite rose in this House and voted against that.

I know that the member did a lot of work trying to help get this bill passed, including meeting with our communities, meeting and speaking with so many people on this bill. And so I want to recognize the work and the labour that he put into this bill. Again, this is a team effort, right? Inside this—in this—inside this building, and certainly, outside this building. So I want to acknowledge him for that work.

And then I want to acknowledge the Premier (Mr. Kinew). I think—I can't remember exactly when this was, and maybe some folks on the other side or the Clerk might remember—I believe it was, like, in 2016, he brought forward a resolution—don't know if it was a resolution on Orange Shirt Day; I can't remember. But he brought forward that, and it received unanimous consent. And then the bill, unanimous consent. And we had Ted Fontaine in here and we got everything done within an afternoon. And so I want to acknowledge that work as well.

I'm pretty sure I just got that wrong, but—was it a resolution, or—what was the Ted Fontaine? Yes, I can't remember. At any rate, got something wrong there. But I still want to acknowledge the work that was done there.

I'm not going to take too much time. I just, once again, want to reiterate that anything good that happens on this path to reconciliation, that acknowledgment and that celebration solely belongs to Indigenous peoples. And in particular, in respect to this bill, solely belongs to our relatives, our grandmothers, our grandfathers, our moms, our dads, our sisters, our uncles, our aunties; everybody that survived residential schools. Because none of us, the Indigenous members in this Chamber, in the government, we wouldn't be here had they not survived.

* (15:20)

And that's a testament to Indigenous people's resiliency and strength. And so I say miigwech to each and every one of them. I say how proud and honoured I am to work and to stand with everyone in our caucus and, on this day in particular, our Indigenous members of our caucus which, again, is one of the highest numbers of Indigenous peoples, I believe, across Canada, I'm not sure. But I think we could probably submit one of the highest levels of Indigenous caucus members in any legislature across the country. That is something extraordinary.

And miigwech.

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to share a few words about Orange Shirt Day.

I had spoken to this many times, both in this Chamber, in this building, but more importantly I've spoken out in the communities, I've spoken out to people from all walks of life. And as Indigenous people, one of the things that we believe in sometimes, or many times, is that things will always work itself out. Things were always meant to be the way they're meant to be.

So the fact that we have brought this legislation forward a couple of different times before and had the discussions and had it delayed, had it voted down, was also a sign of the way it was meant to be. So it furthered discussion. It warranted more discussion. It engaged more discussion from not just Indigenous people, not just people going to school, people in university or high school or in the workforce, but across all of Manitoba and across all of Canada, and for that matter across the entire world.

There were a lot of people watching what transpired here in Canada. Not so much during the residential school era, but after the fact. Because nobody wanted to acknowledge, nobody wanted to discuss, nobody wanted to reflect on what was happening in the moment in the residential school system, in the residential school era.

But we are now. And it's unfortunate, though, that it's come to the fact that it's been on the strength and resilience of Indigenous survivors and inter-generational survivors of the residential school system that we're having this discussion. And I say unfortunate in the way that society in general should have realized it at the time. It should never have happened. It should have been something that we deemed in the moment to be a cultural genocide, which it was.

And those are words that many don't want to use to acknowledge that. And it was quite simple, and the common theme, while there was many individual lived experiences that came along with that residential school era, the common theme was to kill the Indian in the child, to take away your language, to take away your culture.

And if you can relate that to society today, just imagine somebody coming to your home or your community and taking your children and putting them in school and not allowing them to speak the language that you know, that your people know, that your culture know. Not allowed to speak that language, not allowed to practice their culture for fear of getting beaten, for fear of getting killed.

And where in society would that ever have been deemed acceptable? And in our Canadian history, there was a point in time where that was deemed acceptable. And so here we are today, thinking back. And some folks want to be able to just kind of turn the page, let's forget about that, let's stop talking about that.

And while that is a part of history in Canada, it is a terrible part of history, we still need to discuss it and have those conversations about it still being our history.

And it's important that we have those conversations and we never cease to have those conversations, Honourable Speaker, or we'll never learn. We'll always be—and I forget the terminology or the phrase about, you know, if we don't reflect on history, we're doomed to repeat it. But the fact of the matter is, as an Indigenous person, I firmly believe that you die twice in your lifetime or in your existence: one when you physically leave this world and one, again, when the last person ever speaks your name or ever speaks of you.

And it's important for us to never, ever lose sight and lose connection to the people that were affected and the people that we lost because of residential school system, because, quite simply, Honourable Speaker, the students and the Indigenous people that died in residential school and as a result of residential school system, they may never and ever—and will never have the chance to have their family trees fulfilled to where we are today. I'm here because of the resilience of those students. I'm here because of the perseverance and the strength of those students, and I'm able to stand in this building here today because of that resilience and that strength.

So there's things, you know, to acknowledge it, and I do sincerely want to acknowledge Phyllis Webstad for just the symbolism of the orange shirt and what that means for us today. But it's so much more than that as well. It was a catalyst to bring us to where we are today, and it—you talk—we talk about many things that the TRC Calls to Action—and being able to, as society, check off certain aspects of what we've done. And in the big picture, we haven't really done anything. We've done things along the journey to say we've checked that box and we've—okay, we can call this all—let's cross it off the list. But the fact of the matter is it's still something we have to live each and every day.

If I could, and I was going to clarify with the Clerk earlier, if I could table a book and actually have the entire book put into Hansard—I don't know if that's possible, but if I could, I would table the book of Ted Fontaine so that it could be in this building, in this history, and when somebody realized that, they could read that and realize that the dark—the title of the book is even *The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*. So being able to have folks acknowledge and read that history, because Ted is no longer physically with us anymore, but his story and his lived experience needs to be told time and time again so we never forget that experience.

And, Honourable Speaker, there's many aspects. We stood in here, and I thank members opposite—or members opposite that were here at the time, when we talked about an apology from the Pope and we raised that as an opposition day motion that day and received unanimous support in this Chamber to call upon for the Pope to potentially deliver that apology here in Manitoba. It passed at our level here, but it never came to be. And why that was important is in that motion at the time, I stood and I spoke of my uncle. I spoke of my Uncle Alec.

My Uncle Alec has passed away a couple of years ago now, but he was a product of the system, as well, including to the point where he was almost admitted to be a part of the seminary. But out of his experiences, that's not something he wanted to do, not something he chose to do. And out of this, and I've shared this with his family, and he was my uncle, but he was one of my best friends as well. And he was an alcoholic. He was an alcoholic that drank each and every day, Honourable Speaker, because of what had happened to him in his experiences. And for us in our community, we have the Catholic Church kind of a central part of our community, and my family and our homes are little—kind of, in and around the church, and

my uncle lived kind of at the end of the driveway of the church, and each and every winter, each and every season—we don't have church each and every day; we would have church maybe once a week, sometimes, maybe not even.

But my uncle would always be the one to go there and shovel the steps. He would make sure that the lights were on. He'd make sure that everything was cleaned. Even though the effects of residential school and what the church had done to him, he had done that; he had done that for his entire adult life while he lived in that house. And, Honourable Speaker, I was extremely offended and so was my entire family when my uncle who, when he was sick and he was dying and he was on his deathbed, had asked for last rites. He had asked for the Father at the church to come and deliver last rites because he wasn't able to go out and go to church himself. And he was told no. He was told no because the Father said he was an alcoholic.

* (15:30)

So those were just the long—and that's just one example of the long-lasting effects in my own family, but in my community, and those are stories and lived experiences that people need to know, people need to hear.

And elders and survivors of the residential school system were asked time and time again to relive those experiences, to relive those memories, whether it be for a monetary gain or whether it be to prove to somebody that it happened for them to be told that it was believable.

And I've heard many from elders in my community, and I'm not going to speak their names because that's for their families to do. But I will share two of their experiences, Honourable Speaker.

One elder in my community, when he was—I think he was in his 70s when he told me the story, and he said—he just sat down, we were just kind of chatting away and then just out of the blue he says, you know what happened to me? And he says, when I was in school, he says, when I wet the bed, they clamped my privates so I would never do that again. And he just, honestly, Honourable Speaker, just nonchalantly told me that, you know, and just—you just need to know; that was the response to that. Because that's why he told me; he said, you just need to know. He said, I've told maybe a couple other people, but you need to know.

And it was just—it just floored me. I had no idea that that was a possibility, and where is that acceptable in society ever? It's not, and it should never, ever be.

I had the opportunity in the Chamber here to share a member's statement on one of the elders in one of my communities, Charlie Bittern, who was a front-runner for the—to run the torch into Winnipeg, and when he shared his story to us, and there's actually a documentary on him and I encourage everybody here to look at it; I believe it's on CBC, I think it is, where he shared his experiences and his story and his lived example of what the residential school system did for him.

He was very athletic. He was an incredible athlete who would run and run and run marathons; he'd run whatever. So in his experience at school, he was used to track down others that ran away from school. And that was what they used him for and that's what they used his purpose for, was to track down students that ran away from school to avoid this experience that was happening, and to bring them back for punishment or receive punishment himself.

And, Honourable Speaker, those are experiences that when I hear those, it's unacceptable. So it brings back the importance of Orange Shirt Day, the recognition, the conversations that need to happen.

And I'll share one more personal experience that I had—or personal conversation that I had with a survivor of the residential school as well. And he spoke about going to school, day in, day out, being at the school and then some days his friends just weren't there anymore, you know? And they know—they know what happened. They were killed, just straight out. He says, you know, he was there, he had an accident and he wasn't there anymore.

And his accident wasn't a doing of his own; it was an accident brought 'abround' by the actions of the school and the residential school system.

And again, he just—it was no big deal. He just wasn't there anymore the next day. And there was multiple stories of that same instance happening.

So, when we were awoken as a society by the—and I'm going to air quote the term discovery in Kamloops; it was not a discovery. Our people, as Indigenous people, knew. They knew what was there. They were just not listened to, not heard—it didn't matter. So there was no discovery.

So when you hear and you talk to community members and survivors and intergenerationally

impacted family members of residential school survivors and victims, when they talk about discoveries, they're not discoveries; they're just disclosures that are happening that nobody wanted to ever hear before.

And Honourable Speaker, it's important that these discussions go on, on a regular basis, and that we keep on continuing—have this discussion, because now we get into other generations of society that want to be able to engage.

I think it was two years ago I got a call from Strathnaver School, and the member from St. James, now the Finance Minister, had also got that call about Strathnaver School. They wanted to know, because we were talking about Orange Shirt Day here in the Chamber, so they wanted to know what it was about. So I reached out to an elder in my community; we had a little mini star blanket made in orange and white, and me and the member from St. James went to Strathnaver School.

Not in my constituency; not in his constituency, either. And that's where it didn't matter. It was about engaging the young people from all parts of society. So—and we're talking about a school just in, kind of in the St. James area. They had no Indigenous students in that class we were talking to, but they wanted to know. They wanted to know what Orange Shirt Day was. They wanted to know what that meant, what brought that on.

And, Honourable Speaker, that's why the importance of having this made into a statutory holiday is so important: so those conversations can be had. And I'm fairly confident—maybe not all, but there was a portion of that—of those students—that went home and shared that experience with their families, that even their families, being adults or grandparents, may never have heard, because they did not—they didn't have that ability to hear that or experience that. So it's important that we have those conversations back and forth.

And we've had, many times, to be able to walk here in parts of the city, or walk in various communities, walk in various areas or municipalities or townships or First Nations here in Manitoba, on Orange Shirt Day, on September the 30th, and you—the best conversation you'll have is with the survivors that may be with you, the intergenerational impact, the families that may be with you, but also the children that are there.

And I remember a conversation. I was just, kind of, walking. We came from The Forks and we were walking Portage and Main, and a—I think it was five or six kids come running up and asked my name. And—I'm not going to say my name, but ask if I was who I am—and I said yes. And they said, we love what you're doing. We know what this is for. But you know what, my dad can't be here; and one other girl said, my mom can't be here because she had to go to work. But we're still going to talk to her when we get home. We're going to talk to them when we get home.

But we should be able to have that ability. And I know at the time when we had discussions, members opposite were hung up on the word holiday, in terms of it being a day off. And quite honestly, if that's how members of society are going to look at that, that's on us to educate and try and change that narrative. But it's not a day off; it's not a holiday. It's a time to reflect. It's a time to discuss.

But it's a time to do what you want, because if you have the opportunity on that day to sit with your family and talk about Orange Shirt Day or talk about anything you like, don't take for granted that you are—have that ability. You have that ability to talk to your young people, because if this happened decades ago, your young people may have been taken off to school, and imagine that. Imagine not being able to have that ability to have those conversations go forward.

So it's important that we continue to have those discussions and moving forward on Orange Shirt Day as a statutory holiday. As I said, it was meant to be; it was meant to be prolonged the way it was. And it was difficult. It was difficult to sit there and watch sometimes, and watch sometimes the tokenism that was given to that, because we brought forth Orange Shirt Day as a statutory holiday, and it was voted down by members opposite.

And I know members opposite—some are here, some aren't here. But just imagine—*[interjection]* Oh, I'm sorry. I meant in terms of retired and—sorry, I apologize. I did not mean that. I apologize in that way.

But the members opposite, when it was time to vote on making Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday, stood in the Chamber in their orange shirts and voted that down. Imagine the message that that sent to Indigenous people, let alone to society, to say yes, this is important. I am wearing this for a purpose, I am wearing this for a reason—to a point; then it's not going to matter.

* (15:40)

So I hope members opposite, this time around, this is a unanimous discussion, a unanimous vote to be able to do this. And not just a political thing to bounce back and forth to say we're hitting a buzzword and we're—I have this orange shirt, and I'm doing my part to advance reconciliation here in the province, because there's much more to do.

Honourable Speaker, when we had the privilege of—or we have the privilege of forming government, it was just a couple days after September 30, after Orange Shirt Day here in Manitoba. And I remember walking into the Canada Life Centre, and it was packed in there; was packed with orange shirts, it was packed with the sound of the drum.

And we made a commitment there that if we formed government, we would make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday here in Manitoba so that everybody would have the opportunity, no matter where they work, no matter what they did, would have that opportunity to spend it with their family. To educate themselves and educate their family and keep those discussions going on what this meant.

So we had the privilege, on October the 3rd, of forming government, because they heard many messages from us, but that was one message that was resonating loud and clear, is that this was a need. Indigenous priorities, Indigenous needs are a priority here in Manitoba.

And there was some divisiveness, and there was a lot of rhetoric back and forth in terms of a campaign to try and divide. But Manitobans—and not just Indigenous Manitobans, Manitobans in general want to see that unification, want to see that united Manitoba.

So that's what they did. They voted for that unity. They voted for that cohesiveness that we have to have across all of society.

And I had the honour, Honourable Speaker, when we had our Throne speech here in Chamber, I was asked about guests. And my first guest, my first top-mind guest was my own daughter, that I wanted her to be as part of my Speaker's guests in the loge, sitting right across from here.

And she's, you know, a teenager. So, I mean, some of the things that were going on here, she was a little bit overwhelmed by. There was a lot of folks in the building, lot of faces on both sides that she may have recognized in the media over the course of the election campaign. So it was a little intimidating to say is this so-and-so, is that so-and-so, and I was

telling—yes, this is this. And Honourable Speaker, I appreciate the fact that you welcomed her into your office, as well.

But she sat over there, and the first thing—so I spoke to her after. We were making eye contact across the way pretty regularly, and the first thing she experienced when people entered the Chamber was the drum and hearing the drum here in the Chamber. And it—you could see the impact that it had on her. I'm watching her, and you could see the engagement and the impact it had.

And then, through the course of the Throne Speech, obviously there's—as a teenager, she lost some interest in some of the things that were going on until it got to the point where it was recognizing about Orange Shirt Day, and then you see that spark once again.

So I asked her later, I said what did you think? I said, there was some times where you looked bored in what was going on. And we talked about the drum, and we talked about Orange Shirt Day and how that impacted and how that reflected.

And there was also lot of Indigenous leadership, Indigenous members here in the Chamber on that day. And again, a significant impact that we felt throughout that day to be able to bring that forward and to know that this was something that was so close to the finish line to be able to do.

And we're—because it happened just before elections, we're still, you know, another 10, 12 months away from the next official Orange Shirt Day. But those conversations happen so much in between. It's more than just one day.

And I know sometimes we—members opposite got hung up on that word, holiday, and that it should be more than just a day. And I absolutely agree. It's not reflected as a holiday of a day off to go out and, I think it was mentioned to go close up your cabins, and to do whatever you're going to do. It's a day to remember, a day to have discussions. But it's also a day so much in between.

And as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) had mentioned in one of the opportunities that he had to speak to this, he talked about how, in leading up to it, leading up to the week—the week prior to—schools will have a number of events in their school. And even following that, schools will have a number of events.

But it's excitement. Through the course of the entire summer, and albeit we were in election mode

during that time, but there was a lot of talk about September 30th. Having those conversations in June, July and August about what it's going to look like. Where were we going to be? Where's the best place to be to have conversations? Where's the best place to be to gather as one?

And the answer today or the answer going to be, going into the next Orange Shirt Day, is we gather as one across the entire province of Manitoba. Because you have that ability to do that. We will have the ability to do that. No matter where you work, no matter where you reside, no matter where you go to school, you'll have the ability to do that.

So, Honourable Speaker, I was privileged to be able to speak to this many times in the past, privileged in this House to speak to it, but I will say, all due respect to this Chamber, more privileged to have those conversations out in the community, with the families that were directly affected by this, to say, how can we help.

When you refer to intergenerational impact—because there's going to come a day where the last survivor of a residential school is no longer with us in this physical world. But we have to be able to have those discussions going forward and always remember that. And always remember the ones that will not have that family legacy, because their family trees were eliminated, were annihilated, were killed.

So it's important that we carry on that conversation, that legacy, because it is a lived experience for all of us here in society, and it's something that we should never ever forget.

So, bringing forth Orange Shirt Day as a statutory holiday here in Manitoba will allow that conversation to always continue. It won't allow society to forget. It won't allow society to, quote-unquote, move on. But we are going to use it to move forward.

My colleague, the member from St. Johns, spoke to blood, sweat and tears, and that's literally what it was. Literally, they bled. Literally, they sweat and literally, those tears—and those tears are still continuing to this day.

So I encourage members in my last little bit here. I spoke about tabling the book of Theodore or Ted Fontaine, tabling his book. And I encourage members opposite to read it and to—it's an experience. It's a lived experience of a person who survived that system. And it talks about how it impacted him, how it impacted him emotionally, physically, and what that

meant to him and what that did to him, and what that attempted to do to him.

And then it speaks to the resilience of where he comes to be able to share that lived experience. And I don't use it in terms of sharing his story, sharing his lived experience, because that's what that was for him.

And he had the ability, he had the courage, he had the determination to put that into words. And there's many that didn't. My own family, my own elders in my community, sometimes did not want to share their—and I shared some of the stories that were there, some of the lived experiences that were there. But some did not want to speak of that, because they felt they were going to protect us.

I don't want my son, my daughter, my grandkids, to be able to know what I went through. I don't want them to ever see that, experience that, have to potentially know what their grandparents went through or their aunts or their uncles went through.

So they want to be able to have those experiences go forward and say, this is what we want to do. So we encouraged our survivors to share their stories but not to exploit their stories. To share their lived experience because that's what they wanted to do, and they realize the importance of doing that.

Because, Mr. Honourable Speaker, when we talk about Orange Shirt Day, orange—the orange shirt is a symbol of that resilience, is a symbol of that perseverance, is a symbol of that determination to not let our culture's Indigenous people be killed, to be eliminated, to be exterminated. Because that's what that system was meant to do. That system was meant to, again, kill the Indian in the child. And that's something that survivors speak of time and time again.

* (15:50)

Then they speak of their perseverance, their dedication and their strength. And when I say they speak of their strength, they're very humble in speaking about that. But it's something that I know, and I know members opposite and every member in this Chamber know, that that experience and that strength of Indigenous people and Indigenous survivors of the residential school system is why we're here today. Is why I'm able to stand in a Chamber that, honestly, was never meant for Indigenous people.

But here we are today, being able to speak to these lived experiences, being able to speak to the incidents of residential school and being to acknowledge and lift up our survivors and know that those

intergenerational impacted components of residential school system did not work. They did not eliminate; they did not kill the Indian in child.

Thank you, Mr. Honourable Speaker.

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I'm very proud to rise and say a few words about this bill.

I was an Indigenous educator up until June 30. And so I have a unique perspective that I think I can share with folks, things that I saw, things that I learned, my own lived experiences.

And so I learned about residential schools in university, at 38 years old, in 2010. And my own grandmother was a residential school survivor. That happens because these are truths people don't talk about, or didn't talk about to protect their family members.

I remember sitting in my first English class and having to read an article written by the now-Senator Murray Sinclair, talking about the residential school system in full detail. And I had to write a response to this. And I remember leaving class that night and thinking, how did I not understand this? But then also connecting the dots to my own grandmother's story, to our own family's story.

I phoned my mom on the way home and I said, have you ever heard of the residential school system? And she's like, no, I have no idea what you're talking about. And so I explained it to her. Through tears and, you know, a lengthy conversation that went long into the night, we put the pieces together that this was an experience that our family went through, that caused my grandmother to live on a trapline and not be able to read and write and experience so much trauma and marginalization in her life.

I was fortunate to go to university and be in a program that was Indigenous-based. And so, coming out of that as a teacher, I had this knowledge and this experience.

So I—first I want to address something that I think it's important to say. One of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to create a federal statutory holiday of commemoration to acknowledge those affected by residential schools and to educate Canadians.

Well, I take offence to the word schools. These were not schools; these were institutions. And I say that because this wasn't an optional place to attend; you didn't get to pick the school you went to. You didn't get to choose the classes you wanted to take.

You didn't get to go home at the end of the day and be with your family and share your experiences. These were institutions that jailed children in this country, and for a very specific reason.

Over 100,000 children in Canada attended residential schools. We know that there are thousands of children in unmarked graves across the country that have yet to be found. It's extremely difficult to talk about those children without also acknowledging those families or the reasons that those children were taken away to these institutions.

You know, we look at the founding of Canada, and for so long our textbooks and the message spewed out by our government was that this was a place that was discovered, that European explorers came here and discovered this great country, and that thankfully they did this, because we have this wonderful life that we all live today.

However, if you talk to Indigenous people, this wasn't a discovery, this was a disruption. And these explorers were not explorers; they were exploiters who came to take something, not to give. They were looking for resources. They were looking for more land to colonize, and what better way to do it than by utilizing a papal bull called the Doctrine of Discovery from 1493.

That papal bull was created 530 years ago, and it was only last summer that the Pope himself apologized and said that that is not the beliefs of his church. You know, this was developed, and for those of you who don't what the Doctrine of Discovery was, you know, just to paraphrase it very quickly, this was something that was—I'll explain it like this: that if you go to a land that's not inhabited by people who are Catholics, then that land must be empty because the people living there are not humans; therefore, they must be animals and so that land is empty and for the taking, and it is our God-given right to go there and settle and make a life there.

Now, we know that that's not—you know, that's obviously what happened, and we know that Indigenous people definitely were not animals. These were people who were our earliest scientists, our earliest biologists, our earliest storytellers. They understood the seasons. They understood the land; they knew how to live on it and prosper and live in a really good way. Now, they did this because of the strength of their communities, the strength of their families.

And so when we think about Bill 4, we need to think about the strength of those families. If you look at the—you know, pre-contact life, communities were centred around children. Children were the centre of the world. Everybody in that community had a responsibility to the children living there. Even though I may have given birth to a child in that community, any woman in that community could be my child's mother, and they took on that role. Any male in that community took on the role of being a father. Grandparents, they were grandparents to everyone in that community.

Now, I want you to imagine a community where children are at the centre and you're surrounded then by the women, the men, the grandparents and finally the most caring people who were the protectors of the community. What is the easiest way that you can destroy a community's strength? Well, you take the children from that community. And when you take the children; I want everyone to imagine for a moment, imagine a holiday where you're all sitting around your house and you've got your cousins and your brothers and your sisters and everybody there, kids are playing, kids are laughing.

Imagine a community where all the children are taken away. Where's the laughter? Where's the joy? Where's the purpose? People stopped living because that was taken from them. We think about the children; we should always consider the children who went to these schools. But we often forget about the communities left behind and what that must feel like.

Now, I want to think—I want to talk about the first generation that went to residential schools. They were told this was going to be a great place of learning where they would have a chance to develop these skills so that they could be a part of Canada and its growth. Once they got there, they learned that that was far from what they were going to experience.

Now, imagine these children age out of the residential school system. They go home to their communities. They get married and they have their own children, and then suddenly they realize their children are going to get—come to a certain age where they are forcibly sent to these institutions. Could you imagine being a parent who's so powerless that you know what could possibly happen to your child? You know your child might never come home. We often forget about those things.

Imagine being a child like—in a place where you go to bed at night and there's no one to hug and kiss you goodnight, to read you a story, to tell you they

love you, to tell you you're special, that you're important, that you're amazing.

Instead, you're told that your language is terrible, that your language isn't the right type of language, that the way you look doesn't fit in with the rest of Canada, a place that has been your home since time immemorial. Imagine being told that you just don't belong and that the people that are back at home waiting for you, well, you should be embarrassed of them and the way that they live because it just doesn't fit in with the image of Canada.

We learn to be parents by watching what our parents do with us and for us. We learn by people showing us love and respect and teaching us in the home, not just in schools. So we wonder why we have so many folks struggling with intergenerational trauma today. Well, if you don't have the example of a loving home life, how do you know how to provide one yourself? How do you know how to live in happiness and with love?

*(16:00)

You know, this act is so important because, as the member previously stated, this is more than just a day. My hope is that this is just the little nugget, the beginning of us doing much more in terms of educating the general public about the colonial practices in this country.

You know, oftentimes in schools when I was doing this work, it was me who was called upon to do land acknowledgments. It was me who was called upon to do this work in classrooms and to educate everyone else. It shouldn't be the Indigenous person doing the land acknowledgment; we already know that land was ours. It should be other folks who do the land acknowledgments.

We need to have all teachers and adults in this country understand the colonial history, so that it's not only the Indigenous people who are constantly having to explain and teach others, but instead are—started to be treated with respect from those who gain this knowledge.

You know, working in schools is such an important thing. And I was so fortunate to spend the last two years working directly with teachers and students to teach them the true history of Canada. And I mean one of the biggest things that—one of the biggest misconceptions is that the residential school system was something that was just, kind of, on its own. We often forget that it's part of a bigger system, a bigger thing.

In 1871, here in Manitoba, we signed Treaty 1. You know, Indigenous people came to the table as self-governing folks to sign that treaty. Yet five years later, we create the Indian Act, a means to make Indigenous people become wards of the federal government. We don't realize—or folks don't realize today, the Indian Act creates—has a number of policies, including the residential school system. It was enacted through the Indian Act so that it could become law and forcibly confine children to institutions that ended up killing and abusing them.

Many of our own members in this House have been impacted by this policy. I think it's fair to say that if you talk to any Indigenous person in this country, they know someone who's been directly impacted. I worked on a team of six in the Louis Riel School Division. Every single one of us had a grandparent who was in a residential school. Three had parents who were in a residential school. Two others went to day school. This is not an issue of the past; this is an issue of the present that we need to continue to talk about, that we need to continue to commemorate and educate folks about. It's not going to go away.

I think it's very important that our government be one that's about truth telling, and this act is truth telling. It's acknowledging that something happened. We know there are folks out there that are denying that the residential school system occurred or that there are children buried on the sites of these former schools today. And I hope that this is an example to all Manitobans and all Canadians that we are telling the truth. We are speaking to history. And that we are saying that denialism has no place in our province or in our country.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I appreciate the time to put a few words on the record.

The Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

The question before the House is third reading and concurrence and third reading of Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day).

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

We will now proceed to concurrence and third reading of Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act.

Bill 2—The Louis Riel Act

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations (Mr. Bushie), that Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act; Loi sur

Louis Riel, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kinew: Merci beaucoup. C'est un grand honneur d'être ici parmi vous. C'est un grand honneur d'être un député dans le Palais législatif du Manitoba. Et je suis très fier de parler français. Je suis très fier d'être un Manitobain.

C'est Monsieur Louis Riel qui a créé l'opportunité pour ce qu'on pourrait être des députés, pour ce qu'on pourrait parler français ici dans ces terres, et que nous sommes des Manitobains et Manitobaines. Alors, je suis très fier du patrimoine manitobain qui était créé par Monsieur Riel et les autres membres de son gouvernement.

Ce projet de loi est une autre étape pour reconnaître ce que Monsieur Riel a créé. Il a créé notre province; il a aidé à créer le Canada qu'on connaît maintenant.

Ça fait longtemps que les membres de la Nation métisse ont lutté pour leurs droits, et ce processus a commencé avec Monsieur Riel et les autres – ses autres contemporains.

C'est un processus qui a évolué pendant la création du Manitoba, notre participation dans le Canada, et, effectivement, pendant toute l'histoire jusqu'à maintenant de notre province.

À chaque partie de cette histoire, la Nation métisse a toujours reconnu Monsieur Riel comme leur chef, comme leur président, comme leur Premier ministre.

Et maintenant, notre gouvernement, le gouvernement du peuple du Manitoba va aussi se rejoindre dans cette reconnaissance de Monsieur Riel comme le premier Premier ministre du Manitoba.

C'est très important pour moi d'honorer notre passé, notre patrimoine, comme Premier ministre dans les premiers jours d'une nouvelle administration. C'est en regardant à notre patrimoine et notre passé qu'on pourrait mieux comprendre comment nous dirigerons vers l'avenir, vers un futur pour profiter tout le monde dans notre province.

Alors, ce projet de loi va avancer – oui – la fierté des Métis, mais j'espère que ça sera un projet de loi que tout le monde dans notre province pourra être fier de, et que ça va être un projet de loi qui va améliorer la situation pour tout le monde dans notre province.

Ce projet de loi aussi demande aux éducateurs et aux éducatrices de travailler – de continuer, on pourrait dire – de continuer leur bon travail, d'enseigner les jeunes de notre province au sujet des contributions importantes de Monsieur Riel.

Effectivement, ce projet de loi, c'est une partie du travail de beaucoup de monde dans la province, qui a été déjà fait pendant longtemps – 153 ans, on pourrait dire. Le travail de ceux qui travaillent dans les écoles et dans le système d'éducation, le travail des Métis, le travail de la Francophonie ici dans le Manitoba, même beaucoup d'autres citoyens dans des autres provinces qui ont toujours reconnu Monsieur Riel.

Alors, à la fin de la journée, je pense que ce projet de loi est une étape vers la réconciliation, c'est une étape vers l'avancement d'un patrimoine et histoire honorés dans notre province. Et finalement, c'est aussi une étape de créer un Manitoba où ce qu'on reflète honnêtement notre histoire qu'on a vécue ensemble.

Je suis très fier d'être ici pour présenter ce projet de loi, et je remercie tout le monde pendant longtemps qui a aidé le projet de reconnaître Monsieur Riel pour ses contributions importantes ici au Manitoba.

Merci beaucoup.

Translation

Thank you very much. It is a great honour to be here amongst you. It is a great honour to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. I am very proud to speak French. And I am very proud to be a Manitoban.

It is to Louis Riel that we owe this opportunity we have to be MLAs, to speak French here in these lands, and to be Manitobans. So, I am very proud of the legacy created by Louis Riel and the other members of his government.

This bill is another step in recognizing what Louis Riel created. He created our province; he helped create the Canada we know today.

Members of the Métis Nation have been fighting for their rights for a long time, and this process began with Louis Riel and others—his contemporaries.

This process evolved through the creation of Manitoba, our participation in Canada, and indeed through the entire history of our province to date.

In every part of that history, the Métis Nation has always recognized Louis Riel as their leader, as their president, as their premier.

Now, our government, the government of the people of Manitoba, will also join in recognizing Louis Riel as the first Premier of Manitoba.

As a Premier in the first days of a new administration, it is very important for me to honour our past, our heritage. Looking to our heritage and our past allows us to better understand how we will move forward into the future, into a future that benefits everyone in our province.

Yes, this bill will build up Métis pride, but I do hope that it is a bill that everyone in our province can be proud of, a bill that will improve the situation for everyone in our province.

This bill also asks educators to continue their good work: to teach the young people of our province about Louis Riel's important contributions.

In effect, many people in this province contributed to the making of this bill, which has a for a long time in the making—some 153 years, you might say. It comes from the efforts of those who work in schools and the education system, of the Métis, of the Francophone community here in Manitoba, and even of many others in other provinces who have always recognized Louis Riel.

At the end of the day, I think this bill is a step towards reconciliation. It is a step towards advancing the recognition of our heritage and the history of our province. And finally, it is also a step towards creating a Manitoba that honestly reflects the history we have lived together.

I am very proud to be here to introduce this bill, and I would like to thank all the people who worked with us for so long to recognize Louis Riel for his important contributions here in Manitoba.

Thank you very much.

* (16:10)

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Monsieur l'honorable président, c'est un honneur en tant que Métis francophone de la Rivière Rouge d'avoir l'opportunité de vous parler aujourd'hui au sujet de ce projet de loi qui reconnaît de façon définitive, une fois et pour toutes, Louis Riel comme étant le premier Premier ministre du Manitoba.

C'est un énorme privilège pour moi en tant que Métis francophone d'avoir cette chance de vous parler de ce projet de loi.

Vous voyez, je suis en fait le rêve de Louis Riel. Je suis un Métis francophone, je parle encore français

grâce à monsieur Louis Riel. Mes enfants savent qu'ils sont Métis. Mes neveux et mes nièces savent qu'ils sont Métis.

Ce n'était pas toujours le cas pour moi. Quand j'étais jeune, dans nos écoles, dans nos communautés, on cachait le fait qu'on était Métis. Beaucoup de familles avaient honte du fait Métis. C'est quelque chose dont on ne discutait pas.

Mon grand-père Victor Beaudry, simplement dit, n'en parlait pas. Et un jour, en 1990, mon oncle George Beaudry et moi, nous avons fait notre généalogie, et on a dit à notre grand-père Victor Beaudry : « On est Métis, on veut notre carte métisse, on est fiers d'être Métis, et on veut honorer Louis Riel ».

Donc quand j'étais jeune, je jouais le long des rives, le long de la Petite Fourche là où Louis Riel est né. J'ai même eu l'honneur d'être un diplômé du Collège Louis-Riel.

Et même en regardant à ces faits, il y avait beaucoup de personnes dans ma communauté, d'autres jeunes Métis, qui niaient le fait qu'ils étaient Métis. Ils avaient peur de déclarer qu'ils étaient Métis.

Je pense que ce projet de loi finalement va aider non seulement des personnes de ma génération, mais nos enfants et les Manitobains en général, d'être capables de lever notre tête, de façon fière, de façon respectueuse, de façon à être capable de dire ce qu'on a toujours connu : c'est que Louis Riel avait un rêve, et son rêve est à notre portée. Le rêve d'une société multiculturelle, bilingue, inclusive, à la fois autochtone et multiculturelle – et ce rêve est à notre portée.

Et j'aimerais remarquer que ce projet de loi met à grande lumière qu'en 1869, le peuple métis qui habitait le territoire connu sous le nom « la colonie de la rivière Rouge » a établi un gouvernement provisoire. Pourquoi ? Parce que Louis Riel croyait en la confédération du Canada et voyait la place des Métis au sein du Canada.

Le gouvernement provisoire, dirigé par Louis Riel, a adopté une liste de droits fondée sur une vision multiculturelle, bilingue, inclusive d'une province qui respecte les droits des peuples autochtones et des minorités.

Et en tant que Métis francophone, je suis extrêmement fier de ce gouvernement qui – au sein de ce gouvernement, on retrouve 10 membres qui sont à

la fois Métis et Premières Nations – ce qui encore une fois répond au rêve de Louis Riel.

Et parlons du nom « Manitoba » que Louis Riel a proposé et qui a été choisi par le gouvernement du Canada pour être le nom de cette province. Manitoba. C'est un fait important, qui nous permet en tant que tous d'être fiers du fait que notre province, grâce à Louis Riel, grâce à son gouvernement provisoire, grâce aux Métis, qui s'appelle bien et bellement « le Manitoba ».

Aussi reconnaître que Louis Riel est reconnu comme l'un des fondateurs de la province du Manitoba et est considéré comme un des Pères de la Confédération. Monsieur l'honorable président, Louis Riel n'était pas un traître. Louis Riel était le Père du Manitoba, un Père de la Confédération.

Et ce projet de loi va nous permettre d'arrêter, une fois pour toutes, d'arrêter de parler de Louis Riel en tant que traître. Il n'a jamais été un traître. C'est un mensonge, et cette loi va nous aider à rectifier un mal historique, pour reconnaître une fois pour toutes que Louis Riel était le Père du Manitoba, et que sa place dans nos livres historiques, dans nos guides pédagogiques, devrait être référée de cette façon.

J'aimerais aussi ajouter que ça fait trop longtemps, ça fait trop longtemps qu'on attend. En tant que Manitobain, en tant que Métis francophone, en tant qu'Autochtone, en tant que père de famille – ça fait trop longtemps qu'on attend pour cette loi.

Et je pense que j'aimerais ajouter qu'en tant que père de famille, pour mes filles Axelle et Nastassja, qui eux ont toujours su qu'elles étaient métisses, ont toujours su que Louis Riel était le Père du Manitoba, ont toujours su – en tant que diplômées du Collège Louis-Riel, comme moi – qu'elles ont le droit d'être fières, qu'elles ont le droit de porter la tête haute, qu'elles ont le droit de vivre le rêve de Louis Riel et qu'elles ont leur place en tant que jeunes Métisses au sein de cette province.

De la même façon que mes neveux et mes nièces – Alix, Patrick, Rosalie, Paule, Zoé, Zacharie, Jean-Luc et Julien – ont le droit d'être fiers de qui ils sont, d'où ils viennent, et ont le droit d'être fiers d'avoir un futur où ils peuvent s'épanouir, d'avoir une belle vie, d'avoir le droit de bien faire en français comme en anglais, d'être bilingues, d'être fiers d'être bilingues, d'être fiers de leur province, et pour qu'un jour leurs enfants et mes arrière-petits-enfants aient le droit d'être fiers aussi.

Alors, en tant qu'éducateur, j'aimerais ajouter que, dans nos guides pédagogiques, dans nos salles de classe, dans nos écoles d'immersion, dans nos écoles anglaises, dans nos écoles francophones, qu'une fois pour toutes, qu'on soit capable de parler de Louis Riel en tant que le père du Manitoba et le premier Premier ministre du Manitoba, et que cette loi va nous permettre d'accomplir exactement ça.

* (16:20)

J'aimerais remercier ce gouvernement, notre équipe, l'honorable Premier ministre, pour avoir mis d'avant ce projet de loi.

J'aimerais aussi remercier et m'adresser directement à tous les jeunes Métis du Manitoba. Que vous le sachiez ou non, que vous êtes Métis ou non, que c'est votre parcours éventuellement d'apprendre – comme je l'ai fait – que j'étais Métis, que c'est votre droit. C'est votre droit d'être fiers. C'est votre droit d'avoir votre place dans cette province. C'est le droit – c'est votre droit de vivre le rêve de Louis Riel.

Et je pense que, quand on parle d'inclusion et d'accueil et d'amour, que cette loi va nous aider à se rassembler en tant que Manitobains, et de mieux s'accepter, de mieux se respecter, de mieux s'aimer et de bâtir un Manitoba plus brillant, plus accueillant, plus vigoureux, plus ouvert, pour qu'une fois en tout – une fois pour toutes, on réalise le rêve de Louis Riel.

Merci, Monsieur l'honorable président.

Translation

Honourable Speaker, it is an honour for me, as a Red River French-speaking Métis, to have the opportunity to speak to you today about this bill, which recognizes—definitely and once and for all—Louis Riel as the first Premier of Manitoba.

It is an enormous privilege for me as a French-speaking Métis to have this opportunity to speak to you about this bill.

You see, I am in fact Louis Riel's dream. I am a French-speaking Métis, I still speak French thanks to Louis Riel, my children know they are Métis, and my nephews and nieces know they are Métis.

That has not always been my reality. When I was young, we hid the fact that we were Métis in our schools and our communities. Many families were ashamed of the fact that they were Métis. It was something we did not discuss.

My grandfather Victor Beaudry simply did not talk about it. Then one day, in 1990, my uncle George Beaudry and I did our genealogy, and we told our grandfather Victor Beaudry: "We're Métis, we want our Métis card, we're proud to be Métis, and we want to honour Louis Riel."

When I was a child, I used to play along the riverbanks, along the Small Forks where Louis Riel was born. I even had the honour of graduating from Collège Louis-Riel.

There were many people in my community, other young Métis, who denied being Métis, even faced with such facts. They were afraid to declare that they were Métis.

In my view, this bill will ultimately help, not only people of my generation, but also our children and Manitobans in general, be able to raise their heads, proudly, respectfully, so that we can say what we have always known: that Louis Riel had a dream, and his dream is within our reach. The dream of a multicultural, bilingual, inclusive society, both indigenous and multicultural—and that dream is within our grasp.

This bill highlights the fact that, in 1869, the Métis people who inhabited the territory known as the "Red River Colony" established a provisional government. Why did they do this? Because Louis Riel believed in the confederation of Canada and saw a place for Métis within Canada.

The provisional government, led by Louis Riel, adopted a list of rights based on a multicultural, bilingual, inclusive vision of a province that respects the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

As a French-speaking Métis, I am extremely proud of this government: 10 of our members are both Métis and First Nations, a fact that also reflects Louis Riel's dream.

And let us talk about the name "Manitoba", a name that Louis Riel proposed and that was chosen by the Government of Canada for this province. Manitoba. It is an important fact, one that allows all of us to be proud of the fact that our province—thanks to Louis Riel, thanks to his provisional government, thanks to the Métis—is well and truly called "Manitoba".

We should also recognize that Louis Riel is acknowledged as one of the founders of the province of Manitoba and is considered one of the Fathers of Confederation. Honourable Speaker, Louis Riel was

not a traitor. Louis Riel was the Father of Manitoba, and a Father of Confederation.

This bill will allow us to stop referring to Louis Riel as a traitor once and for all. He was never a traitor. That is a lie, and this bill will help us rectify a historical wrong, in order to recognize, once and for all, that Louis Riel was the Father of Manitoba, and to acknowledge that he should be referred to as such in our history books and in our teaching guides.

I would also like to add that we have been waiting too long. As Manitobans, as French-speaking Métis, as indigenous people, as fathers—we have been waiting too long for this legislation.

As a father, for my daughters, Axelle and Nastassja, who have always known that they were Métis, who have always known that Louis Riel was the Father of Manitoba, who have always known—as graduates of Collège Louis-Riel, like me—that they have the right to be proud, I want to add that they have the right to hold their heads high; they have the right to live Louis Riel's dream, and they have their place as young Métis in this province.

The same way my nephews and nieces—Alix, Patrick, Rosalie, Paule, Zoé, Zacharie, Jean-Luc and Julien—have the right to be proud of who they are, where they come from; to be proud of having a future in which they can flourish and have a good life; to do well in French as well as in English; and to be bilingual, to be proud of being bilingual, to be proud of their province. And one day, their children and my great-grandchildren will have the right to be proud, too.

As an educator, I would like to add that, from now on, we must be able to talk about Louis Riel as the Father of Manitoba and the first Premier of Manitoba in our teaching guides, in our classrooms, in our immersion schools, in our English schools and in our French schools—and this legislation will allow us to do just that.

I would like to thank this government, our team, and the Honourable Premier, for bringing this bill forward.

I would also like to thank and speak directly to all Métis youth in Manitoba. Whether you know it or not, whether you are Métis or not, whether it is your destiny to learn one day that you are Métis—as I once did—know that it is your right. It is your right to be proud. It is your right to have a place in this province. It is your right to live Louis Riel's dream.

Speaking of inclusion, acceptance, and love: this bill will help us to come together as Manitobans, in order

to better accept each other, to better respect each other, to better love each other, and to build a brighter, more welcoming, more vigorous, more open Manitoba, so that we can finally make Louis Riel's dream come true.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I'm honoured to stand today. I didn't ever believe, as a child, that this day would come. This week, these weeks around this issue have been very emotional for me, I can tell you, and for my family, as well.

I've made numerous calls to mémère to let her know where the bill is at, what's happening. And coming from a family that for many, many years self-described as French, because that's what was safe, it is an incredible weight being lifted that we can walk with pride and stand with Mr. Louis Riel and acknowledge his rightful place in Manitoba.

I can't overstate what this means for the next generation. And I've had some very impactful and passionate conversations with my colleagues about what it's going to feel like in one generation or two generations for the young people who are going through school and learning our history, and the feeling that will come from knowing that historically we come from a long line of champions. Not of traitors, not of people who tried to skirt the system, not of liars or deceivers, but of people who were honourable and wanted to bring together a province of people in a really incredible way.

And I see it in my little girl already. She is so proud to, you know, at Festival du Voyageur, she wants to talk all about everything that's happening. She is so proud to let people know that she is related to Louis Riel or, you know, our family's from St. Eustache, and she wants to talk about, sort of, some of the family traditions that we have.

But I can't—I wish I could move forward to understand what it will feel like to not carry the weight of feeling as though we weren't enough.

And I'm so grateful to be part of a team that recognizes the importance of this, and that recognizes that the truth part of Truth and Reconciliation has to be met before we move on. And there is—there are many truths to be told in this country, and we've only begin to sort of unpack some of them.

Orange Shirt Day is one way that we honour some of our truth. As we work through treaty land entitlement settlements, we learn about another truth. And this one, for the people of Manitoba, is going to fundamentally change not only how we see ourselves, but, I believe, how the rest of the country sees us as well.

And I've had a lot of conversations with folks who say that Canada is watching and other provinces are watching what we're doing and looking to see if we have found the path, if we are moving forward in the way that we ought to, towards that reconciliation, towards really being a unified Canada and thinking about all of the pressures that are coming from all sorts of disparate groups right now, and the amount of hate that is being spread in so many different spaces.

And today, on a day that we honour women who have been lost to femicide, today it feels so heart-filling to be able to talk about something that will, hopefully, unify us and unify people across our country.

I was thinking if—yesterday or the day before, when we were talking on the very important adult literacy bill, I remembered that my great-grandfather was not able to read and write, and that was wholly symptomatic of the family's social status. And that social status was wholly related to the racism that they faced in our communities. And grandpa would just work, like many people, at a young age. He wasn't afforded an education that would allow him to read and write.

And, you know, I look at myself. I have gone through post-secondary twice, and my kids are on their way to both of them achieving post-secondary education, to living fruitful lives, to engaging in the broader society in a way that my great-grandfather and great-grandmother could never have dreamed of.

And, you know, for folks who don't know the history of Métis families in this province, lots of us were raised on road allowance, in houses that were, you know, kind of put up in areas that nobody wanted and nobody owned, and just hoped—*[interjection]*—it's okay to make a lot of noise; I'm excited too.

The—I think about the people who have faced economic realities that I didn't know that we would cycle out of. And, you know, many family members of mine have struggled to keep full-time employment, and there have been a lot of social challenges. And I would—it's not all related to racism or things of that nature. There's always a personal accountability piece.

But there is a hopefulness that comes from feeling like I can be proud of where I came from and allowing other people to feel the same way.

So I thank the House for this tremendous occasion, and look forward to being able to tell my grandkids—if my children decide to have children—look forward to telling them that I was here on this day for this important event.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is the concurrence and third reading of Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act.

* (16:30)

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

The motion is hereby passed.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Would you please call for the continuation of second reading debate on Bill 5.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Adult Literacy Act

The Speaker: Been announced that we will resume Bill 5, second reading debate, standing in the name of the member from Spruce Woods who has 28 minutes remaining. *[interjection]*

The member from Spruce Woods.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Oh, sorry. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, I appreciate that.

And just starting off where we ended yesterday evening—okay. Very pleased that the member for Southdale (MLA Cable), the minister, brought this bill forward and certainly look forward to further discussion at a later date.

The Speaker: Are any other members wishing to debate?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: I heard a no.

The debate on Bill 5 will continue.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I thank the minister for bringing this bill forward, and I want to put a few words on the record about the great work that the previous PC government had already begun to—that repaired past NDP damage and moved toward balance in a sustainable way.

The PCs invested more per person on health care, education and social services combined than any other province. We on this side of the House stand for economic growth and job creation, which are integral for a stronger, more prosperous Manitoba. Protecting our adult education system will ensure adults can develop the skills necessary to participate fully in the community and contribute to a growing economy.

We support investments in adult learning programming to ensure that Manitobans have the right skills, talent and knowledge at the right time to rebound from the effects of the pandemic and support economic resilience and growth.

Manitoba's adult literacy centres serve all populations in Manitoba, including Indigenous, newcomer and Francophone loner-learners. Adult learning and literacy centres provide learners with opportunities to learn the skills and credentials to participate in post-secondary education and the workforce.

The previous PC government focused on partnering with community-based organizations specialized in adult educational programming skills development so that individuals have adequate support to pursue their employment goals. The PCs were proud to champion skills, talent and knowledge strategy, and we applaud the good work of the teachers and staff at 67 adult education centres to support adult learners.

The PC government disbursed over \$20.3 million to 64 adult learning centres and literacy agencies offering 129 sites throughout Manitoba. These funds assist approximately 8,000 adult learners annually.

Currently, adult learning centres and adult literacy programs have—excuse me—have \$23.3 million that the PCs invested in 2020 to 2021 to support 67 adult learning centres and adult literacy programs. This operates 132 locations throughout Manitoba.

The PCs were pleased to provide \$20 million to these centres that helped over 8,000 Manitobans, including Indigenous, newcomer and francophone learners.

Adult learners learn, earn skills and credentials to participate in post-secondary education and workforce development.

On this side of the House, our PC goal is we want Manitobans to have the right skills, talent and knowledge at the right time. The previous government championed this goal in the Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy as a roadmap to economic recovery.

Adult Learning Centres program currently offers tuition-free high school credits and upgrading courses, which may lead to a Manitoba high school diploma.

In '21-22, 30 agencies received more than \$17 million in operating grants, including amalgamated MITT Adult Learning Centres, which will combine six separate adult learning centres in one centre with multiple program sites.

The Manitoba Adult Literacy Program funds organizations to deliver programming that address the literacy needs of adult Manitobans. Last year, 29 agencies received more than \$2.5 million in operating grants, including a one-time COVID-19 relief grant totalling \$50,400 to support additional operating or capital expenditures that may have occurred related to COVID-19 program pressures.

Adult literacy is very important to ensure that everyone can fully participate in the workforce and community. It allows people to improve their skills and education. It is also important for quality of life and financial security. It helps protect people from being taken advantage of through fraud or scams by ensuring they have the literacy skills to protect their interests.

The Manitoba Adult Literacy Program, I again want to acknowledge, funds organizations to deliver programming that addresses the literacy needs of adult Manitobans.

In 2021, the previous PC government established the province's new Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy that will ensure Manitoba creates the conditions to grow the economy now and into the future.

Adult learning and literacy relates directly to pillar 4: grow, attract and retain talent of Manitoba Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy. This means we all know that Canada has labour and skill shortages. We also know that people need good jobs. We have people that want good jobs.

We know that we can succeed in bringing our systems together. We have an opportunity to draw on

our strengths, such as our Indigenous population, to promote positive outcomes for our communities and our economy.

We also have to be more vocal about the great things that Manitoba has to offer to encourage those who have left our province to return home and to attract talent in our province.

This strategy—important strategy—that the PC government previously implemented, was part of the province's very important roadmap to economic recovery.

This strategy guides our work to align the province's immigration, education and skills training systems with market—labour market and economic priorities.

This is a shared vision and a call to action to advance economic prosperity and positive outcomes for individuals, communities and businesses.

Having worked in the manufacturing sector, I know first-hand that we have a labour shortage of skilled workers here in Manitoba. I look at my own constituency of Midland and a town called Rosenort: 800 people live in that town; five manufacturing plants employ over 1,000 people. Those individuals, over 50 percent of them, need to be bused from Winnipeg in order to keep those plants up and running.

However, those businesses want to grow, and part of the challenge of growing those businesses is attracting skilled professionals, whether that be in welding, mechanics, carpentry, electricians, and adult literacy is a big part of that solution.

* (16:40)

We also know that there is labour shortages in our daycare centres. As a mom, myself, with a three-year-old in daycare, I am heavily reliant on having that daycare in my home community of La Salle. And we know that these daycares, in particular rurally, are struggling to attract the talent and ECE workers to come and work and develop our next generation of young and eager learners before they enter our school system.

Now, in our rural communities, we are competing. We're competing against the city of Winnipeg, other communities, to attract these ECE workers.

Our PC government previously increased the wages of ECE workers in order to encourage them to go into these jobs.

Adult literacy programs are a big part of that, and our team on this side of the House will continue to advocate for advancing trained ECE workers, the very necessary employment needs of this sector, to encourage people to come rurally as also work in the city of Winnipeg.

Our next generation, like my three-year-old and my five-year-old, we need to invest in them. We need to look at what types of skills they're going to need into the future, both education, post-secondary and beyond, and that includes entering the workforce.

This is why our PC team and PC government invests heavily in economic growth and job retention, training and recruitment.

I want to again acknowledge the workforce strategy that this PC government previously implemented, because this increased and attracted, encouraging people who have left our province for Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, BC, Quebec, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, PEI, back into our home province of Manitoba. This strategy was part of the Province's roadmap to economic recovery and success.

As I've already mentioned, our labour shortage here in Manitoba—and, you know, we do know that this is happening across the country, but we do have an opportunity to attract people here in Manitoba, because this really is a great place to live, to work and to raise a family.

I, myself, as a mom with a three- and a five-year-old, certainly hope that my children will choose to live in this great province that we have. But for them to want to stay, live, work and raise their own families in this great province, they need to have the jobs available to them to do so.

That's why our PC team has always been committed to investing and enhancing our education system. The PCs invested more per person on health care, education and social services combined than in any other province. And I want to acknowledge my colleague and the former minister of Education for doing this important work and investing in historic funding within the education system here in Manitoba.

You know, affordability is a big part of encouraging people to live in Manitoba and come

back to Manitoba from other provinces. This is why the PCs increased the basic personal amount. This primarily helps lower income people, and the NDP voted against it. You know, how are we going to attract people to come and live in Manitoba if we don't have an affordable place to live?

You know, the NDP, as we've seen this week, are planning to run massive deficits. They've fudged the NDP numbers. They have their thumb on the scale. They're not planning to implement any much-needed tax cuts for Manitobans, especially at a time when Manitobans feel that affordability is the No. 1 concern that they are feeling.

There has been an Angus Reid poll out about a month ago that said affordability was the No. 1 concern across the country, and that Manitobans were feeling it the most—

The Speaker: Order, please. I'd remind the member to try and keep relevant to the bill we're discussing, please.

Mrs. Stone: I apologize, but this all goes back to encouraging and protecting our education system, ensuring our education system and adult literacy centres have the supports and the finances in order to encourage people to come here so that they can get a good job into the future.

And affordability is a big part of that, because we want people to live here and we want people to be able to have the skills here in Manitoba in order to work in the very much-needed areas that we currently have labour shortages in, like in manufacturing.

You know, manufacturing has a labour shortage right now. The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters have been saying this, and a report has come out that said attracting, retaining skilled workers is the top concern for manufacturers right now in our province. About 85 per cent of manufacturers have responded to polls and surveys saying that this is a challenge.

So this is why adult literacy programs are so important for our province. You know, we need to protect our adult education system to ensure that adults can develop the skills needed to participate fully in the community and contribute to a growing economy. And affordability is a big part of that.

And, you know, on this side of the House, our team has been significantly focused on affordability measures. We put money back into the pockets of Manitobans to encourage people to come back in this province, so they can live and work and afford a

house, so they can be able to work in the very much-needed sectors that we need labour for at this time.

You know, we have always, on this side of this House, supported investments in adult learning programming because we want to ensure that Manitobans have the right skills, talent, knowledge at the right time.

As we head into the future, we have a significant amount of individuals—the baby boomer population, you know. My parents are 65, they are retiring and, you know, we need to fill those jobs that they have now left. You know, jobs that they have filled for 42 years.

We have an increase of newcomers coming into this province and, you know, we need to ensure that they have the supports and the resources available to them so they can enter the workforce free of barriers. You know, we want an inclusive workforce.

And our PC team made great strides through our programming and the knowledge—workforce knowledge and transformation fund—I don't recall what it's called at this time. But it's funds like that that are critically important to advancing our economy, to encourage people to come live and work here.

So I thank the minister for bringing forward this very important bill.

Thank you for the time, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): It is a pleasure to rise in the House today. I haven't had the opportunity to speak beyond asking questions in question period, but I do want to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Speaker, on assuming your role, and it's good to see you there. And I look forward to working together with all of my colleagues in this newly elected Chamber.

It's a pleasure to rise today, this afternoon, to talk about Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, which requires the minister to develop, implement and evaluate an adult literacy strategy in collaboration with others involved in adult literacy. And a component of the strategy is the Manitoba Adult Literacy Program, which supports adult literacy programs.

And I was proud to be part of a government previously that implemented the skills, knowledge and talent strategy. A government that invested record amounts in education, in post-secondary education, as well as our K-to-12 education system and took education very seriously.

I, myself, am one of five children and was at—was the first in my family to go to university, and so kind of a special thing there. My dad moved here at—he was roughly 18 years old, I think it was, when he moved here from Mexico. And so, had only gone to age 13, attended school there, and so as a result, shortly after he moved to Canada enrolled in a adult education program, which he still talks about to this day.

* (16:50)

He's very proud of all that he learned and his achievements and, you know, I always have regarded him as being very smart in the areas of science and math and things like that. And although he spent most of his life, you know, working in miserable conditions, you know, -35°, -40° outside, exposed to the elements under a semi truck as a mechanic, diesel mechanic trying to get it going so that the mill, that—the flax mill that he was working at could run their trucks and things like that, and he worked 12 hours a day, six days a week for many years. And so he's always been someone that I respect for his hard work.

And, frankly, it's people like that that built this province, and it's important that we don't take their hard work and their sacrifice for granted. And so—but an element of that, of his success, was his hard work and his dedication as he enrolled in the adult education program and really applied himself there and got to explore the worlds of math and science and things like that that he wasn't exposed to in his years in school in Mexico.

And so, you know, the importance of education, it's been said before: Education is the great equalizer. And it's something that I felt, too, growing up. You know, as I said, no one in my family had gone to university; we're not a—we're a very blue-collar family. A lot of my aunts and uncles are truck drivers, small-business owners, construction workers, things like that; diesel mechanics, very hands-on. They work really hard and, you know, I admire and respect them for that.

But growing up I, you know, loved to read and loved my country, loved Canada, loved history, and so I kind of inclined to the books. And so, you know, I felt very strongly too that education is a great equalizer, and here I am today, a member of a very blue-collar family and in the—in this provincial legislative body, which is a great honour and something I don't take lightly. But it's a result of education and it's a result of hard work and good values and, obviously, I think, you know, the blessing of my Lord

and Saviour, as well, and so, you know, there's a lot to be thankful for.

But all that to say that adult education is incredibly important, and it's—is really important, as the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) said, you know, when you have a government now that can't seem to do basic math and comes out and says that, you know, we're facing a \$1.6-billion deficit and, you know, it's unfortunate because what is clear that they were left with a \$270-million surplus, and so those are the facts. But I think they fundamentally have a problem with adult literacy because they made \$3 billion in promises and they've got to hide that somewhere, so \$1.6 billion this year gets them some ways down that path.

But it is very interesting that this NDP Premier (Mr. Kinew) came out shortly after the election and warned Manitobans of fiscal pain. And so that just makes me and all Manitobans wonder, moms and dads wonder, if this Premier's talking about fiscal pain and he's saying he's going to run a \$1.6-billion deficit, what taxes are they going to raise? And so—

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. I would remind the member when he's speaking about a bill to keep his comments relevant to the bill.

Mr. Guenter: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I appreciate your words.

I do, though, I do fundamentally believe that adult literacy is very important because we've got to have a government that is literate, that knows the numbers and that is truthful about the numbers and that can do basic math. And I think, you know, it is very serious, because these are—this is, you know, the future of Manitobans that we're dealing with here.

And so we've got to be literate, we've got to know—understand the basic numbers and we've got to be truthful about that. And I think that that's the main thrust of what adult education is all about, is helping adults to get to a place where they are fluent in math and science and in grammar, and all these important subjects, and that they're literate and can apply these skills in—throughout their life and in their jobs, and in their careers.

And so it's important that we have—if we expect that of our blue-collar workers, then we should expect that of our government as well. And so I think it's ridiculous to think that, you know, that it's only—adult education is only for the blue-collar workers, you know, that our politicians should know things, they should know better, they don't need it. But I think

there's an expectation from the public that the government be truthful and forthcoming about the numbers and not fudge a \$1.6-billion deficit based on fake math.

And so let me just say, Honourable Speaker, that it's been a pleasure to share these few words, and I'm happy to allow other colleagues to speak at this time.

Thank you.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate your time and I appreciate the House's time for giving me the opportunity to speak on this.

One of the things—and again, I apologize, because I'm going to make a little fun of myself here, but adult literacy is real important to me. My grandparents emigrated from Ukraine, and I can still remember that I couldn't communicate with my grandma and grandpa, or, my baba and gigi, from Ukraine, because they couldn't speak English. And at that time there was no means for them to learn how to speak English.

So again, adult literacy is something that is near and dear to my heart, and I see it in my own community of Portage la Prairie, like I spoke about today in my member's statement. The Portage Learning and Literacy Centre has offered a lot of time that people can go there and learn how to speak English, but also, you know, when we look at it now in our society, things move so quickly now. I can't imagine what people feel like in these days that we have where things move so quickly, and they don't have the opportunity to learn.

And thank goodness there's places like Portage Learning and Literacy Centre for them to learn. As I said earlier as well, too, it has doubled in size. Not only in space-wise, but doubled in size in the people that are there teaching as well, too. So again, I want to thank people like Cathy Dowd, who is the administrator of that place. And again, Portage la Prairie, my constituency, has become such a great place to be and a great place for newcomers to come to. But I also want to think about those people like my grandparents that came before, that didn't have the opportunity for that.

So I'm glad that we're all talking very collegial about the importance of adult literacy and how important it is to us. When I look at talking about some of the potato industry that we're dealing with in Manitoba and Portage la Prairie, we're the second largest province in Canada for growing potatoes, but one of the issues that we run into is a labour shortage. And again, when we talk about a labour shortage, the people that come to Portage la Prairie that want to get jobs in order to be able to work at some of these factories like this, don't have the opportunity unless there was a place like Portage—

The Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is before the House again, the honourable member from Portage la Prairie will have 26 minutes remaining—27 minutes remaining.

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

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