

Second Session – Forty-Second 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-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 5, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 206—The Louis Riel Act

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for St. James (Mr. Sala), that Bill 206, The Louis Riel Act; La Loi sur Louis Riel, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kinew: Madame la Présidente, ça me fait grand plaisir de présenter aujourd'hui la Loi sur Louis Riel. Ce projet de loi confère à Louis Riel le titre honorifique de premier Premier ministre du Manitoba.

Translation

Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I am introducing today the Louis Riel Act. This bill will confer on Louis Riel the honorific title of first Premier of Manitoba.

English

Madam Speaker, it's with great honour that I rise today to introduce The Louis Riel Act, which would rightly honour Louis Riel as the first Premier of Manitoba.

Louis Riel founded our province. He formed the first representative government here, and the first prime minister of Canada, Mr. John A. MacDonald, recognized his authority by engaging in negotiations with him, which eventually saw our province entering into Confederation.

I want to invite all sides of this House to support this important bill as we get prepared to celebrate Manitoba's sesquicentennial and, of course, honour the great footsteps of this person in—whom we follow.

Thank you.

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

Bill 207—The Election Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 207, The Election Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi électorale, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, this is a fairly simple bill, which we hope can earn the support of the House. It's the idea that changes to The Election Financing Act should require a two-thirds majority in the House in order that it represents the broad will of all the parties represented, and that one party in particular can't just make changes on its own.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): It's my pleasure to rise today in the Assembly to table the insurance risk management fidelity bonds report.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Status of Women—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, which is recognized on December 6th. This day was established by the Parliament of Canada in 1991 to honour the lives of the 14 women who were so senselessly murdered at École polytechnique in Montreal in 1989.

This year, on December 6th, marks 30 years since that very tragic massacre, and many of us will remember where we were that day. For others, who were not yet born, the national day of remembrance will serve to remind us of those women whose lives were tragically cut short 30 years ago. And while it is a difficult reminder, we must pause and reflect, to ensure that we take action to stop the violence.

The Montreal massacre, as it is known, was a watershed moment. It was clearly an attack on women, as the killer intentionally separated the women from the men in order to murder them. Madam Speaker, it is documented that the killer said: I hate feminists. This time in history inspired a new dialogue with all Canadians.

In addition to honouring those lives lost, we must acknowledge the suffering of countless women and girls who face abuse every day of their lives. We must recognize the toll that gender-based violence is taking on all of us: women, men, children, neighbourhoods, communities and workplaces. Society as a whole is negatively impacted and we must take action.

Even the smallest actions by each and every one of us can make a meaningful change. We must speak out when we see any acts of violence or harassment, any kind, and we must teach our children to be kind and compassionate.

We must help our youth understand that healthy relationships—what healthy relationships look like and how to reach out for help when needed. We must support those dedicated front-line workers and organizations working to promote women's equality and gender-based violence—and address gender-based violence.

We must denounce misogyny, Madam Speaker, and on December 6th, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, there will be many memorial services and vigils throughout our province—and I would like to personally invite all of my colleagues in the Chamber to join us on the morning of December 6th at our Manitoba Legislature for a memorial service to recognize all the women and girls affected by gender-based violence.

We will honour the memory of the 14 women killed in the Montreal massacre in 1989 and the women in our province who died in acts of violence in 2019.

Madam Speaker, I would ask that we observe a moment of silence to mourn the women we have lost.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding, I would just like to ask if there is leave after all of the statements are made for a moment of silence. *[Agreed]*

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I rise today on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the École polytechnique massacre in 1989 and on this national day of remembrance and action against violence against women.

Madam Speaker, I remember very clearly where I was on that day, watching the news as it unfolded in Montreal. I actually was living in Montreal at that time, watching it as it unfolded, and you weren't quite sure what you were watching on the news, and you couldn't quite wrap your head around that a man could separate women from men and execute women who were just living their lives, doing what we all do as women every single day in this country.

Today I'm reminded, on the eve of this 30th anniversary, of indigenous women and girls who face exponential levels of savage violence across Canada, from coast to coast to coast. Madam Speaker, often when we talk about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, we often use the number 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, but actually that's not accurate. Those numbers do not reflect numbers and cases that are not reflected in police reports or the self-reported. Some have suggested that the numbers are as high as 2,000 missing and murdered and two-spirited women—indigenous women and girls across the country.

So on this day I acknowledge each of the families who continue to fight for their loved ones, to draw attention to the issue, but also to seek resolution and call on various forms of government and levels of government to adhere to and commit to the recommendations in the national inquiry's report.

Madam Speaker, I also want to take a couple of minutes just to acknowledge all of those women organizations that are on the front line every single day, day in and day out, fighting to ensure that women's rights are protected and that women in the community are offered the supports that they need to be able to thrive and to enjoy every single opportunity that we should and we must have as women and in particular, indigenous, black and women of colour in this country.

So from—on behalf of our caucus, we acknowledge each and every one of those amazing

community organizations that are doing those works and those families that are fighting day in and day out to honour their memory of their loved one.

Miigwech.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to address the minister's statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to respond to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

* (13:40)

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, December the 6th is a very important day, is indeed a—was a watershed moment 30 years ago. It is something that is very close to me, in part because I spent four years in Montreal and in part because I had visited the École polytechnique when I was minister responsible for science at the federal level, and so when this happened it was not only an incredible shock, it was a shock which occurred in an institution that I had been visiting and been there and seen the incredible contributions that people have made at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, and it was so sad to have something like this happen.

It is and was a turning point, and it's a turning point on which we must build. We must recognize not only this time, but what has happened more recently with the #MeToo movement, with the task force and the report of the task force on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

We have a special responsibility in Manitoba to act because we have the highest level of violent crime in all the country, and we have that responsibility here to address not only violent crime broadly, but very specifically, crime which is directed against women or people who are binary or trans or of other genders. We have a responsibility not only to provide safe spaces, but to provide equality and opportunity and equality. In fact, we need to address issues like poverty and homelessness. We want to make sure that no woman or person falls through the cracks of the care that we should be able to provide.

So I rise to join others to dedicate ourselves to create and to build a better Manitoba where women are treated equitably and fairly and where people of all genders have opportunities as they should.

Madam Speaker: Please stand for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Louise Bridge Transit Proposal

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, residents of Elmwood and northeast quadrant of Winnipeg have been eagerly awaiting the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan update specifically as it relates to the so-called eastern corridor bus freeway proposal.

The replacement of the 110-year-old Louise Bridge, which the City of Winnipeg acknowledges is functionally obsolete, is a key piece of any long-term plan for better public transit in our area. That—the option that was under the—consideration that left the Louise Bridge out of the picture was a great concern to the residents of Elmwood because it would've left residents of the Elmwood area without reasonable access to any public transportation primary network, eventually leaving us without a bridge and an important access route to the downtown.

The Winnipeg Transit Master Plan report last month clearly shows the Louise Bridge replacement as key to this bus freeway network. The City has distanced itself from the earlier highway-for-buses approach with a new freeway south of Nairn, which would have seen an expensive bus freeway there, similar in design to the southwest corridor from the U of M to downtown. We're pleased to see a more reasonable and efficient plan proposed.

Plans call for a new six-lane Louise Bridge, including two lanes for buses. We'd hoped a new Louise Bridge would be situated beside the current site and the old bridge would be used for local light traffic, but engineering problems of the site immediately beside the current bridge make that impossible. Residents want to keep the old bridge open to traffic during the construction, as was done with the new Disraeli Bridge and avoid the many problems of long-term closure.

By closing this Louise Bridge route on existing—by choosing this Louise Bridge route on existing Crown-owned land, City's also avoiding significant additional costs of expropriating businesses and other privately owned land.

There is more fine-tuning and consultation to be done, but we're pleased with the direction of this important project at this important stage.

Don Penny

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Central Services): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about a great Manitoban.

We lost Don Penny a week ago today. He was best known for his accomplishments as the CEO of Meyers Norris Penny, but I will remember him as a friend and a mentor, a generous man who encouraged community involvement.

Don was a visionary. During one of my first meetings with him in 1978, he told me to pay attention to the environment; it would become important and there would be many opportunities. He was absolutely correct.

Don was born and raised in Virden and remained deeply loyal to his rural roots for the rest of his life. He joined the firm that became MNP in 1962 as a student and built the firm from a few offices in Westman to what would become the fifth largest accounting firm in Canada.

I was very fortunate to marry Aynsley, the lovely daughter of partner No. 9, the late George Horne. There are now 835 partners and over 4,500 staff.

Don gave his time and money to a variety of community causes, believing that it was his responsibility to give back to the community. He imparted this belief to everyone he knew.

Don threw himself into family life with the same vigour that he gave his career. He adored Sandra, his wife of 39 years, and was tremendously proud of his children and grandchildren. Even the smallest accomplishment was an event worthy of celebration.

As a friend and mentor, Don was always eager to hear about what was happening in your life and offer advice on everything from mergers to fatherhood to how to mix the perfect Caesar—although his wisdom on that topic was a little questionable.

When he was invested as a member of the Order of Canada, it just confirmed what everyone who knew him already knew: Don Penny was a Manitoba treasure.

His legacy will live on in everyone he encouraged to take a chance and think outside the box, in the people he mentored and, of course, in his family.

Community Safety Strategy

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Communities and families are on the front lines of the urgent public safety issues that we are currently facing here in Manitoba. It is families and communities who deal with the fallout of violence in their community. It is families that are left to pick up the pieces, and it is families who have the solutions on how to deal with

issues we are currently facing as a collective Manitoba.

We know the police commission report doesn't address the root causes of what we are seeing. It doesn't say anything about including community members in solutions. Madam Speaker, it really does beg the question, how can we expect to be proactive in tackling these issues when we don't include the very people that it is affecting the most, the people who have valuable insight into what is going on in their own neighbourhoods and communities?

We know there are less social services and resources available to struggling family members and citizens than in previous years. With cuts to the women's health centre, cuts to mental health supports, and the selling off of public housing, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) continues to show Manitobans that marginalized and vulnerable peoples are not his priority and that they simply don't deserve supports.

This morning we debated a private members' resolution urging this Premier to actually start showing compassion and concern for vulnerable Manitobans. Instead of voting in favour, members opposite chose to speak out this resolution.

This morning, Madam Speaker, it was an opportunity for all of us to come together and address this issue in a comprehensive way. The PC caucus failed Manitobans today.

Miigwech.

* (13:50)

Christmas Wishes

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I have made a rendition, / It's in tribute to our former colleague and it's quite the tradition.

Today we part ways for the holiday season / as Christmastime does give us this reason.

My wish for our members is we all remain safe / And I hope the member from McPhillips' suit doesn't chafe.

Talking about clothes, Madam Speaker, that robe / I tried to win it and lost, but I think there's still hope.

To both of my colleagues from Maples and Burrows / You're my North End favourites and your constituents' heroes.

To the three party leaders, a piece of advice / Avoid hiking and rapping, and stop being so nice.

Shout out to our clerks who are musicians and hockey fans / Thank you for keeping this House up and running, despite our best efforts to ruin your plans.

To the new MLAs, I hope you're enjoying the job / Take time to go shopping in the crazy Christmas mob.

As the Minister of Health says, oh geez, that's poppycock / Despite outrage and shushing when we all try to talk.

The member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) stands tall, arms crossed / While the Minister of Agriculture dreams about his motorcycle and exhaust.

Thank you to Hansard and our pages for keeping us in check / And our guards, of course, for having our back.

Madam Speaker, it is clear that we have different views / But can't we all be nice, or we're going to have the Christmas blues.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I say, go Jets go / Our team's going to make it, and it's going to be quite the show.

I thank Blair Yakimoski for starting this tradition / And I look forward to spending more time in the Tyndall Park division.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Dauphin Regional Health Centre

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): For 17 years it seemed the Parkland was forgotten and health-care needs usually meant a day trip to Winnipeg or Brandon. This meant patients and their families taking time off work, taking money out of their pockets to travel up to four hours for non-emergent and diagnostic health-care services, and it also meant taking people away from their support systems and placing undue stress on the patient.

I know many cannot imagine how disruptive this is to day-to-day life, but many of my constituents, either as patients or supporters of patients, have had to endure this. Three-and-a-half years ago, Madam Speaker, this all changed when the PC government began changing the course and priorities of Manitoba health care.

On November 18th, 2019, the last phase of Dauphin's regional health centre and special care unit was officially completed. Our new Central Services Minister, the member from Brandon East, and I, had

the distinct honour of attending this event, marking the completion of a much-needed hospital and emergency update for Dauphin and the surrounding Parkland region.

With the recent announcement of phase 2 of the made-in-Manitoba plan to provide better health care closer to home, Manitobans can look forward to enhanced availability, quality and reliability of care for patients at home and in the community.

On behalf of my constituency and, indeed, all Parkland residents, I thank this PC government for the significant, regional commitment to emergency health care and for their recent announcement to provide better care sooner, which means closer to home.

The constituents in Dauphin and the Parkland have been waiting a long time for these improvements and a government who not only talks about improving rural and northern health care, but one that delivers on it.

Merry Christmas, everyone.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: There are a number of guests that have joined us today, and I would like to take a moment now to introduce them all to you.

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today the consul general of Iceland in Winnipeg, Mr. Thordur Gudjonsson, accompanied by his wife Jurunn, and they are accompanied by Manitoba's Chief of Protocol.

The consul general's three-and-a-half year term at the Icelandic consulate in Winnipeg expires at the end of this month, and on behalf of all honourable members, I welcome him to the Manitoba Legislature and thank him for his commitment and service to Manitoba-Iceland relationships, and all the best to you both.

In the loge to my left we have with us today the former MLA for Swan River, Ron Kostyshyn, and joining him today in my gallery is his wife Judy, and we'd like to welcome them both to the Manitoba Legislature.

And in the loge to my right, we have joining us today Blair Yakimoski, the former MLA for Transcona, and we welcome him back to the Legislature.

In the public gallery today we have with us representatives from ANCOP, which stands for

Answering the Cry of the Poor, who are the guests of the honourable member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino), and on behalf of all honourable members we welcome you here as well today.

Joining us also in the public gallery from École secondaire Neelin High school we have 43 grade 9 students under the direction of Kerri Malazdrewicz, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), and we welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Nurses at Health Sciences Centre Working Conditions and Staffing

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Madam Speaker, the holidays are quickly approaching, and so I just want to take a minute to wish a merry Christmas, joyeuses fêtes [*happy holidays*] and a happy holidays to all the staff, the clerks, the MLAs and everybody in the Chamber and the Legislative Building.

I know from the time that I was a little boy being dragged across the frozen lake by my father on the reserve to go cut down a Christmas tree on the island across the way, to today when my kids and I go to the tree lot not too far from our house, that this is always one of our 'favourite' times of the year. So I just want to wish everybody good vibes.

However, we know that this will not be a happy holidays for the nurses working hard in the Manitoba's health-care system.

So I'd like to ask: Why is this government always being such a grinch when it comes to health care?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, when the NDP left government we were dead last on health care, so I think they get the grinch title. Now we're leading the country in reducing wait times, so I guess we get the Santa title.

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

Mr. Kinew: We know that this government's cuts to our health-care system has caused chaos in emergency departments and hospitals, and now nurses at the Health Sciences Centre are speaking out. They tell us that working conditions there are becoming so critical that they are concerned for the safety and for the health of their patients.

They cite numerous issues. There is, of course, mandatory overtime, which we touched on quite extensively yesterday, which forces nurses to work in unsafe conditions, but there are also concerns about a lack of training for nurses who are being brought in from other units and, of course, they paint the picture that nurses need specialized training in order to operate safely at the bedside.

Which new and specific measures will this Premier announce today to address the crisis ongoing at HSC?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I would agree with the member that 10th out of 10—dead last—in most categories was a crisis.

I would also say that we are making improvements which the members have consistently opposed. So they're defending their title, Madam Speaker, of grinchness when it comes to health care and we're defending our Santa title by improving results for Manitoba patients.

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

New Women's Hospital Working Conditions and Staffing

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): What is of particular concern, Madam Speaker, is not just the situation at HSC, but also that nurses are now reaching out to us and telling us that there are serious problems with the brand new Women's Hospital.

Now, we know that the site has just been opened recently, but nurses there tell us that they have not received adequate orientation and are therefore not able to operate safely in the new facility. We are told that even though there's only been a week of services present, that more deliveries are happening without—only nurses present than ever before.

And very concerningly, there are many code-blues which are not being answered promptly and in some cases not being answered at all. These are, of course, as you well know, Madam Speaker, medical emergencies.

Which new and specific measures will the Premier put in place to address the issues at the new Women's Hospital?

* (14:00)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We accept the preamble in only one respect: that change is

challenging, and I thank the front-line workers in our health-care system for accepting the challenges of change knowing that they want to work in a system that works for Manitoba patients, as do we. That's why we're making the necessary investments, that's why we're hiring more nurses and that's why we'll continue to invest more significantly in health care than virtually any other jurisdiction in the country.

Because, unlike the previous NDP government that spent more and got less, we keep this as our top priority based on getting results for Manitoba patients and families.

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

Spring Flooding Concerns Government Preparations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the only thing we've seen from this Premier is that he fires nurses and then has a tough time hiring them back.

Now, we're also concerned about the issue of flooding in Manitoba next spring. The last time that we have seen fall conditions like this was in 2010—and, of course, we all remember that that led to quite a flood the following year in 2011 which stretched from the spring well into the summer right around the Souris, the Assiniboine, up into the Interlake. Many communities in Manitoba were affected.

At that time, EMO and other officials in government were working flat out from November right through to the 2011 flood season to prepare Manitoba.

What specific measures is the Premier putting in place to prepare for next season's flood possibility?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): More nurses working in the health-care system than ever before with a commitment by this government to invest \$2 billion additional over the next term speaks to our sincere commitment to health care.

In terms of flooding, NDP had four terms, as I recall, to address the issues of flood prevention, for example, in the Interlake area around the Lake Manitoba basin; they did nothing.

Where they failed, we'll get it right.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, in order for the province to be prepared for flooding, the work has to be done each and every flood season.

Now, of course, there have been many investments made over the years to get our province more and more flood ready, but given the soil saturation, given the states of emergency that we've seen declared this fall, given the weather patterns that were visited on many communities—just about a month ago—there are serious warning signs that we are headed for another major flood event next year, which dictates that this government right now with EMO and other departments should be working flat out to get the province ready for the possibility of a major flood.

What assurances can the Premier provide today with great specificity as to the preparations being made to get Manitoba ready in case there is a large flood next year?

Mr. Pallister: Let's talk about contingencies and preparation and foresight.

The NDP inherited a significant amount of money, close to \$1 billion, in a rainy day fund, and then they raided the rainy day fund when it was sunny.

So, Madam Speaker, that's why we put over \$400 million back into the rainy day fund so we have a contingency fund available to help with the issues around flooding, fires and various other sundry disasters.

The NDP had no preparation. We're preparing.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, these are relatively straightforward questions to answer.

It begins to call into question what actually is going on at EMO, who is in charge of EMO these days, questions of that sort. Are they, in fact, working flat out? Are they actually taking every step necessary in order to prepare for the possibility of a spring flood?

Now, we know what this government has done so far. They've underspent the flood mitigation budget by some 54 per cent. They—began the process of selling off Amphibexes, which are needed to clear the ice so that floodwater has some where to drain to.

But with all those changes in mind, the fact that they have begun this process of cutting now that there are storm clouds on the horizon, as it will—as it were, would this minister please update the House as to the

specific direct steps that EMO and his government are taking now to prepare for the possibility of a flood next year?

Mr. Pallister: The member and his party have much more experience in demonstrated competence in creating disasters than they do in preventing them.

The fact that the storm cloud's on the horizon is something that didn't escape our attention. That's why we have added to the rainy day fund for exactly that reason, because ice storms and floods and fires do happen.

The NDP raided the rainy day fund; spent the money on other things; and, Madam Speaker, now rises and claims that we should do more to prevent these circumstances from happening.

So I remind the member that where they were not prepared, we are prepared.

Physician Billing Disputes Doctors' Right to Appeal

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, we agree and doctors agree that in a situation where a doctor has been overpaid, that money should be returned. But the minister has done no consultation with Doctors Manitoba or raised any concerns with them before engaging in this process. Instead, the minister moved ahead with introducing Bill 10, giving doctors no warning.

Why is the minister picking a fight with hard-working Manitoba doctors?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, let's set the record straight. In Manitoba everyone appreciates the work that doctors do for patients every single day of the year. The vast majority of doctors provide excellent service and bill the system appropriately for those services.

Some do not. We need to audit. We need to educate. We're committed to that work.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, Bill 10 removes the right of a doctor to a fair and transparent appeal process to determine if a payment is actually inaccurate. This will leave doctors with no right to provide explanations of their billing or provide an opportunity to address if there is an error. This bill simply presumes that doctors are wrong.

Why is the government removing the right for doctors to appeal?

Mr. Friesen: In Manitoba, there used to be a capacity to look into doctor billing in the system and be able to identify charges where they were made that weren't appropriate. That capacity to look at the system was reduced significantly under the NDP, so much so that in 2015, on over \$700 million of billings, \$7,000 collected.

We believe that an audit function is appropriate and we're attending to it.

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

MLA Asagwara: The minister should be working with doctors to find a solution to issues that is fair and equitable to all. We know consulting is not necessarily a strong suit of this government, but doctors' concerns of changes under Bill 10 deserve to be addressed.

Will the government simply amend Bill 10 to include a fair and impartial process to resolve payment disputes?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, the fact is that they won't take yes for an answer. We've been consulting and listening to doctors for the last eight months, since the original bill was introduced—disappointed that an arrangement couldn't be arrived at until this point. This is simply the—a reintroduction of the same bill.

But I assure all members that the process is ongoing to continue to find a solution that works to ensure that there is accountability in the system and a system that has the trust of doctors.

Health Card Application Delays Impact on New Immigrants

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, recently I and my colleagues have had several constituents report long delays in getting a Manitoba Health card. A process that used to take one week now is reportedly taking eight weeks.

For a government that regularly pats itself on the back for finding so-called efficiencies, this is not very efficient at all for Manitoba families. Many of these constituents are newcomers who have no private health insurance and are at risk of being on the hook for expensive medical bills while they wait for their Manitoba Health card.

Can the minister please inform the House if he's aware of this issue and what is he doing to fix it?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, we're looking into it. We know that people need their health cards. We even helped solve a few problems, just the last few days, to make sure that people have access to those services quickly.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, according to immigration settlement workers, since January of this year there has been a policy change that requires applicants to provide multiple pieces of proof of address in order to now receive a health card. This can be a burdensome obstacle for families who have just immigrated to Manitoba and don't have a permanent address yet.

* (14:10)

More urgently, newcomer parents cannot register their children at school until they have access to Manitoba Health cards.

Can the minister please inform us if there has been a policy change or a new interpretation of an existing policy which requires a permanent address before issuing a health card?

Mr. Friesen: This is a complex issue, but I can remind all members that the complexity in this case actually exists when it comes to the federal government.

There were rule changes more recently by the feds. Our officials are engaged to find solutions to issues that are arising. I can tell you that we've even arbitrated some of these as recently as this week, but the issue is pertaining to federal treatment of the rules which have changed recently.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, some constituents have already had to go for treatment in the hospital without a health card and others have refused to go see a doctor for fear of medical bills. These long delays are hurting newcomer families and putting them at risk for health and financial consequences.

My constituents report that there are four counters currently closed at the Carlton office.

Knowing this government's tendency to leave vacancies open, will the minister please tell the House if these delays are because he is refusing to fill the vacancies in his department?

Mr. Friesen: Had the member listened more closely, she would understand that there are changes that have taken place at a federal level.

Our officials are engaged with the feds to understand how better we can help them to be able to facilitate a quicker delivery of those health cards that people need.

So we continue to make progress on the issue, and we'll continue to strive to make more progress.

Post-Secondary Institutions Government Involvement

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): While many students in our post-secondary institutions are working hard on exams, the Pallister government is using mandate letters to dictate how our post-secondary institutions will operate. They've taken it to extremes, even giving themselves control over every aspect of the institutions, including what classrooms should be built.

Now, it looks like they want every decision about how our post-secondary institutions to be operated right out of the Premier's desk, and it's clear that's not how our post-secondary institutions should be run.

Will this minister and the Premier stop attacking our post-secondary institutions so recklessly?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Training): The member's absolutely wrong.

We have—in the process of drafting letters of consultation to the universities and post-secondary colleges, I can assure members opposite that we have the trust of the universities and that of business altogether into one.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, the Premier has shown his true colours. He wants absolute control and it's just a short—few short years ago, to quote the Premier directly, says, inappropriate and offensive for government to micromanage the programs and purpose and the aspirations of schools across the province.

Well, it looks like this is what Bill 18 has given him. It's given himself total control.

Why is this government saying one thing and doing the exact opposite?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We're working productively together and leading employers. We all

have a shared interest in the success of our graduates. We're aligned with the goal of preparing graduates for careers over the long term by emphasizing the relevant acquisition of skills and knowledge. That's the U of W president and vice-chancellor, Dr. Annette Trimbee, speaking in support of the proposals that we have advanced together.

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

Mr. Moses: You know, the Premier has used the exact opposite language in the past, and we're clearly seeing that this is 'juster' another intimidating power grab, and Bill 18 gives the Premier and the minister total control over our post-secondary institutions, including what classrooms can be built.

I simply want to get an answer as to why the minister and the Premier are saying one thing and doing the exact opposite when it comes to post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, the NDP is well positioned to argue for irrelevance, Madam Speaker, in terms of post-secondary training, but academic leaders aren't taking the same position.

Here's a quote: The university should become one of the engines of economic growth for Manitoba. Education at university and the types of jobs that are necessary in the world today, it's not the same way it used to be. We want to become that university to help students take what they've learned in the classroom to work, to business and to community.

It's not the same as it used to be, Madam Speaker. The NDP should pick up with the times. Incoming U of M president, Michael Benarroch, is—said this, Dr. Trimbee over at the U of W said the same thing and academic leaders across the country are recognizing the need for relevant linkages between job markets and appropriate training at the post-secondary level.

The NDP needs to drop the horse-and-carriage routine and get with the modern age, Madam Speaker. Our students want skills, they want jobs, they want opportunities and they want the training they can get so they can pursue careers right here in Manitoba.

Crown Corporation Governance Concerns Regarding Bill 18

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): The Premier and his government simply cannot get along with anyone. The entire board of Manitoba Hydro resigned. The chair of Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries resigned. Common

complaint: the Premier and his government simply are not listening—and with Bill 18 he doesn't have to. Every decision of our Crown corporations can now be made at the Premier's desk by fiat.

Why has the Pallister government interfered, yet again, in our Crown corporations?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Let me see if we can help clarify the NDP on their own positions.

Yesterday they charged us with the responsibility of intervening in the affairs of Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries in solving the crime problem at liquor stores. Today they say we're intervening unnecessarily. They'll have to clarify in the second preamble what the heck it is that their position really is, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Sala: Bill 18 removes the pretext of an arm's-length relationship between the Premier's office and its Crown corporations.

The Premier and his Finance Minister can direct their plans as they see fit, but as we've seen at MPI, this Premier is more concerned with his own friends and his own interests than what's in the best interests of ratepayers here in Manitoba.

Will the Premier reconsider and do the work to achieve consensus rather than using such a heavy-handed approach?

Mr. Pallister: Well, we got the largest back-to-back majority governments in the history of Manitoba, so we've got friends.

But the NDP keeps losing friends. They reach out for the hearts and minds of rural Manitobans by yelling at CUPE meetings about larger government being the best thing going. They go and they put a bipole line in that cost Manitoba Hydro ratepayers \$1 billion and they don't even ask the people along the route what they think about it. Then they raise the PST after promising they won't. They raise the PST, take money right off the kitchen tables of Manitobans and wonder why they're delegated to the rump they are. The member needs to maybe do a little soul searching over the holiday season. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for St. James, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Sala: I'd like to remind the Premier that the only party in this House that gained seats in the last election is on this side of the House.

Madam Speaker, the Premier misled Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: For years he's called for greater autonomy, yet every move this government has made has been to undermine the decisions of our Crowns, and now they dropped all context—or all pretext.

This legislation makes every decision in our Crown corporations subject to the Premier and his Finance Minister's control. Section 6(4)(m) of the act gives these—the ability to establish any mechanism of control they want at any time. It's heavy-handed and completely contradicts everything this Premier and minister have said they stand for.

Why must the Premier interfere in our Crown corporations?

Mr. Pallister: Why would the NDP promise to give David Chartrand \$70 million from Hydro ratepayers, Madam Speaker? Why would they try to buy influence from the Metis people on the backs of Metis children not being able to exercise their own rights and freedoms? Why would the NDP do that? Because they think it's the road to power.

Keep going. With the rate of progress they've achieved, they'll be in government by 2048.

* (14:20)

Liquor Mart Robbery Repeat Offenders Addiction and Mental Health Services

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): The issue of retail liquor thefts across Manitoba has left citizens and workers feeling as if the law is not being enforced. We met with Liquor Mart workers last week and they made it clear thefts have been out of control for two full years.

While the Justice Minister says there have been arrests, employees told us the arrests and even convictions often don't make a difference. Some had seen the same individual stealing day after day despite his arrests and convictions; in fact, they were on a first-name basis with him.

The Winnipeg Police Service releases, which I table, show that people being arrested are—many are already multiple offenders with multiple convictions.

It's clear from their trials that some are stealing to feed addictions to either drugs or alcohol.

Will the Premier commit to reducing crime by providing effective addictions and mental health support for prisoners to reduce crime and repeat offences?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the rash of crimes at liquor stores and elsewhere in the province is a concern to all of us here, and we all have a vested interest in making sure we address those causes of crime and that we make sure the consequences are real for those who choose to commit crimes, in particular, violent crimes and in particular violent young offenders.

So we'll continue to advance on this issue constructively, addressing both preventative and educational aspects to this at the same time as we address the justice and security side.

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

Individuals Charged with Violent Crimes Reason for Release of Repeat Offenders

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): There is a much more serious side of people being charged and released over and over again. This has been one of the worst years ever in terms of homicides in the city of Winnipeg.

In more than one instance, people alleged to have committed murder this year had already been charged or convicted of violent crimes. I table the details.

We do need to address root causes, especially poverty and addictions to reduce crime; however, violent crime requires a greater level of scrutiny and prevention.

Will the Premier look into why people charged with violent offences are being released back into the community in order to keep Manitobans safe?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): That we have done and will continue to do, Madam Speaker.

The data is concerning and, of course, we want to act and are acting. We're not anything but focused on addressing the problems of crime. Security for law-abiding people in our province is a significant concern to all of us here, and I am sure that we'll be continuing to be open to community ideas, to expert ideas, to the various input mechanisms that we've used and will continue to use to develop policy.

But I want to assure the member that we won't just study it; we'll act on it.

Primary and Post-Secondary Education Government Academic Achievement Plan

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Over the last four years this government has hurt both primary education and post-secondary education here in Manitoba. This government has raised tuition fees, they've removed tuition rebates and they have taken away health coverage for international students.

Now we are seeing that Manitoba students in primary education are last in science and math and second last in reading.

My question for this government is: What are their goals with respect to academics here in Manitoba and how are they going to achieve them?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, the member's wrong in her assertions. The dog whistle they've been blowing on this issue continues to be blown, but it's contradicted by the actual facts.

Our enrolment of international students continues to rise. Manitoba's a great place to come to for anyone who wants to study. It's also a wonderful province to come to for those who want to establish a business or to employ people and create jobs. That's something that's becoming more and more known.

Manitoba was perhaps Canada's best-kept secret for a long time under our previous administration; not anymore, and that's why we lead the country in attracting private sector capital, why we're going to create 40,000 new careers for Manitoba young people, and for all of us here that will be a tremendous benefit.

We'll pursue that with focus, Madam Speaker.

Health-Care Reforms Update on Results

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): This may be the last government question of 2019, so I thought I'd ask something that would leave us all with some cheer in our hearts.

For 17 years the NDP government consistently threw money at the health system and got no results.

Our government is committing to reducing wait times for patients and improving patient care.

Could the Minister of Health please update the House on the recent results published by the Canadian Institute for Health Information?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for Rossmere for that question.

Our government's plan to get better health care sooner has seen significant successes in a number of areas, including emergency wait times, historic lows for waits for personal-care homes and more.

While our province experienced a 16 per cent increase in patient volumes and higher acuity at emergency departments, nevertheless, we saw the length of stay in hospital improve by 25 per cent while Canada's times worsened and, in the WRHA, at the 90th percentile, wait times are down while Canada's wait times went up.

Our government is keeping its promise of getting better health care sooner for all Manitobans.

Financial Reporting Recommendations Statement of Revenue for Budget 2020

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): The Pallister government has made a series of troubling changes in financial reporting that undermine the public's trust. The Auditor General has now twice informed us that the Pallister government is not fairly presenting Public Accounts. Madam Speaker, they're cooking the books.

Now they've gone even further. They're removing statement of revenue from public reporting in the budget.

Will this minister commit to a detailed presentation of the Estimates of revenue in next year's budget?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): This question has been brought up twice already in the House.

We took the advice of the Auditor General and the revenue of Estimates and expenditures in terms—is included in Public Accounts, Madam Speaker. That's advice from the Auditor General that we've taken and we've implemented.

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

Quarterly Financial Reporting Government Intention

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): This minister demands accountability for everyone except himself, and he's been cooking the books. He deleted the detailed Estimates of revenue, and now

this year, for the first time in the history of this province we have a minister who's refused to provide a first-quarter financial report of the Province.

Why has the minister broken this longstanding practice?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): For years the NDP was trying to cover up their financial mismanagement by claiming assets existed that didn't, by claiming assets were worth more than they were and by understating and undervaluing the liabilities of the Province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, those mistakes in management did temporarily cover up the horrible job the NDP were doing, but as those mistakes come to light, people are coming to realize the length, breadth and depth of the incompetence of the previous NDP government.

They broke it. We're fixing it and cleaning it up.

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

Mr. Wasyliw: Well, Madam Speaker, I think the Auditor General may respectfully disagree with the First Minister about who's hiding what. The Auditor General has come to the conclusion that we are actually now in surplus and this government, through some creative bookkeeping, claims that we're in deficit.

So removing Estimates of revenue and now refusing to deliver quarterly reports—I'm going to ask, maybe, the First Minister: Does he intend to deliver a second-quarter financial report and will he restore the practice of quarterly reporting?

Mr. Pallister: I want to be clear in every respect for the member and for all of us in the House: the member has just claimed that we have balanced the books of our Province, and that it's a bad thing. He has said that we should be taking more credit than we are. He has also said that the assets that we have said belong to the farm families of Manitoba, to the working families of Manitoba, should be claimed as our own.

Madam Speaker, I think he's wrong on all counts. Really, we are doing a tremendous job of cleaning up the mess we inherited. We'll continue to do that and Manitobans will understand, as they are beginning to understand, that the road ahead is no longer paved with the potholes the NDP put there. We're patching them up.

Changes to Agricultural Crown Land Leasing Impact on Manitoba Beef Producers

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Madam Speaker, an article in this week's Express Weekly News, which I'll table today, really tells the story we have been raising here for several weeks.

There is a mass exit of beef producers from the industry. Four different families in Ashern are advertising complete herd dispersal. Extreme weather and feed shortages combined with no leadership from the Pallister government broke many family farms.

* (14:30)

Why has this government failed our beef producers?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): Madam Speaker, the member is certainly wrong and certainly has a short memory.

If we go back, we were talking about 2011 flood. That's when they totally walked away from the Interlake and the Westlake area in the middle of the worst flood in—of the century, and the best that they could come up with was the member from Interlake before, Tom Nevakshonoff, said it could have been worse.

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

Mr. Brar: Madam Speaker, the article goes on to explain that the Interlake is seeing some of the biggest auctions it has held over the last 10 years.

It's distressing that we are losing a generation of farmers. The Pallister government's response has been feeble and their timing for fundamental reform to Crown lands was totally inappropriate.

Will the minister pull back his plans for Crown lands and provide the support our beef producers need?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, the member needs to get out in the country a little bit more. We've had six very successful auctions where the—half of those land auctions have gone to young producers.

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

Mr. Brar: I feel like a baby today. I'll share a story here why.

The Minister of Agriculture keeps on saying that our Crown land lease regulation changes are in favour of the young farmers. I would like to share the fact that the young farmer who outbid his nephew recently in one of the auctions is 76 years old. That's why I feel like a baby. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brar: Madam Speaker, producers are seeing incredible uncertainty. This has been one of the most challenging seasons for many, especially in the Interlake—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): If the NDP really cared about farmers and farm families, they wouldn't stand up with the teamsters and encourage a strike that would stop canola from getting to market. Madam Speaker. If they cared about farm families, they'd join with us and fight for a flood outlet who give the lives back to the people in the Interlake.

But they don't do those things, Madam Speaker. The leader just runs out and tells CUPE he wants bigger government.

Tom Nevashonoff's *[phonetic]* right. He says the NDP is destined for irrelevance as long as they don't get back to their rural roots.

But, Madam Speaker, they don't have any rural roots, really. They don't understand the rural roots of our province. I offered the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) a chance to review my back roads of Manitoba book so he could get educated on what the real people outside the Perimeter are looking for, but he still hasn't taken me up on the offer.

Madam Speaker, we know what rural Manitobans want and need, and we're going to keep fighting for it while the NDP fights against it.

Crown Land Leasing Program Parcels of Land Leased

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Well, we got yet one more Christmas present answer to our members opposite and it sounded so good, and I know the minister touched on it, but we're going to just ask for a little more information.

A few months ago our government announced a modernization of the Agricultural Crown Lands Leasing Program. Since then the NDP—who lack an understanding of what goes on outside the Perimeter—have embarked on a campaign of fear, trying to scare Manitoba livestock producers. But as usual, the NDP

spin is far from reality. Multiple agricultural land lease auctions have now been held across Manitoba.

So can the minister elaborate a little more on—from agricultural resource development and update the House on the overwhelming success that this had in rural Manitoba?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): Madam Speaker, I thank the member from Swan River for that excellent question.

While Manitoba farmers are used to receiving a lump of coal from the NDP in their Christmas stockings, our government has given Manitoba ranchers an early Christmas present. Six public auctions, 67 parcels of vacant ag Crown land have been leased to Manitoba ranchers, with half of those parcels going to young producers.

Madam Speaker, our government will stand up for the cattle industry in Manitoba, unlike the NDP, who have no respect for the cattle industry here in Manitoba.

Extreme Drought Conditions Feed Assistance for Cattle Farmers

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): More than a dozen rural municipalities have been suffering from extreme drought in the last couple of years. We have heard from rural councillors that it's possible that two thirds of the cattle herd in the affected municipalities may be at risk—over 100,000 cattle. Madam Speaker, \$135 million in value could be lost, and the multiplier of the—of that loss could be many times that—up to \$900 million.

Will this government commit today to feed assistance to the affected cattle farmers?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, we'll always stand up for our farm families, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lamont: I would like to press the Premier on a slightly more specific answer, if we could, but the estimates of the impact could be in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

There are many cases where this government has ignored or denied problems for many—and taken years to act. The meth crisis comes to mind. We don't want to have the same situation when we have so many farm families who are at the brink and who've been communicating that there are states of emergency.

So would the Premier commit to feed assistance to cattle farmers in need today?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, the federal Liberals, supported by their rump here in Manitoba, stood for higher taxes on farm families just a few months ago, and they also said they wanted to tax the estates of farm families. They're going to make it harder on farm families. We're making it better for farm families.

Speaking of better, Madam Speaker, I wanted to make sure that I wished everyone success and happiness not only here in the Chamber and not only with our staff here, but with all of our government employees around the province and all Manitoba families. I know that all of us wish the very best during this holiday season for Manitobans.

I know that in our 150th birthday celebration next year we'll be celebrating a wonderful province, a wonderful heritage, a wonderful past, and we'll be thankful for what's been given to us by those who came before us.

But I know all of us here will want to re-dedicate ourselves to making sure that as we celebrate together we are also celebrating a wonderful future for all Manitobans and for those who come here from all around the world to this beautiful home of hope, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: And I have a brief statement for the House.

As the House is expected to adjourn later today for our winter break, and as Youth Parliament will be using the Chamber later this month, I would encourage all honourable members to remove the contents of their desks today.

I would further encourage members to recycle as much of the material as possible. The blue bins here in the Chamber are designated for recycling of Hansard only. Any other material you would like to recycle may be placed in the larger recycling containers in the message rooms located just outside the Chamber.

Thank you very much.

PETITIONS

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background on the petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support the system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed for–non-profit early learning and child-care programs have not received new funding–operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living continues to increase annually.

The high-quality–high-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on a child's development, and is a fundamental need for Manitoba families as they contribute to a strong economy.

Financial viability to these programs are in jeopardy and they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving balanced budgets, as operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled–skilled and adequately enumerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable early child care–early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

* (14:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

We urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, non-for-profit child-care programs and recognize the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also provide quality and a stability in the workforce.

Olive Glen [*phonetic*], Dana [*phonetic*] Halcrow, and Steve Zowicki [*phonetic*] and many, many others.

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

Crown Land Leases

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Many farmers, specifically cattle ranchers, will be negatively impacted by the changes to leased Crown land announced by the provincial government on September 27, 2019.

Farmers previously had the ability to strategically plan out the way in which they utilized their leased Crown land.

The announcement reduced leaseholds by 35 years to 15 years, and these changes will create great uncertainty, having the potential to impact an entire farm's operation and even existence.

This uncertainty will take away the incentive for farmers to safely invest in their Crown land leases.

The potential of losing these leases without the afforded time to plan ahead will create additional stress for the current farming generation and the ones to follow.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Agriculture to reconsider the changes to Crown land leases and instead create an agreeable strategy that satisfies all parties, specifically ranchers;

To urge the Minister of Agriculture to recognize the value of agriculture in the province of Manitoba and the value Crown land holds to farmers in sustaining their livelihood;

To urge the Minister of Agriculture and all honourable members to understand the important role farmers play in the Manitoba economy, and to allow them to take part in discussions that directly impact their livelihood.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On House business, I'd like to announce the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet in camera on Tuesday, January 14th, 2020, at 1 p.m. to consider the hiring process for a new Auditor General.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet in camera on Tuesday, January 14th, 2020 at 1 p.m. to consider the hiring process for a new Auditor General.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call report stage amendments on Bill 7? Following the conclusion of those, please call concurrence and third reading on Bill 7. Following that, could you please call debate for second readings on Bills 4, 9, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider report stage amendments for Bill 7, followed by concurrence and third reading of Bill 7, followed by second reading of Bills 4, 9, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Bill 7—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence)

Madam Speaker: So, therefore, we will move to the first item and that is the report stage amendments of Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence).

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard),

THAT Bill 7 be amended in Clause 3 by replacing clause (a) of the definition "interpersonal violence" in the proposed subsection 59.11(1) with the following:

(a) domestic violence, being violence that occurs when a person is subjected to an act or omission mentioned in subsection 2(1.1) of *The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act* by another person who

(i) is co'-hibiting'-'-habitating' or is 'cohabitated' with another—with the person in a spousal, conjugal or intimate relationship,

(ii) has or had a family relationship with the person, in which they have lived together,

(iii) has or had a family relationship with the person, in which they have not lived together,

(iv) has or had a dating relationship with the person, whether or not they have ever lived together, or

(v) is the other biological or adoptive parent of their child, regardless of their marital status or whether they have ever lived together;

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux), seconded by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence), is amended by

THAT Bill 7 be amended in Clause 3 by replacing clause (a) of the definition "interpersonal violence" in the proposed subsection 59.11(1) with the following:

(a) domestic violence, being violence—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Ms. Lamoureux: It is a pleasure to stand once again to speak to Bill 7.

I will reiterate that it is necessary that survivors of domestic violence are fully supported, and I am pleased that this bill has been brought forward as a step forward to fulfilling that goal.

Manitoba has definitely lagged when it comes to protecting our most vulnerable. As it stands, the definition of interpersonal violence in the Employment Standards Code refers to persons as him or her, or as his or her. Domestic violence, sadly, is not an act that is limited to strictly heterosexual or other typically cisgendered relationships.

If Bill 7 is going to truly support and protect all Manitobans, it must reflect those protections for the gender-diverse members of our society, which it cannot do for our two-spirited, non-binary, gender-fluid or transgender people with the references to him or her or his or her in it.

The amendment I propose would maintain the intent of the bill while expanding it to protect those who do not identify as male or female. I hope that we can unanimously agree that the bill should cover all Manitobans, regardless of their gender identity.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I should have indicated that the report stage amendment is in order.

Are there any further members wishing to speak on the amendment?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): It really is a pleasure to be able to speak today to The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, which is Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence.

You know, the member opposite brought forward this—these amendments, and it's very important to us as a government to ensure that there is a gender neutrality in bills, especially this bill.

I just returned from the federal-provincial-territorial meeting of ministers responsible for the status of women just early this morning, Madam Speaker, and it was an important topic that we discussed around the entire table. So ministers from coast to coast to coast have the ability to actually share their comments and the importance of ensuring gender neutrality as we move forward.

You know, we did hear from two youth panels there and they talked about poverty, economic opportunity, health and well-being and the challenges that many of those people from the LGBTQ community face each and every day, so it really is important that we include them in this bill. And this is a big step forward as we move forward with this legislation.

I'd also like to say that this is going to be the very first bill that I hope will receive a unanimous, you know, vote together here today in the Chamber and consensus which will actually be the very first bill that will pass royal assent today.

So I do hope that we will have consensus from all members in the Chamber here today to support this very important work that we do to ensure that women are provided leave at some of the very most darkest and desperate times in their lives.

We want to recognize on this side of the Chamber that women deserve to be provided this leave. It's leave that they can use for counselling, to seek legal services, medical treatment, not only for them but also for their dependent children who have been exposed to interpersonal violence or who have witnessed it.

* (14:50)

So this is a big step forward, Madam Speaker, and I'm very proud of our government for bringing it forward and thanks to the member opposite for the amendments to ensure that we have gender neutrality.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Briefly, I just want to thank the MLA for Tyndall Park for bringing forward this important amendment and make sure that

all Manitobans are covered in the consideration of domestic violence.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment? Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is the report stage amendment on Bill 7, moved by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux).

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

I declare the amendment carried.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 7—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence)

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 7, the employment standards amendment act—oh, okay—I apologize. I would like to start again, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence), reported from the Standing Committee on Human Resources and subsequently amended, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Cox: Madam Speaker, and I am so pleased to rise today for the third reading of Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

This bill makes a variety of amendments to The Employment Standards Code, which expands eligibility of existing protected domestic violence leave to include all types of sexual violence and stalking, regardless of the employer's relationship to the perpetrator.

Acknowledging the wide-reaching impacts of interpersonal violence, the changes further extend these protections to employees who are the caregiver of a child or an adult, who has been the victim of domestic violence or has witnessed domestic violence or stalking.

As with the existing domestic violence leave where sexual violence or stalking has occurred, employees in Manitoba will be able to take leave for the purposes of seeking medical attention, counselling services, legal assistance or perhaps to provide them the opportunity to relocate, not only for themselves or for a child or adult who is in their care.

These changes will protect job leaves, which were introduced under the former bill and aligned with the current protections for vulnerable employees found in other Canadian jurisdictions.

I know that the province of BC, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and PEI have also adopted these amendments to the legislations. It's important that Manitoba also ensure that all of our women and children, individuals, two-spirited, LGBTQ community—all individuals in Manitoba have the opportunity to be protected under this new legislation.

The changes will also complement the recent changes to the recent amendment to The Residential Tenancies Act, which also allowed for the termination of residential tenancy agreements where a resident's safety is at risk due to domestic violence, sexual violence, interpersonal violence or stalking.

And, lastly, the expanded protections afforded to vulnerable employees are a part of this government's co-ordinated commitment to addressing the high rates of gender-based violence experienced in Manitoba, including the establishment of the very first cross-Canada gender-based violence committee of Cabinet.

I'm very appreciative of all of the members of this House for supporting this bill unanimously. It does talk about the importance of ensuring that victims in Manitoba are provided the resources and the opportunity to take time off when they are, in fact, suffering through some of the deepest and darkest times in their lives.

This is the only bill that will be receiving royal assent this session, and it really speaks to our government's recognition of how important it is that we provide these important leave and important opportunities for all persons to be able to take this leave that is indicated in this bill, but also to ensure that they have healthy families and healthy communities.

We've also added \$2.4 million, just recently announced, in counselling services, which was provided to Clinic and Laurel Centre recently to

ensure walk-in counselling services for women and persons who are facing domestic violence.

We've also, for the first time, put forward counselling services and a trauma intake centre over at Laurel Centre to ensure that those individuals who have faced trauma as a result of sexual violence have the ability to receive those services that are so important for them.

And I would like to put on record that Clinic–Nicole Chammartin indicated that it has been decades since they have ever received any type of funds to assist with counselling. This is historic, Madam Speaker; \$2.4 million to provided more women and girls the ability to receive that very important counselling so that they can ensure that they have healthy families and then, in fact, healthy communities.

So I'm very pleased to be able to support this bill, and to have been able to introduce this bill, and to see it now to third reading, and later on today to receive royal assent.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this bill? Is the House ready for the question—oh.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Bill 7 moves the province in the right direction, certainly, by opening up leave for all victims of interpersonal violence, and we certainly support this amendment to the Employment Standards Code.

However, I think it's really important to talk about the realities of the resources that folks who access that leave would also need in community, so beyond—you know, beyond what it means to have time away from employment to take care of oneself and one's family and make the necessary provisions around mental health and wellness and physical safety and all these other things.

You know, in order to do a lot of that, folks really require timely and appropriate—whether that's culturally appropriate, whether that's in terms of, you know, financially appropriate and accessible, community appropriateness in terms the resources that folks really need to be able to access during what would be a very difficult time in any person's life.

And so, you know, fundamentally we do call on this government to put more funding into resources like community-based organizations, put more funding into the resources that folks would really need to access in order to be able to get the most opportunity

to heal, most opportunity to take care of their overall wellness, most opportunity to establish supports and a strong network within—whether it's their family, their friend, chosen family so that, you know, when they return to employment, they have an infrastructure in place where they can be as successful as possible.

And, you know, foundationally you can, you know, we can all agree—we all agree that Bill 7 is so critically important, but we do also need to be able to concretely identify the realities of some of the cuts that we've seen under this government in terms of community resources. You know, this government has cut supports all over the province to services that were in place, actually, to help victims of what this bill calls interpersonal violence.

So, you know, the cuts that have been made by this government—some of the cuts that have been made by this government, rather—actually directly impact and impede the ability of victims to be able to do what they need to in community to get prepared to return to work, but also just to have a quality of life that enables them to be well overall.

* (15:00)

What I'm speaking to specifically, I can name some examples. You know, an example would be, you know, the government cutting supports from the North Point Douglas women's resource centre, a resource centre that is situated in a constituency and an aspect of our province that sees incredibly high rates of poverty, a lot of challenges in the area that community members have been, you know, working collaboratively in order to address, but really need funding from government in order to be able to have the basic resources in place that, you know, help communities be well.

Another example would be the government rejected a proposal for a 24-hour safe space for LGBTQ2S people. And I can appreciate that the minister, you know, did mention the importance of—to us LGBTQ folks having the resources that they need and being supported and respected as whole people in our communities.

But, again, you know, saying that, making those statements while simultaneously rejecting a proposal that would provide, you know, 24-hour safety for folks within a very targeted and marginalized community, at times, doesn't really—doesn't make a whole lot of sense in terms of folks being able to be well, not only in the long term, but really in the short term.

You know, if these situations that arise that, unfortunately, you know folks are subjected to in terms of interpersonal violence, of all types of violence, disproportionately can impact communities that are already very targeted and marginalized. And the reality of it is that many communities that are already targeted and marginalized lack the resources that they need, lack the appropriate resources that they need, just generally.

And so, you know, to implement Bill 7, and definitely move our province in the right direction, we need to also recognize the communities that are currently going without adequate resources to address their very basic needs, and address their very basic human rights, never mind get the most that they can out of accessing a leave, but a leave like this would actually allow them, which is great, but we need to have honest conversations about this government's lack of funding and underfunding of resources that would actually allow people to get the most out of this.

So, you know, for many survivors of interpersonal violence, supports within centres like the North Point Douglas women's resource centre, supports like a 24-hour-7 safe space. Bills like Bill 202, which I introduced in this House just—how long ago was that now? Maybe a week ago? Two weeks ago? It's all kind of blending together, the time, but that I introduced very recently in this House.

You know, those are centres, those are initiatives, you know, that's a potential piece of legislation that would, you know, present an opportunity for all of us to ensure that folks who are very targeted and marginalized know that they have the support of, not only this government, but all members of this House.

And so I want to use this opportunity in talking about Bill 7 to also talk about how we actually, in not supporting—whether it's fully supporting community resources like North End—North Point Douglas, rather, women's resource centre, like a 24-hour-7 safe space, like Bill 202, we actually undermine the spirit of what this bill is trying to do, in a sense.

We can't say, you know, collectively, I—oh, I'm hoping that we'll actually say collectively that a bill, for example, like Bill 202, which would allow gender non-binary folks, trans folks, or whomever, is anywhere on, you know, the gender identity spectrum, to select an identifier for their identification that reflects their true identity.

That is something that, you know, we know is—that is a basic human right, and that is something that,

you know, if a bill like that is adopted and supported by all members of this House, that speaks to acknowledging the importance of legislation like this, enhancing the quality of life for all members of our communities.

You know, that means that somebody who, thanks to Bill 7, is able to access leave from work and take care of their needs can also go and access other resources with a form of identification that actually reflects their true identity.

You know, if we can't make decisions and support, you know, other pieces of legislation like Bill 202, then what we're actually doing is perpetuating barriers and harms for targeted and marginalized demographics who face challenges and barriers in accessing the very systems we're saying they should be able to, should they need to, you know, take a leave from work due to, you know, very troubling and challenging circumstances in life.

So one of the things that I also wanted to talk a bit about in regards to Bill 7 and things that we should be taking into consideration, outside of just this piece of legislation, which we all supported, is the educational aspect of it.

So, in terms of making sure that this bill and what it allows folks to be able to access in terms of leave from employment, its visibility—its general visibility and accessibility for folks who may benefit from this.

And not only is it, you know, visibility for folks to read their employee handbooks, for example—you know, we—you start a job, or you're at a workplace and there's—a memo goes out saying this is a new piece of legislation, this is something you can access under these circumstances.

That's all well and good, but there's also the aspect of it in terms of education surrounding—well above and beyond, actually, how we would identify or outline these different types of harassment or violence or stalking in an employee-type handbook. You know, not everybody reads the same statement and has the same interpretation or understanding of what is presented.

You know, I've worked for, you know, well over a decade as a nurse. I've worked as an addictions specialist. A lot of my work was directly with families, directly with youth, directly with folks who, you know, were victims of, you know, types of violence that are outlined here. Victims of stalking; you know, I have people in my life that I'm friends with, that I'm

close to, who have unfortunately gone through those experiences.

And the interesting thing that I always found, you know, working in community and working with families, working with individuals of all ages, of all backgrounds, of all extractions, was the wide range of how people interpret stalking or violence or abuse or harassment—that even though it may be spelled out and written out within the context of, you know, an employee handbook or in legislation or in a campaign or commercials, however it is presented—how it is interpreted for each individual person, how it is measured, varies greatly.

And so my hope would certainly be that there is a concerted effort from folks being very young, actually, to learn about and to understand the different types of harassment and violence and sexual violence and stalking beyond the definition of these terms, beyond how it's described in any given handbook, or on a poster or in a commercial or any form of, you know, typically presenting this information and making it visible and—so that folks are aware.

You know, making sure that folks of communities where maybe English isn't—or, French aren't first languages, how are we making sure that folks of all communities know exactly what this content means, know exactly what, you know, how we define these things in our province, in our country, and how that can manifest itself in relationships.

You know, there are terms that, you know, in one language mean something completely different—may translate, you know, the same but actually have a different meaning.

There are lots of things to consider in terms of how we inform and educate folks about all of this, and it's certainly a great task. It's a big task, but it's so, so, so important to make sure that this information, and that access to this kind of legislation and protection and leave from work is equitably accessible for all people who may need it and who have the capacity to access it.

*(15:10)

So, you know, I briefly mentioned, you know, education from when folks are small. That's so, so important. You know, it's not a matter until folks are in junior high, or high school, or in the workplace.

You know, for myself—and I know times have changed, you know, very, very quickly. Even in the last few years we've seen conversations around

stalking and harassment and violence and rape culture, and consent culture, toxic masculinity, you know, privilege, white privilege, white supremacy—all of these things, all of these conversations and terms are now more top of mind and top of surface for folks, and that's a good thing.

It's a good thing, but it's something that people shouldn't have to wait until they're well into adulthood to learn about all of these things and have conversations about all of these things and how they impact different communities and individuals and how they're expressed and all of that.

And so the hope would be that, you know, in introducing this piece of legislation, which is a good piece of legislation, that we do our due diligence in providing education to youth, you know, to get them started young in terms of learning the language around this and having those conversations much younger. And, you know, folks in this Chamber taking the lead in providing this information to their constituencies, and making sure the youth have access to this information.

We can all be ambassadors and share information and knowledge with folks in our communities, where, you know, hopefully we have strong relationships with our constituents and a good understanding of the needs of our constituents and can present this information and education in a way that it is accessible and meaningful and long-lasting.

And, you know, going back and talking about the importance of informing and educating youth: you know, we talk a lot about, especially in mental health, you know, especially in the, you know, addictions field, or however you want to call it, especially when we're talking about wellness, specific to, you know, how we address issues around harassment and violence and sexual violence and rape culture and toxic masculinity and all of these things, and racism and discrimination and anti-black racism and anti-indigenous racism; we talk about all of these things.

You know, they can be really touchy subjects and that's, you know, language that I hear—that I've been hearing a lot over the last few years. Those are touchy subjects. But those are subjects that become much more easy to navigate when we reduce the stigma around having those conversations. When we present that information to folks at a very early age, what we're saying that, you know, there shouldn't be stigma around talking about these things.

There shouldn't be stigma about talking about abuse or harassment or sexual violence. There shouldn't be any shame attached to those conversations. And in that way, you know, as kids grow up, they're able to express themselves and their experiences in a manner that is stigma-free, hopefully, and without shame and without guilt or any of those things.

It's simply a matter of understanding the information and being equipped with that information and education in order to make good, healthy choices, respectful choices about your own self, your own autonomy, your own body, your own health and wellness, and your own resource.

And so, ultimately, you know, there's a part of me that wants to get into conversation right now about, you know, Bill 7 and the importance of, you know, really fundamentally talking about how we make sure that folks who have the least amount of access to resources—folks who have the least amount of privilege, you might say—folks who experience the most amount of discrimination, barriers in systems, barriers in the workplace, barriers, you know, navigating the world: how do we make sure that those folks, you know, who maybe, you know, they're in a position in their employment where they deal with challenges in the workplace that would make it uncomfortable for them to want to even come forward and access a piece of important policy like this.

How do we make sure that folks who feel like their employment is precarious, you know, feel safe and comfortable to be able to access what would be policy based on Bill 7? You know, when—if we can do our due diligence in making sure that this type of legislation is equitably implemented and equitably shared and dispersed in terms of information and education, in a manner that sees people who are most, most disproportionately disadvantaged by the systems that they may work in.

If we can do that, then this will be something that benefits everybody incredibly well. And I think that should really be the measure of—although, you know, it's successful, if it's something that even one person can access well and take care of themselves in their life. It is something where we should be looking at the realities of folks who, you know, for any number of reasons, would have a more difficult time even being able to access something like this in their workplace.

And I think that if, you know, there's some way to, you know, follow up with employers and follow up with folks to understand the lived experience of what

it means to access something like this, then, you know, we can make sure that in the long run it's something that really serves as many Manitobans who may need to use it as well as possible.

And so I think I'd like to spend my last, you know, couple of minutes really commending, kind of echoing, what the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) said earlier in her statement, really commending all of the people who provide care and service and resource for those who are affected by harassment and stalking and a wide, varying range of violence; for—commending those folks who go with very, very little resources from this government and still show up and deliver services and get really creative about how to support all people who take a leave from work due to something like this; all people who are struggling with challenges around, you know, violence and abuse and harassment and stalking.

I really want to commend those organizations that are—you know, many of which I've heard from who are struggling right now due to lack of resources, due to lack of funding, and I want to commend them for their hard work and commitment to serving community and serving folks as well as they possibly can.

And I want to, you know, commend all survivors who are making their voices heard, who are—you know—getting through these challenging times and lend my support to them.

So, thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this bill?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, this is an important bill, and it is essential that we move and move to do what we can to decrease violence in—violent crime in Manitoba and that we work well and comprehensively to specifically address violence, domestic violence, in particular against women.

Manitoba, as we know and recognize, has the highest ranking—which is the worst ranking—on the violent-crime severity index of all of Canada, and that we have this high rate of violence, which is more than double the national average. And it's simply unacceptable that this is happening here in Manitoba.

I don't believe that Manitobans are worse people than in other provinces or are more violently inclined than other provinces, but I believe that there are some

factors which we clearly need to address and to address vigorously. And that is one of the reasons why we will be supporting this bill and supporting it strongly.

Not only do we have the most violent province, but we have, in Winnipeg, the most violence—large city in Canada. And we have, in—Thompson, Portage la Prairie and Selkirk among Canada's most dangerous cities. When there is violence at this level in our province, it's important to address comprehensively the fundamental causes of violence, which is addressed disproportionately against women.

* (15:20)

One of the critical issues is poverty, and we have a review of the poverty strategy later on this afternoon at a committee level. It's quite apparent that we're still not where we need to be.

It is curious that the Conservative government has scheduled this committee at a time when there's a press gallery get-together—so that, I would expect, none of the journalists would be able to attend and report on what is happening. It is a curious way of covering up the lack of attention to poverty, but hopefully we will get attention to poverty in spite of the attempt by the government to cover up the problems.

Another major issue is homelessness. We have, as we all know, a significant issue with homelessness in Manitoba. And it is—from what we know this year, and as our Liberal leader has spoken about, there are numerous people who are homeless, who are hanging out under bridges and in various other places in Winnipeg.

It won't go away, the problem of homelessness, by itself. It needs some leadership from the Province. And that leadership has been lacking for many years. The situation has not improved. It continues to exist and it continues to be very troublesome.

One of the odd things that the current government has done when it comes to homelessness is to have the young people who are aging out of care, who are in Child and Family Services. Instead of making sure that there's a transition plan and they are adequately supported, they—the province has been using dollars from a homelessness initiative to find homes for people who are aging out in care.

And that, in spite of the fact that the homelessness program is supposed to be dedicated to those who

have been chronically homeless, not to people who have been—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Just a reminder to the member that the bill before the House is on The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act. And I would urge the member that he's straying somewhat from the content of the bill, and I would ask if he could try to connect his comments right now to what bill is on the floor for debate.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, in fact this is directly relevant because we're talking about the origins of violence against women, and therefore the need to have these Employment Standards Code changes which are present in this act to make sure that women who are supported, because many of the women who are affected are women who are disproportionately or have been homeless or poor or with addictions or with mental illnesses.

Madam Speaker, there is a report recently—and I mention this because, again, it is important when we're dealing with violence against women, that among those who are homeless I am led to believe that there's a recent report which shows about half of the people have some sort of a brain injury.

And this, again, is important because when we're looking at violence against women as the—my colleague has already mentioned, that we are often looking at it disproportionately against those who are marginalized. And those who are marginalized often are people who have mental or brain health issues, in terms of a brain injury.

And so we need to make sure that the supports and the understanding is there to address this. It is similarly true that when we're talking about people who are struggling, and where there may be a disproportionate level of victimization is among those who have learning disabilities.

Nutrition is very critical to make sure that people are helped, and so we need to address the broad issues that related to violence against women. And this is particularly important when we're recognizing today the 30th anniversary of the Montreal massacre.

But these changes which we're dealing with in this bill which deal with employment standards to make sure that people who are—manage to get a job are able to get protection, are able to get additional leave, when in fact they experience the violence against them.

And it is important that we are supporting people who are victims, and to make sure that they do not, as a result of being victimized, end up poor or homeless or with addictions or with other problems.

And that is why it is so important that we have support for people who have been victimized, including the support which we are dealing with here in this legislation. It is sad that governments in the last three decades have largely failed to implement a comprehensive approach to reducing violence and violent crime, and particularly violence against women here in Manitoba. Such an approach is badly needed.

It is notable that under the current Conservative government that the violent crime severity index has risen. In other words, the situation has got worse and we are having—experiencing more violence under this government over the last two years than we were at the time that this government was elected.

It is important to recognize that when we are dealing with supporting—as we are in this bill—those who have been victims of domestic violence, it is important that we send signals in everything we do that matches the words that we speak in terms of preventing violence and supporting people.

Let me give you an example. Not long ago, there was a woman in the Tyndall Park liquor store, and she was assaulted. She was a victim of violence. Now she would not be covered by this legislation, and so it raises the question of should we actually have broadened the legislation so that when there is violence against a woman, as happened in the Tyndall Park store, we would make sure that she is covered.

Now it may be that the Manitoba liquor commission which oversees that liquor store has been generous in its treatment of the—their employer—employee who was so injured in Tyndall Park. And—but we would like to make sure that all situations like that are covered. And we would hope that in the future, perhaps, we will have legislation to make sure that it's not just violence, domestic violence against women that is covered, but it is more broader.

And we also want to make sure that the legislation covers not just women, but it covers interpersonal violence. And that means not just including women, but including men, but it also means including people who have other genders, who are binary or trans, or various members of the larger LGBTQ community.

* (15:30)

And so that's why I was delighted that the MLA for Tyndall Park is—was ready to bring forward an amendment to make sure that everybody is included, because that is a significant and positive contribution.

This legislation, which covers employment, needs to be part of a larger basket of measures to reduce violence and, in particular, domestic and interpersonal violence. I would say that this is an area which I have been concerned about for quite some time, and one of the reasons that I have had this particular personal interest arises out of long discussions over many years with my sister-in-law Nikki, who lives in Saskatoon, and who has worked in this field and contributed in trying to prevent violence as a psychologist; but she's also contributed academically with important research into the nature of interpersonal and intimate partner violence, and areas where we can act to address and reduce such violence.

It is of significant and vital importance that here we are, thirty years after the Montreal massacre, and yet we still have a significant issue of intimate partner and domestic violence and we, quite frankly, as I talked earlier on, we, in this province, need to take responsibility for the fact that we have one of the highest levels of such violence, certainly the highest level of any province in Canada.

And so, if there is going to be a solution—and there are solutions—we need to be front and centre in implementing those solutions and in making sure that women—indeed, anybody who is the victim of intimate partner domestic violence—can be supported.

I would say that one of the things about this bill that also could have been looked at: The bill talks about intimate partner violence; it talks about people who have a dating relationship. It doesn't necessarily define a dating relationship, and so there could be some question. Is that the first date, or is that the—does somebody have to have been out on dates a number of times before they would be covered by this act?

What happens if somebody goes to a party, and in the process of being at the party, it becomes the victim of a violent act? The defining relationships at a party, where people have met for the first time, may not necessarily be simple, but maybe this, also, should be looked at and maybe this should be covered.

The MLA for Tyndall Park shared with me her experience that it was quite common for there to be violence at parties over the last few years, violence, probably in part because people had been drinking.

And maybe we continue on and accept that this is going to be a common occurrence, or maybe it's something that we need to look at because it is those episodes of violence at parties which, unfortunately, can sometimes lead to devastating or catastrophic effects, with people being injured, or even killed, in the worst circumstances.

So I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that it is, in fact, really important that this be a part of a larger effort and that we have an effort in which we more closely monitor the records we gather in terms of violent crime.

We get reports of, for example, murders. We are on track in terms of a record number of homicides in Manitoba this year, and yet, we also have other data which deals with property crimes and interpersonal violence and so on, that somehow, year by year goes by, and the number, the trajectory, doesn't particularly improve.

So we need to make sure that, in fact, we are doing something that is effective, and that we are, in fact, getting closer to a goal in which we have a less violent society. We want to get closer to a goal where four of our communities—Winnipeg, Thompson, Portage la Prairie—are no longer among the most dangerous cities in Canada. We don't accept that this is acceptable. We don't accept inaction.

We believe that there needs to be clear, fundamental changes and action, and that part of this broader picture of action, as well as sending a signal to people who are victims of interpersonal or domestic violence, that we're going to support you if you're employed. Instead of acting in this fashion alone, we need to make sure that we start earlier on with addressing more effectively measures to prevent and address and decrease mental health issues earlier on, as well as addictions and use of meth, as an example.

And so, recently, the government is to be supported in providing an effort, a pilot project, in a few schools. I think it's Steinbach and Portage la Prairie and Brandon. But it is our view, as Liberals, that, in fact, the effort should be province-wide, and, in fact, it is sad that of those few schools with the pilot, it only covers one of the four most dangerous communities in Manitoba, and surely we should've done better.

There are options being used elsewhere for education in terms of mental health and in terms of addictions and in terms of substances like meth. There are options which are being used elsewhere, which we are being very slow to take up and use here

in Manitoba, and I believe that that is part of the reason why we are not doing nearly as well as we should be doing when it comes to addressing these issues.

I have talked with numerous people when it comes to one of the important precursors of this violence, and that is addictions and the help for people who are addicted to meth or to alcohol. And I was talking just recently to Kim Longstreet in Brandon, and she was emphasizing the importance of making sure you have continuity of help for people so that there are not gaps where people can, you know, revert to drinking or taking meth or whatever the problem—particular problem is.

* (15:40)

And this is something that I have believed strongly for some time, and I have talked with others in other circumstances who have also emphasized the importance of this continuity, in terms of where people are being—and how people are being supported, and that we can't just go through detoxification and then just wait a while before we go onto the next step; that people have to go smoothly and continuously from one step to another in terms of the treatment that's being provided.

Madam Speaker, it is a significant bill. I am pleased to be able to have the opportunity to talk about it today. I want to say thank you to staff who are here for the contributions during this session, including the Speaker for your leadership. I want to wish everybody a really good holiday season, whatever your faith is. It is a time when we can enjoy family and friends and celebrate a little bit.

But it is also a time when we need to remember that there are others who are not so fortunate. And that in helping others now is more—a very a critical time, as is immediately after the holiday season, for helping people and making sure that people who are marginalized, people who are poor, people who are—have addictions, people who are homeless, are supported. And that we look at ways and try to better understand what is happening with people in our province.

I give you an illustration. I was talking recently with a fellow who is on Employment and Income Assistance, and his daughter is currently up north, but she is able to come down and visit him periodically. But he was telling me the problem he has is that the cost of that flight which he must pay for is, I think, \$377, if I remember.

He was able to put together from all sources for a month, after looking after his lodgings, \$381 from his EIA. That left him \$4 to survive on food for a whole month. And that is tough when you are poor and you have to make a decision about whether you eat or whether you are able to have a visit with your daughter.

And somehow we need to be thinking about what the real life of people is, and what the real needs of people. And one of the real needs, I believe, of people when we're talking about this holiday time, is to be able to spend time with family and with friends, and we need to be thinking what that means. What that means in making sure that people will be able to visit with their family and friends.

And I would say that one of the things that we need to address in this respect, and where there is a disproportionate level of homelessness and violence is, in fact, in people who have been in the care of Child and Family Services. Children who are taken away from their parents. And we know that, sadly, disproportionately they end up in difficult circumstances.

And I have been working with quite a number of families. And, in fact, I know of two families where they are not sure at this point that they're going to be able to see their child. One case is the child has been taken away and the case is before the courts, and the parents have a pretty good case, but they're not being allowed to see their child.

And in another, there are visits being allowed, but the costs of those visits is significant because they, according to a court ruling, they have to pay a significant amount of money to make sure that the mother can transport the child so that the father can—has seen the child and have some time for the child, and there needs to be some supervision, but it all adds up to money and uncertainty about whether a visit with a child can actually be afforded.

So we need to be, I suggest, thankful about the position which we are here in as MLAs, but mindful of the difficult circumstances of many, many others in Manitoba, and it is in thinking about those who are marginalized that we are trying—who are caught up in domestic and interpersonal violence, who we need to be particularly concerned.

So I'm pleased that this bill is being passed. I do believe that we need to go further, and I hope that in the next year when we come back within the next session that we will be able to take this effort

significantly further than we've been able to achieve today.

So I wish everybody a happy holiday and all the best with their family, friends, as we end this session.

Thank you.

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): On November 25, 2015, so four years ago, the Province introduced proposed—introduced and proposed new legislation that would provide paid leave, job protection for victims of domestic violence.

In 2015 this was a groundbreaking change to the Employment Standards Code. It gave victims of domestic violence the right to time off work without fear of job loss. It gave employees a new leave for long-term illness and injury, and it extended the length of leave for compassionate care.

This legislation on November 25, 2015, was announced by then Labour and Immigration Minister Erna Braun. Then-Minister Braun said: When there is violence at home you shouldn't have to worry about holding on to your job as you escape and rebuild.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

At that time in 2015, Manitoba was a leader, and other provinces soon followed with this proposed first-in-Canada legislation. It ensured that victims of domestic violence would have financial security, job protection and the flexibility to take time away from work in order to recover from violence.

The 2015 legislation proposed that employees who are victims of domestic violence would be entitled to take a leave of absence in a broad range of circumstances, including up to 10 days to use intermittently or consecutively, as needed. There was also a provision for an additional continuous period of leave of up to 17 weeks.

These proposed leaves would be available in each 52-week period each year and up to five days of leave for being paid. Many of these proposals were actually taken from informed suggestions from a nationwide survey that was done by the Canadian Labour Congress, and that survey was called *Can Work Be Safe, When Home Isn't?*

This survey, by the Canadian Labour Congress, found that a significant number of workers experience domestic violence and that the violence actually follows people to work, putting their jobs and workplace safety at risk.

* (15:50)

Then secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Labour Congress, Barb Byers, was quoted: Everyone deserves to be safe and supported at work.

Fast forward to four years later, our collective understanding regarding issues relating to gender, violence, bullying, sexual harassment, sexual assault, as well as the prime importance of learning about concepts like being trauma informed, especially for folks who work in education, in public health, the community as a whole. It's changing and it's indeed expanding.

So Bill 7, which we are pleased to support, provides important amendments and important updates to definitions that address our changing and expanding understanding of issues relating to gendered violence, and these updates are in keeping with the original intent of the legislation passed by the NDP.

For instance, instead of using the term domestic violence, Bill 7 expands our understanding to interpersonal violence, which captures domestic violence, stalking and sexual violence.

Another example of an important update that this proposed amendment brings forward is in subsection 59.11(3.1) in recognizing that children who are exposed to a family member being a victim of interpersonal violence can be traumatized and may need counselling or other treatment. There is a provision in Bill 7 that would allow an employee to take leave to obtain counselling for their child in such a case, despite the fact that the child was not directly victimized.

And this is an example of how educators, public health workers and, indeed, legislators are now aware of the concept of being trauma-informed and how trauma can negatively affect our well-being for a long time and also affect our families, and especially our children. We will support this bill on this side of the House because this proposed bill does, indeed, take these important concerns into account.

Another important proposed amendment includes subsection 59.11 section 3, which is a change that will allow employees to take a leave for multiple purposes where a person they are responsible for was a victim of domestic violence.

Currently, the only purpose that an employee can take leave for, where the victim is other than themselves, is to seek medical attention for their child, but this proposed amendment would have that dependents, for example, an adult with a disability in

the employee's care, you could also potentially take leave for to take care of that kind of dependent.

We will support this bill on this side of the House because this proposed bill does, indeed, take these important concerns into account.

Other than that, definitions like dependent and interpersonal violence, these have all been expanded to be updated over the last four years.

Those proposed amendments I've listed are the main differences between the existing act, as we know it, and the changes that Bill 7 proposes. Other than that, there would be no other change and, for those reasons, we are, on this side of the House, very encouraged by these proposed amendments and would be happy to support these proposals.

Thank you.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Bill 7, Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, it talks about domestic violence. It talks about broadening the eligibility for current domestic violence leave. It talks about interpersonal violence and it talks about expanding the eligibility for leave to the people who are affected by such kind of violence.

I would say that Bill 7 is a step towards right direction. But, when we talk about such amendments, it opens us to the options to discuss these issues deeply. It takes us to the situations where we have an opportunity to understand what's happening around and how we can address those particular issues; how we can fix the problems in our society, in our families, in our organizations; and how we can prevent them to happen.

I think there are always two ways to go: prevention and cure. While this bill talks about helping those who have been impacted by domestic violence or interpersonal violence, we need to think about why at all this happens. We need to think about how we can create an environment where there are very few cases of domestic violence in this society, where there are very few cases of interpersonal violence in our workplaces, in our offices, in organizations. We need to work on both fronts.

Why domestic violence happens? If I talk about just women who are abused at home, that won't be enough. There could be kids being abused at home; there could be seniors being abused at home; there could be men being abused at home. And this also applies to the workplaces.

Whenever we try to address such serious issues or problems in this society, we either go the education way or we go towards enforcement way. Both are equally important.

But, if we emphasize more on the education part of the things, then we can prevent the damage that could be done in the coming days. We need to educate our families; we need to educate our employers; we need to educate our seniors; we need to educate our youth, our kids, at an early stage: what domestic violence means, what sexual violence means, and how you identify and how you face or deal with such situations.

* (16:00)

In this diverse country, where we're talking about introducing this Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, all peoples, in spite of the fact that they share values, they are way different in their lifestyles, in their perceptions, in their cultural values. They vary in the ways they perceive things. They vary at the levels they are living their life at. It reminds me the immigrant families and in relation to that, Maslow's hierarchy of needs. There are people—we need to understand this very carefully—in this city, in this province, in this country, there are people who are just struggling to survive. They don't even have time to think about their self-respect, love, affection. They're just caught up in their basic needs: food, shelter and clothing.

So for those—we need to take care of those families, using different tools than those are to be used for the other part of the society. While you're struggling, working seven days a week, you have no time to understand what sexual abuse is. You have no time to sit together with the next generation and talk to them whether they understand how to handle such peer pressures, sexual violence in schools or playgrounds, or at an early stage of life. And there are other reasons, other cultural reasons for new Canadians coming from different parts of the world that prevent them to talk about sexual abuse to their own kids. We need to develop tools.

While, as I said, Bill 7 is a right step towards addressing the needs of the people who are influenced or impacted by violence, whether at home or at office or work, we still need to develop and use the tools that may be applicable to this part of the society, to that part of the society, and another part of the society in a different manner.

If I talk about just the language barrier, we could think and feel that all new Canadians living in this province, they do not have equal access to the media information that's being provided because either they're unable to understand English or French, or they are not able to understand to the extent that they should be able to. We all know that in this province there are so many ethnic media organizations working towards creating awareness on issues like sexual violence, sexual abuse. But still we need to strengthen those organizations.

When we talk about sexual abuse, we talk about women, and I can tell you that there are some communities around where there is a stigma, there is a shyness for women to talk about what they're going through. We need to empower those women. We need to empower those young girls to stand up and speak out about what's happening around, what's unpleasant, what's tough for them to face.

We need to develop organizations in the ethnic communities. I am speaking from this angle because I know I can say to a better extent that some communities are facing such tough situations. There could be situations where, if a girl or a woman wants to speak about what has happened to her, or she has been abused—physically, sexually, mentally—she would be suggested to be silent on the issue because of socio-cultural reasons.

We need to touch that part. We need to touch that part of the story. We need to discuss that. We need to change the way we perceive things. We need to develop those people. We need to develop their confidence. We need to bridge the gap between this generation and the next generation. We need to embrace our little kids and tell them which is right, which is wrong.

There should be some programs which are culturally appropriate. For example, there are communities where women do not feel comfortable being addressed by or being in discussion with the male presenters or educators. We need to balance those things. We need to develop the resource persons, women resource persons, bilingual resource persons, from that very community.

If we talk about counselling, youth counselling or drug counselling, I don't see many bilingual—when I say bilingual, means the person who knows French and English, or English and an ethnic language, or French and an ethnic language—that's a very important tool. We need to work around—we need to bring the projects. We need to fund the projects with—we need

to fund organizations who provide those diplomas or trainings to the people who have this inherent multi-language tool so that the people, the clients who are in need of counselling, they could understand the things better, and we can bring that change in a better manner. We can bring that change in an easier way. We can serve those clients who are not being served at this point of time.

I would like to mention that budget cuts to the North Point Douglas Women's Centre is not a positive step. Whenever we talk about people being allowed to have more leave or easy ways to have that leave that allows them to take care of themselves or their families during domestic violence situations, we need to think that what those people, those victims, would be going through for those 10 days or a few weeks. We need to provide them the resources which are required. Where are they going?

For example, a lady is on leave for 10 days. She is not just sitting at home and waiting for those 10 days to be over. She needs resources. She needs people to talk to. She might need medicine. She might need counselling. She might need an outing. She must need discussions. She might need some lectures. She might need some resources to read and understand how she handles herself in such situations.

So we need to work on strengthening those organizations, or we need to create some new organizations. We need to create future leaders who can take the lead on this. We need to identify youth who are bold enough to speak and educate their peers about the importance of these things. We need to get out and we need to talk to the communities and we need to be willing to help those in need.

* (16:10)

Now I would like to talk about the seniors. Who knows how many seniors in this city, in this province, in this country are being abused, physically, mentally or in other ways? They do not know nothing about the system here. We need to bridge the gap, the information gap that we have. They do not have language skills. They're just taking care of their grandsons and granddaughters, but they need to be taken care.

Who is responsible for taking care of them if—in case they are being abused at home? We need to take care of them. We need to teach them what's the definition of domestic violence. They don't even think that this is domestic violence. They must be facing

odd situations. They are not comfortable but they might be taking that normal part of life.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

So, as I speak to this bill, and as I mentioned that this is a positive step towards the right direction, but we need to take more steps to that right direction to make the things still better.

Again, I would talk about the situation where girls are being judged by the way they talk, by the way they dress, by the way even they laugh. We need to support them, we need to teach our daughters, we need to educate them about their rights. We need to educate them to be, to have a courage, to speak and stand for their rights. Not just the girls; there could be boys who could be victims of sexual violence or domestic violence or violence at schools, but we need to educate those little leaders, those little minds so that we can make this place a better place to live.

When we talk about reporting, I was going through these papers and there's a mention that nine out of 10 women do not report incidents of sexual assault. They often cite fear of the police investigation and the court process as a deterrent to reporting.

How about men? I don't have any data, but we need to think about it, we need to take care or support the male members of this society who are being physically assaulted, who are victimized at work, or who are victimized at their homes and who are facing domestic violence.

Once again, I would like to say this, that Bill 7 which is Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, is a step towards positive direction, but keeping in mind the point and the opinions that we have just shared, we need to work more on this issue and we need to invest more on this issue and we need to invest in prevention of such crimes, in prevention of domestic violence and interpersonal violence, rather than finding money to fix after the damage is done.

So I would end here. Thank you so much for providing me time to speak on this issue.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 7. One of the messages that I do want to convey is I believe this bill moves the province in the right direction by opening up a leave for all victims of interpersonal violence.

I think of myself and my own community of—where interpersonal violence was the norm. Wasn't the exception; it was the norm. A long time ago, we

developed a Community Holistic Circle Healing Program, or CHCH program for short, that dealt with interpersonal violence, relationship violence, disclosures of such—I couldn't even begin to imagine what those people, what the employees, what the young women and the young men had went through and felt that they were never able to disclose, they were never able to talk about.

So one of the driving forces in our community was to in fact start dealing with those issues and dealing with the issue of breaking silence, being able to feel that I can disclose, I can talk, I can say what happened, I can say that I was oppressed, I can say what was done to me in the workforce, in my home life. And the aspects of Bill 7 really kind of cover that on a more focused scale.

Myself as a father of six, as a father of four—my children, or my daughters—my four youngest are daughters—I don't want them growing up in a world where silence is accepted, where the ability of being able to say no is something that's frowned upon and they need to remain silent, remain in the shadows, and not be able to share, disclose, if something is wrong by them.

And I feel that Bill 7 really kind of brings that into perspective, but I also feel Bill 7 is not the be-all and end-all. I believe it's a start; it's a step in the right direction to be able to get out there and say, this is what we're going to do now.

This is something that generations ago was never even thought of. Like I said, it was the exception and not the norm. And now we've flipped that around. And now when we talk about things that go on in our communities, and people, especially young people, especially young women, are now growing up to know what they mean, and what they mean to society, what they could contribute to society and exactly what they could do to be a better person, grow up to be young leaders in our communities. And I feel that the roots of Bill 7 really kind of start trying to engage that a little bit, but again, I think there's still more work.

I think Bill 7 also needs to be a work in progress. I support Bill 7 to this point, but, again, I believe it's a work in process that we need to go on and go forward, and it needs to really take into consideration the victims of such offences that go on in the workplace, and not so much a focus on the perpetrators, but at the same time, we need to have some kind of mechanism to be able to deal with the perpetrators also. And I think there needs to be a little bit more bite to what we're doing here.

So, when I talk about this being a work in progress, I believe that it was in a step in the right direction, but we still need to continue on the work that Bill 7 is going to do. There's various amendments that have been talked about, various changes and tweaks that everybody wants to do. And I'm—it's unanimous around this Chamber, around the norm in the province, that Bill 7 is, in fact, a step in the right direction and is something that is necessary.

It's necessary to speak for those people that have before never felt they had a voice, never felt they could be heard. But what also needs to encompass in Bill 7 is we have to be able to recognize victims: their signs, the 'symps'—the signs and symptoms, because even though there will be legislation that will have a voice for those people, there is still those people that will still not disclose. And they'll have a vast variety of reasons. Maybe they won't believe exactly what the consequences may be to a person that has offended them or who has beat them down.

So, for those people, I would like to know, or like them to know, that in fact they do have a voice. And they can't just refer to Bill 7 and say, oh, that's the limitations. This, like I said, is a work, is a step in the right direction, but we need to also enhance on this and move forward as a society to encompass more than just Bill 7. So, when we talk about recognizing victims of non—or non-disclosure victims, as I'll refer to them, what do we have in place for them? What do we have in there that helps employers and fellow employees, family members, community members, help recognize the victims of interpersonal violence, as it's referred to in Bill 7?

* (16:20)

Prior to, there was never any resources, no shelter and support, no recourse, no consequences, and that was the norm. And that's what community people and people that have experienced such interpersonal violence were used to. I have no place to go. I have nobody's going to listen. And for that, I say we should be shameful how it was for us in generations past and, going forward, I think we need to step in the right direction.

For myself and my riding and my constituency, is a lot in the North. And there's also been, over the course of time, there's also been a large number of industrial, big construction projects in the North. And, while they have a bunch of different issues and various parties differ on how those projects are built, how they're constructed, there is still a realistic, human component to how those things happen.

When someone—somebody comes into your community who's an outsider, who does not know the community, who does not understand what the family's like, what the dynamics are like, sometimes, again, they're just—it's the norm. I'm going to go in there, I'm going to use what I can in there, and I'm going to get out. Including in the past, using young women, young men.

And I really hope that Bill 7 helps to give those people that were so used to being used in the past, a voice. And I believe that it does. But again, a step. It's a step in the right way. And for that, I stand here and I support this bill as it is, to this point.

The norm before was: I need a job. And everybody in the province of Manitoba feels they need a job. I want to work. I want to be able to support my family. I want to be able to give myself a better life, to 'revent'—my children have a better life. And in some cases, they had to make that choice: accept this burden, accept this violence, this interpersonal violence—accept it, or don't work. There was no middle ground. It was one or the other.

And I believe this, now, is going the right way to be able to address. Now there is middle ground. Now there is a choice; there is truly a choice between somebody who can—doesn't have to decide whether or not they're violated versus being able to have a job.

The norm will no longer be speak up and be fired. Instead, they will no longer have to work in silence. They can sit there and know that I have a voice. And in the event that they did speak, there seemed to be always a different a reason, or maybe some kind of ridiculous nitpicking reason as to why, well, I'm going to dismiss this person for this reason. But now they can feel that they have a voice instead of feeling that, no matter what I say, it's going to go—it's going to fall on deaf ears.

There's so many people up the chain that, no matter how far I go up that chain, somewhere, sometime, somebody's going to tell me to shut up; somebody's going to tell me to be quiet; somebody's going to tell me that you can't do it, don't do it, otherwise, you're going to 'maise' a big fuss. Maybe this whole contract's going to be taken away. You will no longer have something in your 'commuliny'. Maybe you won't have hydro power. Maybe you won't have a water treatment plant. Maybe you won't have any kind of education, just because you're going to speak up about something that's violating you. And for that, again, as a society, it's not in any one particular party, any one particular government—

society as a whole, we should be shameful that that was acceptable at some point in time.

As indigenous people, in my community, in my riding, interpersonal violence almost went hand-in-hand with the root cause. And the root cause of that being racism; underlying racism, sexism, even ageism. Where no matter where you went, you were told to be a—less of a person. You were beat down. You were looked at as an afterthought. And this Bill 7 now gives those same people—there's no mention of race in Bill 7, which is fantastic that we don't have to worry about this is who you are as an ethnic group in our community, or the colour of your skin. Interpersonal violence doesn't really know those kind of boundaries in the literal sense. It's just a matter of violence against somebody.

So, when I look at Bill 7, I also asked them, who had input in the development of Bill 7? Who was consulted in the development of Bill 7? Which ethnic groups, which—was it women? Was it men? Was it—how old? How young? Were they work-experienced? Were they education? So, who had an input in Bill 7?

And, in particular, I think, one of the important people that needed to have an input in Bill 7 are, in fact, the victims—the victims that have had to go through this, which is unfortunate because it—it's an after the fact. It's a reactive instead of a proactive, which is unfortunate. That's almost the way this needed to happen for there to be a victim to say, hey, this is wrong. What's going on here is wrong.

But how were these people engaged? And I hope they were engaged along the process—not a specific group. We talk in this Chamber about rural, urban, southern, northern. We're Manitobans, no matter where we are, and that's how we need to look at when we talk about Bill 7 and being able to implement that across what we know as the province of Manitoba. It has to be able to be inclusive and reflective of, in fact, all of Manitoba.

So I question and I ask: Who was engaged in the process and who actually was involved in helping develop this? And if it was everybody at the table and all the players in the game, that's fantastic and you can know you truly have a voice. Otherwise, if this is something that's being developed by somebody who's never experienced life, who perhaps has never been victimized and not to say that anybody should have to ever be victimized in interpersonal violence in any way, but in order to get these things done, sometimes it involves a victim feeling like they're re-victimized, like they have to prove their claims of violence for fear

of exclusion, and that they're not looked at, they're not recommended and they're not seen as a recommended voice or professional in the area because they haven't gone through anything.

And who speaks for those people who can't speak? Whether it's a language barrier, physical barrier—and that's only to name a few barriers that might be out there. So when we talk about Bill 7 having a little bit more bite, being able to carry on, it needs to at some point in the future reflect people that can't speak for themselves because we will still ultimately have victims of interpersonal violence no matter how much legislation we put behind it, no matter how much we want to say, we're truly representing everybody and everybody is, in fact, speaking. There will always be people that fall through the cracks. So we need to look at fine tuning that and exactly how we get—and speak for those people.

Some of the things that, when it comes time to interpersonal violence, especially with Bill 7 is, you've heard the term, she asked for it, he asked for it, she wanted it, he wanted it. That's the thought process of perpetrators when it comes to interpersonal violence. Or, rather, I shouldn't say perpetrators—maybe the term is predator because that's exactly what those people are.

So Bill 7, again, is a first step, but it puts the onus on the victim. It puts the onus on the victim to come forward. The sad fact is that we have to wait until there is a victim until we see something like this come into place. What we would like to see in the future is enhancement of this bill that will take a more proactive and less reactive approach, but again, for the time being, this is what we have, but this should be a living document. This should not be the be-all end-all but is a step. And it's a step in the right direction, but it needs to be a work in process—a living document if you will—something we could expand on because I'm not going to stand up here today and assume that I know everything about this, and I assume everybody in this 'chamber' is not going to say, I know everything about everything.

So we should be able to be open to discussions, open to recommendations, open to change because like I said, generations ago this was something that was never, ever discussed. It was just the norm. It was just accepted, and now we're going forward and we need to be able to give a voice to the people that have no voices, give a methodology where people could go

and they can say, this is what I'm going to do. Now I have a means.

Now I have a mechanism to have my voice heard when I never had before. I want to be able to know that somebody is going to speak for me when I can't speak for myself. And for that I believe Bill 7 moves it in the right direction, and I think, going forward, a living document that needs to be open to change, whether it be Bill 7, bill 77, bill 777—whatever it may be at some point in time. We're probably not going to get that far, but at some point in time, it needs to be able to be enhanced. It needs to be a living document that we can, in fact, build on, to in fact give the voices to the people that never had the voices.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

* (16:30)

Madam Speaker: Are there any further speakers on debate?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 7, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence).

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

I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Is it the will of the House to reflect that the vote was unanimous?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to reflect that the vote was unanimous? [*Agreed*]

I'm advised that the Lieutenant Governor is soon to arrive and the House will now prepare for royal assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Ray Gislason): Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Her Honour Janice C. Filmon, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

Madam Speaker: Your Honour:

At this sitting, the Legislative Assembly has passed a bill that I ask Your Honour to give assent to.

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Monique Grenier):

Bill 7 – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Interpersonal Violence); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congé pour les victimes de violence interpersonnelle)

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): In Her Majesty's name, Her Honour assents to this bill.

God Save the Queen was sung.

O Canada was sung.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

* (16:40)

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on House business. We say to you and to your table officers and to all the staff of the Legislative Assembly, thank you for your service. We wish you a wonderful holiday and merry Christmas. We hope that all of you have time to reconnect with your families over this time.

To all members of the Legislature, we wish you a happy holiday, merry Christmas and hope that you return safely to us when this House resumes, whatever that date may be.

And, with that spirit in mind, I wonder if you would canvass members to see if it is the will of members to call it 5 o'clock.

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

Prior to doing that, I am just going to remind everybody again before we rise, I would, once again, remind members, if you have not already done so, to please remove the contents of your desk before leaving the Chamber today.

And I also would like to take a moment on behalf of all of us that work in the Legislative Assembly to wish everybody a very merry Christmas. May you have a wonderful time with your family and friends.

We know how precious all this time is. And I hope everybody has just an absolutely wonderful Christmas and all the best in the new year.

And the hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until March 4th, 2020, or to the call of the Chair.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 5, 2019

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