

First Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Social and Economic Development

Chairperson
MLA Billie Cross
Constituency of Seine River

Vol. LXXVIII No. 2 - 6 p.m., Monday, December 4, 2023

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Monday, December 4, 2023

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – MLA Billie Cross (Seine River)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface); MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson)

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the committee present:

Hon. Min. Cable, Hon. Min. Kinew

*MLA Cross, Mr. Ewasko, MLA Loiselle,
Mr. Narth*

Substitutions:

*Hon. Min. Bushie for Hon. Min. Cable at 7:12 p.m.
MLA Redhead for MLA Loiselle at 7:12 p.m.*

APPEARING:

Cindy Lamoureux, MLA for Tyndall Park

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Bill 2–The Louis Riel Act

*Joël Tétrault, Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph
du Manitoba*

*Anita Campbell, Infinity Women Secretariat
David Chartrand, Manitoba Métis Federation*

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 2 – The Louis Riel Act

*Bill 4 – The Employment Standards Code Amend-
ment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange
Shirt Day)*

* * *

Clerk Assistant (Mr. Tim Abbott): Good evening, everyone. Will the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development please come to order.

Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I nominate MLA Cross.

Clerk Assistant: MLA Cross has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

Seeing none, MLA Cross, please take the Chair.

The Chairperson: Our next item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson. Are there any nominations?

MLA Cable: I nominate Monsieur Loiselle.

The Chairperson: Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, MLA Loiselle is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following: Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act; Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day).

I would like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. A standing committee meeting to consider a bill must not sit past midnight to hear public presentations or to consider clause by clause of a bill, except by unanimous consent of the committee.

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in a committee. In accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members. Questions shall not exceed 30 seconds in length, with no time limit for answers. Questions may be addressed to presenters in the following rotation: first, minister sponsoring the bill; second, a member of the official opposition; and third, an independent member.

If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a

presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is the signal for the Hansard recorder to turn mics on and off.

On the topic of determining the order of public presentations, I will note that we do have a presenter who indicated they wished to present in French. They are marked with a double asterisk on the list.

With that considerations in mind, in what order does the committee wish to hear the presentations?

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): I have a suggestion that our first presentation be, in fact, in French.

The Chairperson: Okay. It has been suggested that the first presenter be the person speaking in French, and then we will continue through the list.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Thank you for your patience.

Bill 2—The Louis Riel Act

The Chairperson: We will now proceed with public presentations.

I will now call on Joël Tétrault to please proceed with your presentation.

Joël Tétrault (Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba): Bonsoir. Je me nomme Joël Tétrault et je représente l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba à titre de secrétaire de l'organisme. Je vous apporte les regrets de la présidente, Paulette Duguay, et le vice-président, Justin Johnson.

Premièrement, merci de m'avoir accueilli ce soir. Il me fait grand plaisir de vous parler aujourd'hui pour le premier organisme représentant les Métis au Manitoba.

Fondée en 1887, l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph est fondée deux ans après le meurtre politique de Louis Riel. L'Union Nationale Saint-Joseph du Manitoba avait pour mandat de protéger l'héritage de Louis Riel et du peuple métis.

Nous avons aussi la responsabilité de raconter les vraies histoires par rapport aux événements qui ont eu lieu lors de la Résistance de la Rivière Rouge et la subséquente création du Manitoba. En plus, nos ancêtres – qu'on surnommait « les fidèles à Riel » – voulaient s'assurer que les actions courageuses de Louis Riel et les Métis lors de la Résistance du Nord-Ouest soient racontées de façon véridique et honnête.

Étant secrétaire de l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba, je suis conscient que j'ai une lourde responsabilité aujourd'hui, car – si vous ne saviez pas – Louis Riel était d'abord et avant tout le premier secrétaire du Comité national métis qui représentait les Métis à l'automne de 1869.

D'ailleurs, c'est ce comité qui a instigué et soutenu le mouvement de résistance qui a assuré la création du Manitoba. Je veux m'assurer aujourd'hui de faire honneur à mes ancêtres et de bien représenter les opinions de l'Union par rapport à ce projet de loi.

* (18:10)

« Je sais que, par la grâce de Dieu, je suis le fondateur du Manitoba ». Ces mots ont été prononcés par Louis Riel pendant son procès. Par ce projet de loi, Louis Riel sera reconnu à sa juste valeur, et sera confirmé et reconnu comme l'un des pères de la Confédération canadienne – une grande victoire pour Louis Riel, ses fidèles et leurs descendants.

En négligeant pour 150 années de confirmer l'apport politique et les victoires de Louis Riel, le gouvernement du Manitoba perpétuait l'omission des grandes contributions apportées par les nombreux peuples autochtones et leurs chefs à bâtir et maintenir les fondations d'une province hospitalière, accueillante et inclusive.

La liste des droits qui ont été en partie créés par le gouvernement provisoire et les citoyens de la Rivière Rouge s n'a jamais vraiment été reconnue légitimement. Je suis convaincu, sans aucun doute, que si cette liste n'aurait pas été enchâssée dans la Loi du Manitoba, notre province n'aurait certainement pas été un endroit que l'on reconnaît aujourd'hui.

C'est certain que le bilinguisme, la liberté religieuse et surtout des écoles publiques qui reflètent des valeurs inclusives n'auraient jamais vu le jour. Nous ne devons jamais oublier que le Manitoba est d'abord et avant tout un espace autochtone, et ce projet de loi confirme le rôle joué par Louis Riel et les Métis à maintenir, préserver et légiférer ce fait historique.

Finalement, en légiférant que Louis Riel est réellement l'un des grands fondateurs de notre province, votre gouvernement répare l'une de ses plus grandes erreurs historiques. Ce n'est qu'en racontant l'histoire de façon véridique que notre province puisse vraiment aspirer à une vraie réconciliation.

« Pendant cent ans, mon peuple va dormir ; dans cent ans, il se fera réveiller par les artistes ». Oui, ça, c'est une citation qui est souvent attribuée à Louis Riel. Cette citation en dit long sur ce qu'il

pensait du rôle des artistes dans la préservation de la mémoire nationale.

Plusieurs pédagogues croient fermement que l'enseignement est un art. Étant éducateur moi-même, je suis du même avis. Selon la tradition métisse, les meilleurs enseignants sont les meilleurs conteurs et conteuses, car ils ou elles ont le don de vulgariser et transmettre des leçons de vie essentielles avec aisance et simplicité.

L'Union nationale Saint-Joseph du Manitoba est aussi sur la même longueur d'onde. Nous sommes ravis de constater qu'une des provisions de la loi sera de s'assurer que les programmes d'études reflètent et soient écrits pour éduquer les élèves manitobains des vraies contributions de Louis Riel et les Métis. Nous espérons que ce sera le premier pas vers un plus grand effort de décoloniser le système d'éducation.

En revanche, nous espérons que le travail sera fait en consultant et en incluant les organismes et des éducateurs métis. Nous croyons fermement qu'on ne devrait rien créer à notre sujet sans notre participation active.

« Nous devons chérir notre héritage. Nous devons préserver notre nationalité pour les futures générations de jeunes. Notre histoire devrait être écrite pour pouvoir bien le transmettre ». Comme le dit bien Louis Riel, bien transmettre l'histoire est un outil identitaire capital.

D'ailleurs, ceci a aussi toujours été une grande croyance chez l'Union nationale Saint-Joseph du Manitoba. De plus, nous croyons sincèrement que les leçons de l'histoire, positives ou négatives, ont moulé la société dans laquelle nous vivons aujourd'hui, mais surtout qu'elles doivent guider nos futures actions.

Si nous regardons les inéquités, les défis, une certaine division qui existe actuellement dans notre province, nous implorons le nouveau gouvernement de mettre en œuvre certaines des valeurs principales véhiculées par Louis Riel et nos ancêtres Métis. Les valeurs telles que l'hospitalité, l'acceptance, la liberté, la compassion et le souci de l'autre devraient guider le gouvernement dans ses efforts d'améliorer, réformer et décoloniser nos institutions publiques pour qu'on puisse créer ensemble une meilleure société.

Unissons-nous pour que notre province se rapproche éventuellement de la vision et des aspirations qu'avait Louis Riel par rapport à notre communauté. Nous croyons sincèrement que ce projet est, sans aucun doute, un pas dans cette direction.

Merci beaucoup.

Translation

Good evening. My name is Joël Tétrault and I represent the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba as Secretary of the organization. I bring regrets from the President, Paulette Duguay, and the Vice-President, Justin Johnson.

First of all, thank you for having me here this evening. It gives me great pleasure to speak to you today on behalf of the very first organization to represent Métis in Manitoba.

Founded in 1887, the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph was established two years after the political killing of Louis Riel. The Union's mandate was to protect the legacy of Louis Riel and the Métis people.

We also had a responsibility to tell the true story in regards to the events that took place during the Red River Resistance and the subsequent establishment of our province. Furthermore, our ancestors, who were known then as "Riel faithfuls," wanted to ensure that the courageous actions of Louis Riel and the Métis during the Northwest Resistance were told truthfully and honestly.

As Secretary of the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba, I am aware that I bear a heavy responsibility today. For, in case you did not know that, Louis Riel was first and foremost the first Secretary of the Comité national métis that represented the Métis in the fall of 1869.

In fact, it was this committee that instigated and supported the resistance movement that led to the creation of Manitoba. Today, I want to make sure that I honour my ancestors and represent the Union's views on this bill.

"I know that, by the grace of God, I am the founder of Manitoba." These words were spoken by Louis Riel during his trial. With this bill, Louis Riel will be fully recognized, confirmed and acknowledged as one of the Fathers of the Canadian Confederation—a great victory for Louis Riel, his followers and their descendants.

By neglecting for 150 years to confirm Louis Riel's political contribution and victories, the Manitoba government perpetuated the omission of the great contributions made by the many Indigenous peoples and their leaders in building and maintaining the foundations of a hospitable, welcoming and inclusive province.

The list of rights that were in part created by the Provisional Government and the Red River residents

has never really been legitimately recognized. I am convinced, beyond any doubt, that if that list had not been enshrined in the Manitoba Act, our province would certainly not have been the place we recognize today.

Bilingualism, religious freedom and, above all, public schools that reflect inclusive values would most certainly never have come into being. We must never forget that Manitoba is first and foremost an Indigenous space, and this bill confirms the role played by Louis Riel and the Métis in maintaining, preserving and legislating this historical fact.

Finally, by legislating that Louis Riel is truly one of the great founders of our province, your government is righting one of its greatest historical wrongs. Only by telling the story truthfully can our province really aspire to true reconciliation.

"For a hundred years, my people will sleep; in a hundred years, they will be awakened by artists." This quote is often attributed to Louis Riel. It speaks volumes about his perspective on the role of artists in preserving national memory.

Many educators firmly believe that teaching is an art. As an educator myself, I agree. According to Métis tradition, the best teachers are the best storytellers, because they have the gift of popularizing and transmitting essential life lessons with ease and simplicity.

The Union nationale Saint-Joseph du Manitoba is of the same opinion. We are delighted to see that one of the bill's provisions will be to ensure that school curricula reflect the true contributions of Louis Riel and the Métis and are designed to educate Manitoba students about them. We hope this will be the first step in a larger effort to decolonize the education system.

On the other hand, we hope that the work will be done in consultation with and inclusion of Métis organizations and educators. We firmly believe that nothing should be created about us without our active participation.

"We must cherish our heritage. We must preserve our national identity for future generations of young people. Our history should be written down so that it can be passed on." As Louis Riel put it, passing on history is a vital tool of identity.

In fact, this has always been a core belief of our organization. Additionally, we sincerely believe that the lessons of history, positive and negative, have

shaped the society we live in today, and above all, that they must guide our future actions.

Looking at the inequities, challenges and division that currently exist in our province, we implore the new government to implement some of the core values espoused by Louis Riel and our Métis ancestors. Values such as hospitality, acceptance, freedom, compassion and concern for others should guide the government in its efforts to improve, reform and decolonize our public institutions so that we can create a better society together.

Let us unite, so that our province may eventually resemble the vision and aspirations that Louis Riel had for our community. We sincerely believe that this bill represent, without a doubt, a step in that direction.

Thank you very much for your support.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much, Joël Tétrault. Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Merci beaucoup pour votre témoignage – et puis, je pense que votre participation dans cet événement dans la langue française, ça nous montre un peu des contributions de Monsieur Riel. Et puis, il y avait beaucoup dans votre discours au sujet de l'inclusion dans le système d'éducation des contributions de Monsieur Riel, alors moi je me demande – et je te demande aussi – comment est-ce qu'on pourrait inclure les éducateurs, les éducatrices métis dans ce processus ?

Nous avons le département de l'Éducation ici au niveau de la province, mais il y a aussi des « knowledge keepers », et puis ceux qui connaissent la langue michif, et puis des autres éducateurs et éducatrices qui sont peut-être en dehors du système d'éducation formel. Mais il y a en même temps des contributions à faire.

Alors, c'est une question assez grande, mais je vous demande de peut-être réfléchir un peu.

Translation

Thank you very much for your testimony. I think that your participation in French to this event is evidence of some of Louis Riel's contributions. You talked a lot in your presentation about including Louis Riel's contributions in the education system, so I am wondering—and I am also asking you—how could we include Métis educators in this process?

Here at the provincial level, we have the Department of Education, but there are also knowledge keepers, and then those who know the Michif language, and other educators who are perhaps outside the formal education system. But these people have contributions to make.

So, it is quite a big question, but I would like to ask you to think a bit about it.

The Chairperson: Oh, hang on. Order. Just a reminder to all members that questions shall not exceed 30 seconds.

J. Tétrault: Je vais la prendre en deux parties. La première, je vais répondre au nom de l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba, mais aussi comme éducateur métis.

Je pense qu'il y a deux grandes priorités que je proposerais au gouvernement.

La première, ça serait d'avoir un plan d'éducation autochtone clair et précis. On en a un au moment, oui, mais je pense qu'on peut aller plus loin à soutenir les éducateurs autochtones, et non seulement les éducateurs autochtones, mais les éducateurs non autochtones. Je pense qu'il y a beaucoup de travail à faire à décoloniser nos curriculums, et je commencerais en regardant de façon critique nos curriculums et nos façons de faire dans la salle de classe – et surtout la pédagogie.

Je pense qu'en deux parties, décoloniser nos écoles et rendre les écoles sécuritaires pour tous nos élèves, ça veut dire de regarder la façon qu'on enseigne et notre système d'éducation publique de façon critique. Ça ne veut pas dire que notre système d'éducation n'a pas fait des bonnes choses dans le passé, mais je pense que si on regarde au décalage entre le pourcentage de finissants autochtones et le pourcentage de finissants non autochtones, il y a un décalage de plus de 30 pourcent.

Puis, je pense qu'on a besoin plus d'ainés dans nos salles de classe, plus d'ainés dans nos écoles. On devrait aussi peut-être changer certains critères d'enseignement. Je pense qu'il y a beaucoup d'obstacles au niveau universitaire qui empêchent beaucoup d'enseignants ou futurs enseignants autochtones de prendre leur place dans les salles de classe et puis dans nos écoles.

L'autre chose, je travaillerais beaucoup pour attirer des éducateurs autochtones au niveau administratif aussi – parce qu'on sait, au niveau de l'école,

les administrateurs et les administratrices ont une grande influence sur la culture de l'école.

Alors, ça c'est en gros là ce que je proposerais dès le début. Mais, ça serait le fun, peut-être qu'on pourrait prendre un café un jour pour en discuter davantage.

Translation

I am going to respond from two perspectives. First, I am going to respond on behalf of the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba, and then as a Métis educator.

I think there are two main priorities that I would propose to the government.

The first would be to have a clear and precise Indigenous studies education plan. We have one currently, but I think we can go further in supporting Indigenous educators. And not just Indigenous educators: non-Indigenous educators also need support. I think there is a lot of work to be done in decolonizing our curricula, and I would start by taking a critical look at these and our ways of doing things in the classroom—especially the pedagogy.

I believe that, in two parts, decolonizing our schools and making them safe for all our students means examining critically the way we teach and our public education system. That is not to say that our education system has not done good things in the past, but I think if you look at the gap between the percentages of Indigenous graduates and non-Indigenous graduates, the gap is over 30 per cent.

I believe we need more elders in our classrooms, more elders in our schools. Maybe we need to change some of the teaching criteria. In my opinion, there are a lot of barriers at the university level that prevent many Indigenous teachers and future teachers from taking their place in our classrooms and in our schools.

Additionally, I would encourage more efforts be made to attract Indigenous educators at the administrative level as well. As we know, at the school level, administrators have a big influence on a school's culture.

So that is basically what I would propose from the outset. It could be fun to maybe have coffee some day to discuss this further.

The Chairperson: Are there any other questions?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Thank you, Monsieur Tétrault, for your presentation and your service to Louis Riel School Division students.

As the former Education and Early Childhood Learning minister, I have to say that working with the Red River Métis Minister Ledoux and Minister Chartrand has been just absolutely eye-opening and wonderful experience.

And I just want to say, again, thank you very much for your presentation, coming here this evening, and I look forward to working closely, but now on the opposition or on the education advocacy side, as opposed to critic. So thank you again for your presentation and your dedication to your students.

The Chairperson: Mr. Tétrault? Your response.

J. Tétrault: Well, first of all, yes, I am a teacher in the Louis Riel School Division and I'm proud to work for that division. However, I am here representing l'Union nationale Saint-Joseph-métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba.

And I hope, today, that one day, the MMF and our organization can build, produce together so we can both unite and talk with the same voice one day. So hopefully, this is hopefully—I am hopeful that someday that will happen.

But as an educator, thank you very much for your comment, and I hope that you will all work together to support teachers and support this public school—public school, sorry.

The Chairperson: Any more questions?

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and thank you so much for your presentation. I really appreciated how you talked about the importance of recognizing our past, both the good and the bad. I think that's often lost amongst a lot of us, so thank you for emphasizing that point.

And I just wanted to ask: Are there more things that we could be doing provincially to help build those connections for you?

* (18:20)

The Chairperson: Is there leave to allow time for a response because we've run out of time? *[Agreed]*

J. Tétrault: Well, as an educator, I think investing—true investing in public schools—and not defunding it would be a—the first objective, or the first thing we should do.

The other thing I would do is making sure that we create safe spaces for all students. A lot of students, especially Indigenous students, do not feel secure and—physically or mentally—in our classrooms, and

I think for Métis students as well, they're a lost—sometimes lost in the shuffle. A lot of Métis students don't want to self-declare.

We know that history has been taught, and I know, in my family, I still struggle with some family members not wanting to admit that we are truly Métis, and I, you know, raised my kids to respect history, respect their culture, their identities.

So, I think having more teachers that reflect that—the Métis identity, that know their culture, that know their history, and I think, having a look at the history curriculum, I think history has often been taught in—the Facebook version of history has always been taught in our classrooms, and to never look at it critically.

And as a history teacher—I have been—I was a history teacher for 17 years before becoming an Indigenous education teacher—you have to look at that curriculum. I would redo it completely, and I think that Indigenous history and Métis history should be weaved, for a better word, better weave that history, because Indigenous history is almost—and Métis history—is almost looked as an aside, and if we have time we'll do that. And I can tell you that Indigenous students in my classrooms really feel that when most teachers put that aside.

So I think there's a lot we can do, but, yes, the history curriculum, I think there's no reconciliation without truth, and I think there's no real reconciliation without telling the real story of what happened here in Manitoba, especially.

I mean, my family was forced to flee in the 1870s because of the reign of terror, and the story we tell in our classrooms is that Manitoba was created in a peaceful manner, and it was a great transition, but not for my family. My family had to flee to the United States and actually had to live there for over 15 years before coming back.

And when they came back, what was left, well, all the great pieces of land were given away to the former soldiers that raped, killed my ancestors.

So, I mean, I know those are strong words, but those are the truth. So I think there's a way to approach it in a classroom, but I think we should approach it in truth and not in half-truths.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation. I think I can speak on behalf of all of us we appreciate everything that you've said tonight.

Are there any other presenters wishing to do their presentation in French?

Are there any members wishing to speak in French during the remainder of the committee proceedings this evening?

Seeing none, our interpreter can now head home. On behalf of all committee members, we thank our interpreter, Orson, for his hard work in the House today and at the committee this evening at short notice.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: Yes. The Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Kinew: And can we all collectively wish the translator a happy birthday and our sincere thanks for coming in on his birthday to help us out.

The Chairperson: Honourable First Minister, that was not a point of order, but we thank you for your attempt.

* * *

The Chairperson: Okay. I will now call on—sorry—I would like to let everyone know that the interpreter said thank you very much.

I will now call on our next presenter, Ms. Anita Campbell. Do you have any materials to be distributed to the committee?

Anita Campbell (Infinity Women Secretariat): No, I don't.

The Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

A. Campbell: Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of Infinity Women Secretariat.

We are a proud affiliate of the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Red River Métis government.

Sorry, my throat is a bit sore today so hopefully I can do justice to this.

I want—first of all, I want to thank, of course, Premier Wab Kinew for your advocacy and work to bring Bill 2 this far along, and we are so proud of this.

Today is yet another day, an historic one, as we come together to consider Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act. Louis Riel was an outstanding leader who always supported his people, consistently moving forward to protect and recognize the rights and identity of

the Red River Métis. He brought the province of Manitoba into Confederation, so it is very fitting that he should be made the first honorary premier of this province.

We also know that women played an important role in Riel's life: his grandma, his mom, his sisters, his wife. We know that these were important women who helped him achieve all he did and what he was able to accomplish.

And so, for me, that's exactly the role that we, as Métis women, continue to play within our families, our communities and also within our own Red River Métis government. We continue to play on that role and take on that responsibility.

For those who have heard me speak lately, you know that identity has been one of the focuses of my conversations over the last few months. I was born in a Red River Métis community of Duck Bay and was not always proud to say I was Métis.

Growing up, I was often treated differently because of the colour of my skin, and I think there's a lot of people had of gone through that. This has made me more aware of my identity, and for many years I wanted to hide who I was. But as I grew older, this actually made me more determined, more challenged and more feisty about to help other women and girls, just like me, facing the stigma of being Métis.

This past weekend, we had held a consultation in Brandon to hear feedback from our members about what could be done to create a more equitable society, one in which all Métis women are valued and respected. We also had asked them to share stories about their facing stigma, racism and discrimination, to becoming proud and flourishing Métis women, reclaiming their rightful place in society.

When asked about the bias and discrimination faced in their everyday life, the responses were similar to: I don't know where to start, to—one woman had expressed that she was actually not able to declare herself as Métis because of the pale complexion of her skin and therefore she was denied her identity and her culture.

The responses from our women attest to all the challenges they have had to overcome on this road. Red River Métis women are often excluded at a political level; for example, as an afterthought to consultations. I think it's even including our Red River Métis people, who are excluded from consultations

that continue to exist. For example, there is consultations that'll happen and we're an actual afterthought to: Oh, yes, we forgot about the Métis people.

And so for us, it's a matter of making sure that our voices are heard, specifically our Métis women.

Over the past decade, I can say that I'm a very proud Métis and my life has been focused on creating these programs and services for women, girls and members of our 2SLGBTQ+ community to address all types of discrimination and hardships they face in their lives.

I've been advocating for Métis women, and IWS is becoming a legacy of its own, through its strength and resiliency of our over 1,800-plus members.

The introduction and reading of The Louis Riel Act are critical steps in ensuring that the Red River Métis are not just included but can take a leading role in discussions that focus on Métis women's needs.

As looking at these—was I—going to talk about tonight and what I was going to present and then when I look at all—and I think of—go back to what has already been presented as part of the memorial event that we hold at Louis Riel's gravesite.

And throughout that—the years that we've been doing this, there's always one of the members that will mention all of the things that are named after Louis Riel, whether it's just the Louis Riel school that was just mentioned; the Louis Riel—the bridge, the school, everything—the streets—everything that's named after Louis Riel.

I think in itself, we are thinking about the women that are attached to his life, whether it was his mom, his grandma, his sisters, his wife, the friends of the families that he knew and the effect that they had on his life.

*(18:30)

And one of the ones that came through, and I'm not sure if people are aware of Annie Bannatyne. So Annie Bannatyne also has a plaque in the Health Sciences Centre; there's a contribution plaque that is identified, that she's identified in.

And so I just wanted to read you a little thing on Annie Bannatyne, because I thought it was important to mention her and the role that she played on Louis Riel. And so she's perhaps one of the most famous stories of a woman influencing Louis Riel, as one of Annie Bannatyne—McDermot, actually, Annie McDermot Bannatyne.

And so she had actually—she was educated, opinionated, and she used her privilege to good purpose. So a man named Charles Mair, who was a member of the Canada First, had advocated for the annexation of the historic northwest, had a letter published in the Toronto Globe, which you might recognize as one of Canada's, today, Globe and Mail.

In the letter, Charles Mair said many wealthy people are married to half-breed women, who, having no coat of arms but a totem to look back to, make up for the deficiency by biting at the backs of their white sisters.

And of course this would have been read and discussed at volume throughout in many of the corners of the Red River Métis settlement. But it was Annie Bannatyne's reaction that had been documented and passed down in Canadian history—or in the nation's history.

So on one Saturday afternoon, at four in the afternoon, while the store was full of people, Annie advances on Mair, seizes his nose between her fingers and gives him five or six strokes of the whip on different parts of his body. Look, she says, this is how the women of the Red River treat those who insult them.

By evening the incident was known all across the country. I'm not saying that I'm approving of violence, because I am against violence. I'm just saying that I can understand why Annie felt compelled to be violent in this case. It was her way of making a statement: that for somebody to speak ill will of women, especially Red River Métis women, was not something that she was going to accept or condone.

So by the end of April 1869, history shows that Riel was clearly associating Annie Bannatyne's stand against Mair, with his own stand against the takeover of the Red River by the Canadian government.

And so that's only one example of the role that women played in our history.

To put it simply, the Red River Métis are matriarchal people, and our nation has always valued the contributions, teachings and guidance of our women. Even today, Red River Métis women are the backbone of our families, our communities, and working together they formed the foundation of our nation.

From our locals to our cabinet, our women are leaders within our Red River Métis communities and government, building relationships and advocating for our nation.

Look at our cabinet, and also our leadership team: the staff that are there, majority are women. You can plainly see that women continue to play a strong role in our government and in our politics. This is a nation that Louis Riel was born into, and this is the culture that still exists today.

So today I speak to Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act, and we celebrate the recognition he is receiving. We remember how he lived, what he fought for and the sacrifices he made to defend us all. And we remember how he became the man he was.

So to Premier Wab Kinew—I was actually going to say to Premier Kinew, Wab—on behalf of the women of our nation, who I am proud to be the voice for, I say thank you. Thank you for recognizing Louis Riel, for recognizing his struggle and for giving us a chance to speak for our ancestors on this very important day.

We will carry on the legacies of Riel and all our ancestors. We will build on their legacies now and into the future. To me, identity is so important and being proud of who you are. Because we're not only talking about ourselves, we're talking about the generations that are coming behind us, the generations that are with us today, and the older generations, because it has been that long that people are proud to say that they are Métis. And today it is a good day to be Métis.

We have so many of our citizens that are coming back, and I know the story that the previous speaker is talking about, because we hear it all the time. There are so new Métis that I'll put in brackets, because they're coming home. And one of the things that we have always said is that we will welcome with open arms all of our Métis citizens—our Red River Métis citizens.

And so for us the identity, the education that's going to change in the schools, and I was really particularly really looking at the bill, and at the bottom it had the—an explanatory note—

The Chairperson: You have about five seconds.

A. Campbell: Okay, I can talk fast. I said The Louis Riel Act bestows the honorary title of first premier of Manitoba on Louis Riel. The Manitoba Education curriculum must now include the significant contributions of Louis Riel, and I think that's the important part of this act, is to change the history that's been wrongly recorded in our books and said to our young people.

So thank you very much for allowing me to be a speaker today. I really appreciate it. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you so much for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Kinew: Kitchi miigwech, Anita, for your presentation, and there's a lot in there. And as you point out, the bill charges the Minister of Education to take some steps to work with the curriculum for public and private schools to include Riel and Métis history.

I would probably refer the minister to review your comments here at the committee, because there's a lot of good stuff in there, with that in mind. So if he looks at that, what would you want him to interpret that with? Which thoughts should he keep in mind as he's reviewing your comments and thinking about how to bring it into the curriculum?

A. Campbell: To me, two things. I think if we don't change the wrong that was put into the books, then they'll always be there. I think we need to clarify the history. Growing up, Louis Riel to us was always a traitor. He was always, you know, the bad person.

And I think that's largely why most people did not want to associate or be recognized with him. So I think changing that history, making it right, correcting what was in the books, is going to change a lot, especially for the young people. Because we tend to have a lot of our young people come from school, go home—whether it's to their parents or their grandparents, or even their aunts—they go home and they talk about what they learned in school.

And I think in changing that, they'll be able to now clarify to the aunts or the grandmas that don't want to get their citizenship card, to be able to clarify to them, here's what the real history is about, about Louis Riel and about the Métis people. Because, you know, everybody doesn't do this on their own. Louis Riel didn't do all on his own; hence, why the women, his friends, his comrades were all important people.

And I think that's what it's to change. Because I'm proud of where I'm from; I'm proud of this province and I'm proud of our country. And so, if we don't change that and correct the wrong, then the history will always be there. So I think that's one thing.

I think the second thing that the minister should look into is starting from the early learning child care, is starting at that level. I think that's so important for

us to instill culture, instill who they are, where they come from, who do they belong to—their community—and instill that right from the bottom up. And moving that up.

So I think those two things would be the two things that I would pull from here, in terms of the education piece of it, and focusing his attentions on that. Which, by the way, I'm going to go see him after.

Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Campbell, for your presentation. I agree. I mean, being a teacher for over 17 years before I got into this wonderful, wonderful political life.

It was—many, many students would be apprehensive to come forward and self-identify. And it's nice to see, over the last few years, that more and more students are getting that—not necessarily courage, but that education to be able to, you know, have those conversations with other supporting adults, their caregivers, their parents in their lives, to come forward and self-identify.

The Chairperson: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Ms. Campbell, would you like to respond?

A. Campbell: Sure. I agree with what he said. And so, I'm—I was trying to pull the question from what he was going to ask.

But I think it's important to note that it's—if we don't change now, if we don't have that history corrected, then you're—continue going to have those. Because it's, for me, it's every time a woman comes through—because for us they have to have a citizenship card in order to belong to IWS and be one of our members. And so we know they're part of it.

I've had women come up to me and ask if their sister's daughter could be part of our—or does the blood quantum matter, and at some point do we run out. And so it's that whole educating them about who the Métis people are and educating them about how you are Métis. And it has nothing to do with your blood quantum, and you don't run out of being Métis in your family.

* (18:40)

Because I think the more that we have educating our own people about—or even just society in general about who the Métis people are and what we brought to this province is going to be integral in terms of

moving us all as Manitobans forward because we don't just again work alone; we work with everyone.

So, but I agree. I think it's important for us to be able to move together and make sure that history is rewritten and that our identity is something to be proud of.

Everybody wants to be Métis, literally. And I just thought I'd throw that in.

MLA Lamoureux: Do I have leave just to make a response?

The Chairperson: Is there leave for MLA Lamoureux to pose a question? *[Agreed]*

MLA Lamoureux: It's more of just a comment than a question.

Thank you for your presentation, and I just want to sort of highlight how telling it is that so far we've had two presenters, and both of you have shared stories, personal stories, of people you know who have had to hide their identity, who have chosen to hide their identity, as well as being felt like the aftermath of something or not being—having room in the school curriculum to talk about something.

I'm feeling very fortunate just to be learning by you here today; I want to thank you for that. And I say, be loud, be opinionated—I loved the word you used—be feisty.

The Chairperson: Order. Is there a question? Okay, time has expired.

Ms. Campbell, would you like to respond?

A. Campbell: Thank you so much for your kind comments.

I think one of the things for us is, and you'll notice this with—I'm not sure if you've noticed it with the—my fellow sisters, we tend to talk a lot, and we tend to be opinionated; we tend to want to make sure that our voice is not only being allowed to speak, but being heard. And I think that's part of what we as Métis women always are.

And I think part of the thing for us in terms of our own communities is that we've always been respected that way in terms of being able to provide that voice to our community, to our families. And so for us, when we go into the society and we're not regarded that way, then we start becoming now a little bit more opinionated and a little bit more in terms of the information that we want to share.

We'll still today find people out there all the time, every day. It doesn't matter, every day. I could walk into a store; the young people that are there, they see my coat, my jacket, anything, and they ask me if I'm Métis, and I say, yes, I am. I said, are you? And they still have parents that won't allow them to get their card because the parent doesn't want to get their card.

And so, they wait to be 18, and I give them my card and I tell them, call me; I'll get you a child card, because there's ways for us to be able to do that. Because they want to belong to somebody; they want to—they know who they—they know they can be Métis, but they get no support still. It's getting less and less, which is great, but us being able to provide that and provide that support in that community to them and at home, I think is what they're looking for.

So, thank you so much.

The Chairperson: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for your presentation and thank you for giving voice to Métis women tonight. Thank you for being here.

I will now call on President David Chartrand.

Do you have any materials to be distributed to the committee?

David Chartrand (Manitoba Métis Federation): No, in fact, you told me I couldn't, so I didn't bring anything. Anyways—

The Chairperson: Please proceed.

D. Chartrand: I hope we didn't time me from getting here and lost a minute already, so I just want all my 10 minutes. I was telling my wife, I said, oh, I've never had Billie come chair my meeting, so cuts off so quick.

Anyway, let me say this. Look around this room; not at yourselves, to the walls. These are our premiers. These are premiers of our province that led us in which, I believe, one of the most beautiful provinces in this country. What better place to talk about this particular bill than this room and to see the walls.

And, you know, I was thinking about, I have a presentation, I got to make sure I'm within 10 minutes obviously here, but let me say this. Thank you to the 25th premier of Manitoba, first Nation premier in Canada, 25th, they say, because the first three were not elected premiers, but they're recognized in history as first premiers. And we'll reflect our thoughts and my thoughts.

I've been campaigning on this for at least 30 years. I've got a ways on some parts, so I was able to achieve quite a bit in getting certain parts—father of Confederation, the debate happened in parliament. Then we've been able to get to a level of a holiday named after him. In other parts we all know it's called Family Day. Here it's called Louis Riel Day.

Not only was the Métis government lobbying, it's the children of this province who also adopted that position, and that was under the leadership of Gary Doer, because Gary and I had some discussions and he asked my opinion on it. Of course, I told him how proud I'd be if that ever happened.

And we—I got his picture hanging in a wall amongst all other premiers, but he's not recognized as the first premier of this province.

Now, I'm going to read—I want to read some quotes. It's not typical of me, as you all know me. I don't speak with notes. I speak to what I know. I speak from my heart and from my knowledge, but I've got to read these because apparently they go in Hansard, so I've got to keep my context of my statements in line.

But let me first say, for the Hansard and for—people here must—may have misunderstood Anita when she said: We always—we saw Riel as a traitor and as sort of a bad guy. That's not what she meant. We didn't see it that way. The school system saw it that way and taught us that because I remember I rebelled at 14 years old on this whole issue in school.

So, I just want to correct that because I know what she meant, but I don't want the Hansard to misrepresent and then somebody walk out of here and say, oh, the Métis thought the same thing. No, we did not.

Secondly, our Métis government is always have our doors open, so Union nationale métisse is one of, in my view, one of our locals—you know, about 130 in the province and, of course, they're always welcome to our government any time they want to come.

But let me read now what I'm forced to read. I'd rather speak from the cuff but I have no choice.

Thank you to standing committee on a Social and Economic Development for inviting me to speak as a witness on Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act.

The Louis Riel Act seeks to—I want to look at the time there, so give me some time, give me a notice or something. Louis Riel Act seeks to give formal recognition to Louis Riel as the honorary first premier of Manitoba.

This bill will ensure that, true to Riel's legacy and his contributions to Manitoba and, indeed, his legacy in historical and contemporary Canada, is told through the curriculum, delivered by Manitoba's public and independent schools.

Before reconciliation is possible, we must first have the truth. Whenever Métis identity is being manipulated on a national scale and our symbols and heroes stolen, the recognition of the truth has never been more important than it is today. And for those of you, it's a big national fight right now because in Ontario, they're stealing our heroes, they're stealing Riel, they're stealing our beadwork, they're stealing our music and they say it's theirs. It is not theirs; it is ours in the west.

That a government led by the first Nation premier of Manitoba, as recognized a Red River Métis statesman and a politician this way was a testament to Riel's place as a visionary leader who could see the potential and promise of our homeland.

At his shroud, Riel said: When I came into the northwest in July, the 1st of July, 1869, I found the Indians suffering. I found the half-breeds eating the rotten pork of the Hudson's Bay Company and getting sick and weak every day. Although a half-breed and having no pretention to help the whites, I also paid attention to them. I saw they—deprived a responsible government. I saw they were deprived of their public liberties. This is Riel himself, not just for the Red River Métis but for all Métis. We'll call it river settlement home. In the—1869, all people will call it home today.

In 1869, Riel said: I'm more convinced every day that without a single exception, I did right and have always believed that, as I have acted honestly. The time will come when the people of Canada will see and acknowledge it.

And I think that time has come. Today we recognize the truth; that Riel's vision sought equality for all. Included in the list of rights adopted at Upper Fort Garry on Wednesday, October 1st, 1869, 154 years and three days ago, this is what it said: The right of the people to elect their own legislative—that was a decision, of course, our government; Riel's government; that treaties be concluded and ratified between the Dominion government and the several tribes of Indians in the territory to ensure peace on the frontier; that the English and French languages be the common language of the Legislature and the courts; fair and full presentation of the Canadian Parliament—

154 and three days ago, this is what Riel led and negotiated into Confederation.

* (18:50)

The provincial government, led by Louis Riel, adopted a list of rights, based on a multicultural, bilingual and inclusive vision of a province that respected rights of Indigenous people and minority rights.

For generations, our children were taught that Riel was a madman, a traitor. However, the legacy he left us through his own words demonstrate he was clear in his purpose and his commitment to his people.

Now, you can hear me read a lot of quotes, and I urge you to listen to them, because this is not taught in our schools.

When the Government of Canada presented itself at our doors—this is Riel—when the Government of Canada presented itself at our doors, it found us at peace. It found the Métis people of the northwest could only live well without it. But that it had a government of its own, free, peaceful, well-functioning, contributing to the work of civilization. It was a government with an organized constitution, whose jurisdiction was well—was all the more legitimate and worthy of respect because it was exercised over a century—over a country that belonged to it.

This is all his quotes. I'm going to keep on reading them. We must seek to preserve the existence for our own people. We must not by our own hand—own act allow ourselves to be swamped. If the day comes when that is done, it must be no act of ours.

It is to be understood there are two societies who treated together. One was small, but in smallness had its rights. The other was great, but its greatness had no greater rights than the rights of the small, because the right is the same for everyone.

I am glad the Crown approved that I am the leader of the half-breeds in the northwest. I will perhaps one day be acknowledged as more than a leader of the half-breeds, and if I am, I will have an opportunity of being acknowledged as a leader of a—of good in this great country.

Yes, I have done my duty. During my life, I have aimed at practical results. I hope that after my death, my spirit will bring practical results. All that I have done and risked rested certainly on the conviction that I was called upon to do something for my country. I know through the grace of God I am the founder

of Manitoba. Louis Riel, May 6, 1885, Batoche, six months before his execution.

Quotes from Riel at trial—I read the entire thing today: Your honours, gentleman of the jury—this is Riel speaking—it would be easy for me today to play insanity, because the circumstances are such to excite any man. And under the natural excitement of what is taking place today, I cannot speak English well—very well, but I am trying to do so, because most of those here speak English.

Of course, that is a Protestant jury in the territories.

Under the excitement which my trial causes me would justify me not to appear as usual, but with my mind out of its ordinary condition. I hope with the help of God, I will maintain calmness and decorum as suits this honourable court, this honourable jury.

This is what else he said: The day of my birth, I was helpless, and my mother took care of me. Although she was not able to do it alone, there was someone to help her to take care of me, and I lived. Today, although a man, I am as helpless before this court and the Dominion of Canada and in this world as I was helpless on the knees of my mother the day of my birth.

The northwest is also my mother. It is my mother country. And although my mother country is sick and confined in a certain way, there was some from lower Canada who came to help her and take care of her during my—during her sickness, and I am sure my mother country will not kill me more than my mother did 40 years ago when I came into the world. Because a mother is always a mother, and even if I have my faults, if she can see I am true, she will be full of love for me.

Do these reflections sound like a man that's crazy? He could have took the easy route and said, I'm insane, and he would have been found insane, and he would have lived. But everything he did was—would have been gone.

Riel was a defender of the prairies, defending all people who called the Red River home. Defending the homeland from expansionists' manifest destiny of the United States under Ulysses S. Grant. Again, it was Riel who protected. We could have been Americans today, my friends, if it wasn't Riel who stood at the borderlines and said—made it very clear, you cross these lines, you go to war with the Métis.

We did not allow Riel to be exonerated—

The Chairperson: Order. Your time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Kinew: I'd ask for leave to allow the president to finish his statement?

The Chairperson: Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

* * *

The Chairperson: Mr. President.

D. Chartrand: We did not allow Riel to be exonerated. To do so would have been to forgive him for crimes that he was not guilty of in the first place.

As you know, in this country, the exoneration was raised in the Parliament, it was raised out here, and we fought vigorously—I fought vigorously against it, because it would have been wrong. And I have a background in justice, and I know it would have led to, again, injustice, if it was exonerated for him not ever being guilty, for a crime he did not commit.

Louis Riel led the provincial government as president of then-named Assiniboia, which created the province of Manitoba—in other words, one and the same.

His was the first government, and Riel was defending the people who occupied the land from uncertainty and threats from the east.

There is still a need to educate the educated on these points. The son of an MMF member was told by a teacher that Riel was not the first premier of Manitoba, just—I'm talking now. Not a month, year; now. My granddaughter's sitting there with the Riel around her neck, and I'm proud of her. She's 16.

Martha's high-school project just started the other day. Students were provided with the following statement: historically, Riel is viewed as either a hero or a traitor; the correct title for him is traitor. That's what the school says in the statement, sentence. I could show you it as evidence.

Martha crossed out the word traitor and wrote hero in her place as a Métis person and a Métis citizen. Now, was the school causing a debate to occur? I'm not sure. I'll find out more details why the school would classify him as a traitor.

When The Louis Riel Act receives royal assent, it'll ensure that telling the truth about Louis Riel's place in Canada as the founder of Manitoba and as the

province's father of Confederation will be enshrined in Manitoba law. Finally, we can begin to reconcile the harm done to the legacy of Louis Riel through the mistruths taught to generations of all Manitoba schoolchildren.

I thank the NDP government, led by Premier Wab Kinew, again, for introducing the act, an important acknowledgement from our first Nations Premier in Canada.

I thank Heather Stefanson for remarks in support of The Louis Riel Act in the Legislature. This is what she said: I think what's really important about this, Deputy Speaker, is that this bill that's before us today is an important one. It'll bestow an honorary title on Louis Riel for the history that he has made in our province, and we on this side of the House are fully supportive of this.

And I hope that those words stand firm.

I thank Cindy Lamoureux, again, leader of the Liberal Party for her steadfast support of the Red River Métis.

And my last statement, I give the supportive—given the supportive positions of members of each party, there should be no hesitations or delays in this bill being adopted unanimously of all—by all members of the Legislative Assembly immediately.

And that, as a religious man myself, and Riel being a religious man and so are my people, if we see unanimous support, it'll touch the hearts of every Métis citizen, and it'll also touch the hearts of Louis—touch Louis Riel's heart as he watches and looks down upon us.

So with that, Madam Chair, I conclude my comments.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Kinew: Thank you very much, President Chartrand, for your words. And I know you brought a lot of people here with you today, which is good to see.

But I noted that you brought your granddaughter, and I wonder if you could just talk to the committee about why that's important. *[interjection]*

The Chairperson: Mr. Chartrand.

D. Chartrand: Thank you very much; I apologize for speaking without acknowledgement.

Clearly I—my wife and I have raised my granddaughter. We've raised her since a child because of the situation at home where my other grandson is born with a very rare syndrome and has needed medical attention even to this day at the age of 15. So we've been fortunate and lucky enough to raise our granddaughter, and I've been raising her on the beliefs of who we are.

Just like my mom said to me: Gego wiikaa waniiken wenjiyin She said—my mom said to me: Don't you ever forget where you come from. And I never will.

And we teach that to my granddaughter. And she's taken passion to this, and she's been selected by the school some certain things.

When this issue came up, and—she didn't tell me, she told my wife—she crossed out traitor and she put hero. I can see a defender coming, of my people. And one that has great pride and a sense of who she is, and she takes great pride in being Métis, and also supporting causes.

She's—on the Orange Shirt Day, she was adamantly wearing orange shirts, and on certain days, red dress. She's out there pushing on those issues.

So she's really adopted, I hope, what the spirit will be from our young generation, to stand up and believe.

You heard that people today are ashamed to be Métis. It is true. Lot of people came back—because of years and decades of this falsehood about Riel being a traitor, a madman and just an enemy of the state—people have now come forth and said, wow, he's a real hero. He's a real first premier of our province.

It's going to change the mindset of entire—and the country.

Just today, Mr. Premier, tomorrow you'll read an article in the Free Press—or in the TV. Hopefully in media stations. I am taking Bell Canada to court, I'm taking Astral to court and potentially the Ottawa airport to court.

As you know, we're very proud Red River Métis people, and we have the signs promoting who we are: the Red River Métis government. Which we have at the airports, you see them all over whenever you're driving. Proud who we are.

We have those same signs in Ottawa. They were taken down December 1, and our contract doesn't end 'til next year, 2024, June.

* (19:00)

So, we are going to challenge this action. Why in the hell would you take down our signs, and if somebody complained about them, what can they complain about? That's exactly who I am.

That's what I'm teaching my daughter, Mr. Premier (Mr. Kinew). I'm teaching her to be an advocate. I'm teaching her to be proud of who she is, and she truly is getting out of her shell and, as I said, I actually do see a leader of tomorrow coming. And that, I hope, will resonate with so many of our young leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, President Chartrand, for coming today and, again, demonstrating democracy here in Manitoba. There's very few provinces in Canada that has the opportunity to hear from the public, and organizations bringing forward to any kind of bills that are coming to this wonderful Legislature.

So, thank you, again, for your presentation, and I looked forward—it was great working with you, and I look forward to working with you moving forward as well.

So, thank you very much.

The Chairperson: Mr. Chartrand, would you like to respond?

D. Chartrand: Mr. Ewasko, I do thank you for your kind words.

But let me say this before I leave out of here: it's important that I recognize and you recognize me for who I am—a government. I'm not an organization.

When that mindset is changed amongst everybody—and it's not just you, Mr. Ewasko—it's still out there. It's because we are forced to be a corporation by the governments that we—people continue to call us organizations.

When you start looking at me as a government, looking at my government, and behind me is my Cabinet, all proud and willing to fight the fight for whatever cause, and I think it'll change the mindset of how we interact with each other, because I am a government.

And I thank you again, Mr. Kinew, on a statement you had made—or Premier Kinew—I got to be careful, my language, here, as I'm common man, I speak the common language.

So—but the point for me is that it's been now 'sted', it'll be nation to nation, government to government. Your premiers have said that in the past, but now we're seeing it's going to be real.

And I want it to be real, because I want to walk into a room, and you're going to look at me as a leader of my people. You're going to look at how Louis Riel should have been seen in the—154 years ago—or 153 years ago, be honest with you.

So, when I look at it that way, imagine, I always tell my Cabinet, I tell my people—

The Chairperson: Order.

Time has expired.

MLA Lamoureux: Do I have leave to ask one more question?

The Chairperson: Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

MLA Lamoureux: Thank you, President Chartrand, for coming out today and for your presentation and just for your continued work with—and I like that, your government—the continued work with all of the other levels of government—the municipal, federal and provincial. The contributions that you have made are outstanding and they continue to be.

I won't use our time, just give you some more time to finish up your thoughts. [*interjection*]

The Chairperson: President Chartrand.

D. Chartrand: I keep on forgetting. Thank you, Billie. I meant, thank you, Madam Chair.

So, let me say this to finish off my statement, Mr. Ewasko, and also thank you for the time to lead me into the answer.

You know, I always reflect the thoughts to my people at assemblies and meetings. As you know, we have the largest assembly in this province. We have 4,000 people at our annual assembly, bigger than any political party you have and the gatherings you have. And these are citizens coming from all across—and now we have people joining us from all across, through video or driving from all over, even including British Columbia.

We have thousands upon thousands joining the federation today, coming home to their government.

But, let me say this. I say to Cabinet, imagine 153 years ago, if Riel was treated as a premier and the government was treated as a government. Where would we be as Métis people? We would not be the

working poor today. We'd still be hard-working, no doubt. That's all we—that's our backbone—but we would be in a different economical state.

Imagine the land did not be taken from us. Guess what we'd be today? Like the Mennonites, which I'm very proud of them. They had 586,000 acres of land. You're allowed to live as a communal state. Today they're the most powerful, some areas, justice and judges and in economics, because they were allowed to live as a communal state as a people.

So, you look at that, I tell—just dream, I tell my people. Imagine, for a second, we are allowed to live the way we should have been allowed to live, allowed to be treated as a government, as a people. Just imagine that. Where would we be today? Maybe we'd be spoiled brats, I tell them. I don't know. But, hopefully, we'd be good people, hard-working people. And that's what we are today.

So, thank you for that question, and thank you, Cindy, for allowing me to finish off my sentence. There's a tough Chair there. So, anyways—lucky she's not a Speaker of the House, no, just joking.

The Chairperson: On behalf of the committee I would like to thank you for being here, for representing your citizens and speaking so well. Thank you so much.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me. Would anybody else in the room like to make a presentation?

Seeing none, we will now begin clause by clause.

* * *

The Chairperson: In what order does the committee wish to consider the bills before us?

Mr. Kinew: Bill 2 first.

The Chairperson: Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

As agreed, we will now proceed with clause by clause of Bill 2.

Bill 2—The Louis Riel Act *(Continued)*

The Chairperson: Does the minister responsible for Bill 2 have an opening statement?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Thanks to all of my colleagues for being here this evening. Thanks to all of the people who attended and the officials who spoke.

I appreciate the commentary from President Chartrand, from the spokesperson for Infinity Women Secretariat, Anita Campbell, as well as Joël Tétrault from Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba.

I just wanted to say on the record that I transcribed the phrase in *Saulteaux Anishinaabe* and *Ojibwe* that President Chartrand said: Never forget where you come from; *gego wiikaa waniiken wenjiiyin*. And just want that to be reflected in Hansard with the orthography from the language so that that's included accurately.

The bill has been described and spoken to by people in the public, so I think everyone understands the purpose of this: it's to right an historic wrong in a way that still reflects the challenges of the past 150-plus years.

So, recognizing Mr. Riel's founding contributions to this province and his role as a Father of Confederation in Canada, but to do so without erasing the fact that many people have had to fight for many years for this recognition to be broadly based and understood in our society, including many citizens of the Manitoba Métis Federation, which is the national government of the Red River Métis.

I know that I certainly look up to Mr. Riel, and I've been on my own learning journey about his contributions. And hearing the quotes that are read into the record about what he had to share, I find very moving, and in particular, you know, his statement, approaching the end of his life, that he wished someday to be recognized—and I quote: As being acknowledged as a leader of good in this great country. End quote—I think spoke to his aspirations to be a nation-builder, and his commitment to Canada, which is a country that we all know and love.

And so, I think it's very important that we move forward as a collective process of charting how we're going to talk about our heritage and legacy in the province here, in this way.

And I think that that's a benefit for all people. We heard certainly from the presenters tonight that this means a lot to Métis people in Manitoba, and to the Métis nation. But it's my view that this is a positive step for kids and people of all walks of life. When we better understand our true history, I think we're better able to build the province and country that we want together, as one province for the future.

* (19:10)

And with that in mind, I know that President Chartrand was on a roll when he—we did the first reading of this, and I just wanted to read his quote into the record that he said on that day we brought this bill forward for the first time. He said, quote, this a proud day for our people and a proud day for all Manitobans, all societies, all nationalities, different religions, different backgrounds. We are all Manitoba. End quote.

And I think that's very fitting because, among other things, that was Riel's vision, and I think, if we all work together as Manitobans, as one province, that's when we're going to succeed together.

So, with those few words, very much appreciate everyone being here this evening.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I, too, on behalf of our opposition Progressive Conservative side, would like to thank all presenters for coming today and sharing your—not only your words, but your stories, President Chartrand on, you know, with Manitoba—Red River Métis government and your Cabinet.

I'm—I, too, am hoping that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Altomare) is listening today as well, because I do know that we started many great initiatives with the Red River Métis and your Cabinet, and I look forward to seeing those efforts continued moving forward.

So, thank you, everyone, again, and I look forward to moving forward with clause-by-clause.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Ewasko.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Committee Substitutions

The Chairperson: I would like to inform the committee that, under our rule 85(2), the following membership substitutions have been made for this committee, effective immediately: honourable Minister Bushie for honourable Minister Cable; MLA Redhead for MLA Loiselle.

* * *

The Chairperson: I have received a letter of resignation as Vice-Chairperson from MLA Loiselle, which I table.

Accordingly, before the committee can continue with the business before it, it must elect a new Vice-Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Indigenous Economic Development): I nominate MLA Redhead.

The Chairperson: MLA Bushie—I mean, Minister Bushie.

Mr. Bushie: I nominate MLA Eric Redhead.

The Chairperson: Are there any other nominations?

MLA Redhead, having been nominated and seeing there's no other nominations, he is elected Vice-Chairperson.

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

The Chairperson: Does the minister responsible for Bill 4 have an opening statement?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): So, I just want to say, for the benefit of the people in the room, that we've passed The Louis Riel Act, and so it'll now go back to the Chamber and will be—*[interjection]* Yes.

So, I just wanted to explain the procedure and report that the last bill we just considered will be headed to third reading and then hopefully royal assent at which time it'll ready to become law, and we're now doing another bill that I think will be of interest to the presenters and other folks who are in the room, which is the bill that I'm speaking to now, which is the Orange Shirt Day bill, Bill 4.

And so we know that residential schools have had a huge impact on our country, and perhaps Manitoba is one of those places that has borne one of the greatest impacts. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, in my experience, was a powerful, powerful time in our country's history in which we had residential school survivors come forward and share their experience.

But then to move beyond telling their stories to also engage in charting a course forward for our country that could answer the question that so many of us have when we hear the stories of what residential school survivors experienced when they were little kids, which is, how could this country that I love so

much have a history like this, and how do I reconcile that history with the vision that I want for Canada, to be this great country, going forward into the future?

And I think the contribution of the residential school survivors was so important because they took from these hearings of pain and trauma and different emotions—very emotional hearings, I would say—they took out of that a road map, a road map for how do you grapple with those tough questions and make the country even better than it is today for the future?

And one of the recommendations contained in these calls to action is to have the day to recognize the experiences of survivors, to commemorate the children who never came home and to honour the parents who were left behind.

And so this bill is another step towards advancing the project of reconciliation here in Manitoba. It would make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday in the province, and that's important because up to now there has been extensive recognition of Orange Shirt Day in the school system and in some workplaces.

And here I will acknowledge the previous government's work on the education side. Our colleague, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) was the premier, I think, the first time when this was a designated day off in the provincial school system.

But with the exception of some employers who think this is an important priority—and I know there's some clothing manufacturers and some real-estate developers and people in other industries who give their employees the day off to commemorate Orange Shirt Day—many other people have to go to work, which also means that many other kids aren't able to participate in the activities to the extent that they would like.

And we all are familiar with the phrase, Every Child Matters. And so to me, passing a law to ensure that every child, no matter where their parent works, no matter which provincially regulated workplace they go to work in, that every child is able to participate is another way for us to live up to that phrase, Every Child Matters.

And so it's my hope that the next Orange Shirt Day, the children of people who work in manufacturing, work in construction, work in all the provincially regulated sectors are able to participate along

with all their friends in the Orange Shirt Day commemorations that take place, from north to south and from east to west, across Manitoba.

And so that's what this bill is really all about, and I think it's an important step forward. And I guess, just in closing, I want to acknowledge the courage and the magnanimity of the residential school survivors, you know, that experienced some very difficult things and challenging things.

I think these are folks who had every right to be angry or to be upset about the way they were treated in this country, and yet instead of dwelling on that, they chose to emerge with a plan for hope and an opportunity to bring people together from different walks of life.

And I think that that, among other things, is a powerful example of resilience and deserves to be taught to young people alongside maybe some of the more challenging aspects of the history that they experienced.

And on a personal level, I just wanted to say the names of some relatives of mine. So, my late father, Tobasonakwut Ibun, was somebody who was a residential school survivor, as was my late Aunt Nancy. And they were able to participate in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; they were able to hear the apology.

* (19:20)

But I wanted to say the names of two of their siblings: John Pete, and Tootoons, who's also known as Edwin. And I wanted to say Tootoons and John Pete's names into the record because they never lived to see the apology.

They never received compensation. They never had the chance to see the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They experienced all of the hardship and the challenges, but they didn't get to see where we are today in Canada.

And so I'm very hopeful about the future and what the next generation of Manitoba kids and Canadian children are going to be able to achieve when they're the decision makers in this province. But as we move forward towards that goal I do want to take one moment to commemorate some of the folks who weren't able to join us along the way.

So with those words on the record, very much look forward to moving this bill forward as well.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Okay, no opening statement.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Kinew: I'd like to ask if there is leave here at the committee to include the written transcription that I

tabled, as written, of President Chartrand's comments, for inclusion in Hansard.

The Chairperson: Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

Leave has been granted, and it is not a point of order.

* * *

Gego wiikaa waniiken wenjiyin [*Never forget where you come from.*]

The Chairperson: The hour being 7:23, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

The Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 7:23 p.m.

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