

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	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, Hon.	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, Hon.	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
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
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

Tuesday, June 1, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

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

Please be seated. Good morning.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Could you canvass the House—could you please canvass the House for leave to allow an exemption to our dress code requirements so that the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) could wear a traditional ribbon shirt as he participates in House proceedings virtually today?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave to allow the—an exception to our dress code requirement so that the member from Keewatinook could wear the traditional ribbon shirt as he participates in the House proceedings virtually—is there—today?

Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

Deputy Speaker's Statement

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am now advising the House that I have received a letter from the Government House Leader indicating that the government of caucus has identified Bill 237, The Elections Amendment Act, as the first of their three selected bills for this session.

As a reminder of the House, the rule 24 permits each recognized party to select up to three private members' bills per session to proceed to a second reading vote and requires the House leader to provide written notice as to the date and time of the vote.

The Government House Leader has therefore advised that the questions will be put on the second

reading motion of Bill 237 this morning, June 1st, 2021, at 10:55 a.m.

Should a recorded vote be requested, as per rule 23(7), that vote will be deferred until 11:55 a.m. the next Thursday when the House is sitting to consider private members' business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on government—on private members' business.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you please call for debate this afternoon, bill two—[*interjection*—this morning. Boy, it's got to be afternoon somewhere—237.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been called by the honourable Government House Leader that we'll be—on private members' business will be on Bill 237, The Elections Amendment Act, now under the name of the honourable member for Brandon East.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 237—The Elections Amendment Act

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I move, seconded by the honourable member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin), that Bill 237, The Elections Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Isleifson: Well, thank you again and good morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's good to see everyone this morning.

I am pleased to introduce Bill 237, The Elections Amendment Act, this morning and put a few words on the record.

This bill will update The Elections Act by requiring any leader of any recognized party to be open, transparent and upfront with their past financial records. To do so, this bill would require the leader of any registered political party to file their income tax statements with both their income and their tax payments with the chief elections officer and then to the public.

The readers of—pardon me—the leaders of recognized parties would disclose the amount of income tax that they have paid for the last 20 years, thereby increasing the transparency for Manitobans in regards to who is running for public office.

To reiterate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, leaders of recognized parties would have to disclose their tax information for the last 20 years or until they were 18 years old.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've been involved in a number of elections as both a volunteer and as a candidate. During these times I have heard numerous conversations around tax documents of leadership candidates and how these should be made public. In addition, when election season comes around, we often hear the leaders of political parties sparring over releasing their tax forms or requesting their opponents to do so.

This legislation would proactively solve this issue by requiring that information on the amount of taxes paid would be released. This establishes a standard that all party leaders would have to abide by, and by putting in legislation, everybody who is seeking the leadership of a party will know well ahead of time what that standard is.

The current wording of this bill allows Manitobans to have a deep look into the leaders' history of tax payments or evasion. Additionally, it would also be required that they provide their notices of assessment to the chief 'electoral' officer, in order that they may verify the accuracy of the declaration.

I do want to note that this bill does not require that the actual tax returns or notices of assessments be made public, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Bill 237 simply represents a balance between the transparency that is often asked for around election time, while respecting the privacy of personal financial information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do believe that while others want to speak, and I do look forward to listening to their comments, that we can all come together and pass this bill. You see, in 2016 general provincial election, the leader of the NDP at that time, Mr. Greg Selinger, made his tax return public, and he called on the other leaders to do the same. Mr. Selinger even went as far as saying that, if re-elected, he would require all MLAs to make their tax returns public. I'm not going that far with this bill.

Manitobans deserve to know who they are voting for and who is trying to represent them. Manitobans deserve to have their political leaders held to this

higher standard of responsibility, and public disclosure is required and will be required by this bill.

This legislation will provide Manitobans with information that many of them would like to see. And I think that we can all agree that our leaders, regardless of political affiliation, should be open and honest with the Manitobans they are hoping to serve in public office.

I believe this legislation will broaden the openness and maybe even shine a light on the financial actions of leaders of political parties, just like it did when former British Prime Minister David Cameron who—released his income tax returns from the past seven years when he was in office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're certainly at a time where there are more demands for public transparency, and see, in March 2017, I was very fortunate to attend a global meeting of world leaders at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris. At the conclusion of the anti-corruption in politics conference, I wrote a report on how to create a corrupt-free world by changing the little things one at a time.

* (10:10)

One can also review the research by the American Economic Association article titled Disclosure by Politicians, as it shows that public disclosure, rather than confidential disclosure, is associated with lowering perceived corruption and creating better government.

On May 25th, 2021, the current NDP leader stated in the Legislature, and I'll quote: The person that you are on the way is the person that you will become when you sit in the chair. End of quote. This bill will help to highlight the morale character of those in leadership roles and who they were on the way to get there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill is a step in the right direction. It is certainly an opportunity for us to proceed in strengthening the democratic process, creating better accountability and really making all Manitobans more aware of what we as politicians can bring to the table.

Again, it will really be transparent with election season just coming up around the corner, and I'm sure that political parties are already getting ready to spar with each other—the leaders, anyways. And I am sure the question will come out: what was your tax return and why is it looked for?

So again, by putting this legislation in place, it will certainly provide an opportunity to level the playing field and to let not just the political parties, but again, Manitobans more aware of the history, the background, the integrity, the honesty, the openness, the fairness, the transparency that needs to come with a government, that needs to come with any political party that is representing those who put them there.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look around the House and I ask for support from all sides. I am generally interested in hearing feedback and inclusion from all parties and I look forward to this morning's debate.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before we go on to the question period, I just want to clarify, when we started with all the moving parts this morning, I basically said to the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) on private members' business. I should've said private member's business and it—and addressed—call for the Government House Leader.

So we are in government—private members' business and private members' bills, so just to clarify that and put that in Hansard.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So now a question period up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question might be asked by the member from another party; any supplement questions may follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question. And one—no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Thank you and good morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I appreciate my friend, the member for Brandon East's, comments regarding the need for open and transparent ways here in the Manitoba Legislature.

And with that in mind, I'd like to ask my friend, will the member for Brandon East call on the current Premier (Mr. Pallister) of Manitoba to release his income earned and taxes paid today, yes or no?

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I thank the honourable member from Notre Dame for that question.

It's a great question and, you know, I would say, when this bill passes, and if I could have their support and we get this bill passed, once it goes live, then it's

in effect, and all leaders of all parties—and not just in the Manitoba Legislature, the parties that—such as the Communist Party of Canada, the Green Party, the Manitoba First party, the—you know, all the parties leaders will have to disclose that information.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): I'd like to ask the MLA for Brandon East if he can advise why he selected 20 years as the time frame for the disclosure agreement as part of his legislation that he brought forward this morning for us to debate?

Mr. Isleifson: Thank you to the great member from McPhillips.

So this legislation will require a party leader to show the whole picture of their financial history, not just the years that they pick and choose after making positive changes. The public will be able to see their financial history from before they were likely even considering running for public office.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I have to ask the—if the member attended an OECD meeting, was he aware of the fact that from 2009 to 2012 Costa Rica was on the OECD blacklist for non-co-operative tax havens and that it was only moved to a grey list in 2012?

I mean, is he aware of the fact—of this fact, that the Premier owns a corporation where he has declared no income from a known blacklisted OECD tax haven?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon East.

Member for Brandon East, if you take your mic off mute.

Mr. Isleifson: Well, I guess that's five bucks. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank the member for St. Boniface for the question.

So when I attended the OECD conference, I worked really close with MLAs from northern Australia, from Jamaica and, of course, there were 895 people at this conference. We spent three days talking about ways to prevent corruption, and I'll say Canada is on the—I'm going to say—corruption list at the bottom; anti-corruption at the very top. And, of course, there are countries that have more challenges.

And I just think, with this bill, my intention is to ensure that we reign on top of the anti-corruption piece and not on the bottom where other countries lie.

Ms. Marcelino: You know, my friend, the member from Brandon East, I really do believe that all of us—

not just our leaders—have this role to play to make sure that we, you know, try to make our government as open and as transparent as possible. But with that said, you know, I don't think that your leader would agree with this bill. I mean, in the past he's called this kind of thing being a stunt.

So does the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) agree with his leader that releasing tax information is a stunt?

Mr. Isleifson: So this bill increases transparency and it improves and increases it by legislation, in the fact that a leader in—a leader of any political party will have to disclose their taxes that they paid and their income, plus notice of assessments, for 20 years.

I truly believe a 20-year package is definitely not a stunt. It is something that is, in my opinion, something that we can all aspire to look at to improve openness, transparency in not just government, but in all parties.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): I thank the member for Brandon East for introducing this bill.

Just a question for him: Would leaders only have to file their disclosure once?

Mr. Isleifson: I thank the member for Lagimodière for that question.

The answer is simple: no. Once a leader of a recognized party has filed a disclosure, they will be required to update the disclosure each year with any new notice of assessments that they receive. This would definitely help ensure that leaders of parties are consistently disclosing their information and it continues the principles of transparency for Manitobans.

Ms. Marcelino: Does my friend, the member for Brandon East think that it was wrong for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the PC leader to be—refused to release his income and tax information in the 2016 election?

Mr. Isleifson: Again, thank you for the question from my friend from Notre Dame.

So again, there's a reason I'm bringing this bill forward. And as I said when—my experience in not just running in elections but volunteering for elections the previous four elections, we've always had—in my opinion—political involvement, political leaders challenging and sparring other candidate hopefuls for leadership in releasing their information.

This bill, Bill 237, would eliminate that and all leaders of all registered political parties in the province of Manitoba will have to comply.

* (10:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield).

The member for Rossmere can unmute his mic? [*interjection*] Oh, he's not—okay.

I'm going to then call on the honourable member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin).

Mr. Martin: Mr. Deputy Speaker, through you, I'd like to ask my colleague, the member for Brandon East, about this legislation, whether or not it'll impact only those political parties that currently have elected members in the Legislature, or does it apply to any other political parties here in Manitoba?

Mr. Isleifson: Again, thank you to my friend from McPhillips.

So again, this legislation will be enacted to all political parties that are registered with Elections Manitoba in the province of Manitoba. So, for example, I think I mentioned a few of them before, but we do have the Communist Party of Canada, the Green Party, Manitoba First, the Manitoba Liberal Party, the Manitoba Party, the New Democratic Party of Manitoba and the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba.

Ms. Marcelino: Does the member for Brandon East think it was wrong that the PC leader refused to reveal his income taxes as the Leader of the Opposition did in 2017?

Mr. Isleifson: So again, I want to look forward. And if there're issues with the sparring of leaders in releasing their information, whether that was 2008 or 2016, whenever that happened, this is current, this is—this bill when passed will eliminate that.

There will be no need for that question in the future because every leader from every political party in Manitoba will already meet these obligations in order to fill their—fulfill their obligation as leader of their designated party.

Mr. Smith: The bill states that the party leaders will need to go back 20 years or until the age of 18.

I was just curious, why exempt income earned before the age of 18?

Mr. Isleifson: Thanks to my friend from Lagimodière. That's a good question.

When we'd look, though, at the age of 18, the age of 18 is considered the age of—I'm going to say adulthood with a number of items in Manitoba, you know, such as alcohol and gambling and things like that. So we look at the age—at least, I look at the age of 18 being the transition period into adult life, and the bill is designed to create that adult life moving forward.

As a young man, for example, I washed dishes for my first job in a restaurant. That would not come into play because I was 16 years old at the time. But once I turned 18, if I was aspiring—which I'm not—to be a leader of any political party, then I would disclose—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up and the time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate is open.

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Bill 237 is The Elections Amendment Act. The purpose of this bill is to amend The Elections Act to require the disclosure of personal financial information by the leader of a political party for a 20-year period.

This bill would require the leader to file with the Chief Electoral Officer a statement disclosing their total income and the income taxes they paid as an adult, as well as any tax notices that they received. The leaders' statements about their income and taxes will be—must be made public by the Chief Electoral Officer.

In our opinion on this side of this House, this bill sends a clear message that the PC Party is out of touch with regular Manitobans, and I say that because we're right in the middle of a third wave and this is the best that the PC Party can put forward, and I believe that Manitobans deserve so much better than this failed and tired PC Party.

You know, one of the questions that I would have liked to ask, if we had more time, from the member from Brandon East is, you know, in his opinion or just from, you know, just working in his constituency office, what are the top three, top five issues that constituents are coming to him with? What are their main problems? What are things that he can help them with, you know, if he could do anything for them—the top three, top five priorities from constituents?

I know what mine are in my constituency and, certainly, putting forward a bill like this wouldn't be one of the top three or top five issues for my constituents at this time.

You know, we're in the middle of a third wave. We're seeing record unemployment numbers. We're seeing, you know, a situation where we're not even able to take care of our own folks here in this province. And instead, we're engaging in a bill that is going towards American-style politics and more leader-bashing and things of that sort.

Bill 237 would require leaders of all political parties to disclose their total income, income taxes paid as an adult and tax notices received for the past 20 years. This in and of itself is a little bit bizarre because the CRA requires individuals to keep their tax information for only seven years, so 20 years seems to be an arbitrary requirement.

You know, the member is talking about stuff about being 18 years old and adulthood. It's really looking for any kind of hole now. Like, obviously, this is something that's going to be, like, another attack on, you know, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), looking for things because maybe he's doing such a good job right now that we need to find more things to attack him about—for.

So it's—again, it's a bill that is a stark example of PC hypocrisy. Why would a PC member bring forward a bill that their leader wouldn't even follow? You know, the series of questions that I asked about the member for—I think it's Fort Whyte—the Premier (Mr. Pallister), you know, would he be okay with releasing his tax information?

He's called it a stunt. He refused to release his tax information in 2016. He didn't do that in 2017. He didn't do that in 2019. So this is, like, this is something that even his own leader wouldn't be able to do when called upon to do so. So he's called—like, the Premier has called the release for taxes to be reminiscent of American-style politics. He's rejected that. The Premier has called the idea of releasing taxes in an election campaign a distraction from the real issues that matter to families.

And, you know, the PC Party stated at the time, quote: "Greg Selinger's last-minute election stunt is desperate, American-style politics from an old, tired government trying to divert voters' attention from the real issues that matter to families." That was from a CBC article on April 10th, 2016.

The Premier, throughout the pandemic, has been constantly deflecting from the real issues and blaming everyone—including people like the President of the United States—everyone except himself. And here's a fact: the Leader of the Official Opposition is

the only current party leader who has revealed both his income and taxes paid, which he did in 2017.

The intent of the bill is clear. It's meant to perpetuate a racist myth about Indigenous people in Canada that they don't pay taxes. We've seen, you know, this kind of race-baiting here in this Legislature with the different kinds of bills that have been introduced.

And, I mean, I used to live in Sage Creek and—during the last election—and had to drive by Lagimodière—drive through Lagimodière and see this big billboard during the last election. You know, it had the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) in a headdress. And it was a big billboard paid for by the PC Party and it was saying something like, oh, is this the kind of leader that you would want.

So there is this type of, like, Indigenous race-baiting that we're seeing here, and I believe that this bill is another type of race-baiting, another type of leader-bashing. And, you know, there's this racist myth that Indigenous people in Canada don't pay taxes. And here's another bill that's, you know, going to try to prove that. But you'll be wrong.

In fact, it's your leader that's not paying taxes. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) likes to claim he always pays his taxes, but we know that's not true. We've learned over the years that the Premier did not pay the taxes he was legally required to play on his 'luxury' villa in you-know-where. I don't want to have to make the—my friend from—my friend, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) to pay another five dollars.

* (10:30)

He broke the laws of you-know-where and then threatened to sue the Winnipeg Free Press for bringing it to light. He never apologized to the Free Press for threatening to sue them, even when they were proven right.

Then, just this year, we found out that the Premier has been taking advantage of an application-only amnesty program to lower his bill even more. The taxes the Premier dodged were meant to support housing programs for the poor in you-know-where and he failed to pay his taxes on his luxury villa for over a decade. It was only because of the reporting of the Free Press did the Premier's breach of the law come to light.

This bill appears to exclude monies held in trusts and corporations from disclosure, which means a substantial portion of the Premier's personal interests

will be kept in the dark. Pallister investment holdings 22 corporation holds property, stocks and other income-generated assets that the Premier has an interest in, yet this would be excluded from the required information for disclosure under this bill.

This bill was not included in the recent changes the government made to the conflict of interest act for members and leaders of recognized parties in this Chamber, and this bill is a hypocritical attack from a party whose leader has repeatedly refused to comply with the very standard that this bill sets. It's ridiculous to think that this is this government's priority.

Manitobans everywhere are still fighting through the third wave of this pandemic. I would urge my friend, the member for Brandon East, and my friends on the opposite side of the aisle to really consider their constituents and the members they're—and other Manitobans, the priorities of Manitobans right now and to withdraw this bill immediately and instead focus on those constituents, on those Manitobans and their needs and why we're here in this office in the first place, to bring those concerns forward, not to keep perpetuating this type of—these types of American-style politics that this bill would actually bring forth.

If the Premier himself would like to release his income and tax information such as the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) has done, he can do so at any time without legislation. Let's keep this space here for legislation that's actually important to bring forth the priorities of Manitobans.

Other negative changes made to the election laws recently; you know, there've been many that affect democracy in a negative way. We know that Manitobans value the principles of democracy and they expect their elected officials to uphold the principles of free and fair elections.

Fixed election dates keep our government accountable and a blackout on government advertising leading up to provincial elections is an integral part of our democratic process. But this government has now passed Bill 32, and it was a bill whose main purpose was to help the PCs gain political favour during the next election. So that's not a very open and transparent and democratic bill that they passed.

Bill 32 shortens the advertising restriction period for a fixed-date election from 90 days to 60 days. It also amends restrictions on advertising before a vote on a referendum, shortening the restriction—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): I want to start by acknowledging that we are gathered on the ancestral lands of the Treaty 1 territory, a traditional land of the Anishinabe, the Cree, the Oji-Cree, the Dakota and the Dene peoples and on the homeland of the Métis nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to start with that out of respect and acknowledgment of the 215 lives lost at the Kamloops residential school.

When I came to the Legislature this morning and passed the children's shoes and teddy bears and such on here at the steps of the Legislature and knowing that I had the opportunity this morning to speak in the House, I knew I had to take this opportunity and comment and express my solidarity with my colleagues in this Legislature to make sure that these young lives are remembered, acknowledged and, most important of all, action is taken to ensure that never again can we have something like this happen here in Canada.

It's truly a heart-wrenching situation. I give complete applause to the Kamloops First Nation. I won't embarrass myself by trying to pronounce their traditional name, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I know they took advantage of culturally appropriate methods when surveying the properties using ground-penetrating radar and such, but obviously to make sure that the situation was handled in a most appropriate way.

So I had that opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I saw those shoes this morning and, like I said, I just knew that I wanted to share my condolences and know that there's still a lot of other children out there that still need to come home.

I know when I was rereading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission last night, I was reading the section by Dr. Scott Hamilton from the Lakehead University, he's with the department of anthropology there, and he wrote an article within the TRC called, *Where Are the Children Buried?*

And in it he noted that at least 3,213 children died over the 140 years of residential schools, and, obviously, we know and suspect that many more fell victim to those schools. So we need to work together to ensure again that all those children are brought home, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we are here again virtually. I know that the numbers in the Legislature have been pared down more, as Manitobans continue to battle the third wave,

Mr. Deputy Speaker. I look forward to that opportunity when the virtual component is eliminated and we can once again sit and talk face to face.

Because, again, while the—I think we need to applaud and herald yourself, the Deputy Speaker, and, of course, the Speaker, for all your efforts in ensuring a seamless virtual democracy. It is still virtual and nothing can ever eliminate or mitigate the personal component.

So to that end, I encourage all of us, all members and all Manitobans to make sure that they continue to follow good COVID practices, Mr. Deputy Speaker; that they're wearing a mask, that they're social distancing and physically distancing from others, that they're following the social restrictions being put forward by Shared Health, that they're washing hands and most important of all—*[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a point of order.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): There's just a little bit of question of relevance to the debate here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps the member for McPhillips could stick to the point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that, given the acknowledgement that the member was making on the tragedy in Canada that has been discovered, I would think that there would be some degree of grace and latitude by the Leader of the Liberal Party for the very poignant and important comments that I think all members, given the opportunity, want to put on the record.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): You know, typically we don't all agree in this Chamber, but I would suggest that if the member for McPhillips wants to put some words on the record, that is his right, particularly at this moment in our collective history.

And I will just say this: I don't think that Indigenous peoples need the member for St. Boniface to speak on our behalf. We can do so if we need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On that point of order, it's—in this case, it's not a point of order but—oh, sorry, just one second.

What I will do is encourage all members to bring the relevance of the bill back into the—as—relevance and, like I said, it—this wouldn't constitute as a point of order. It is—at certain times that we're dealing with—it's important too, but I would encourage all members to be relevant when it comes to the bill that we're talking about.

* * *

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for those sage observations.

* (10:40)

And to the Leader of the Liberal Party, I'm not going to apologize for expressing my solidarity and condolences with the families of those 215 children who never got to go home, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When we talked about—when I was talking about vaccinations, we know that the BIPOC community is disproportionately being impacted by the third wave, not unlike children of Aboriginal descent who were disproportionately affected by previous pandemics during their time in residential schools. The tuberculosis pandemic, for example, had a devastating impact on children in residential schools, resulting in bodies literally being piled up in the wintertime because there was no place to store them.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's incumbent on all of us as legislatures to stand up and acknowledge our history and the history of which part of our country and our parliamentary democracy is built upon. It's built upon the bones of these children, their lives.

So again, if the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont), if the leader of the little party is so outraged that one could share feelings or share, I don't know—I guess, share their thoughts on the revelation that horrified Canada, I'm not sure what to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, back to your original comments about ensuring focus. It is to that, I want to thank you as we wind down this legislative session. Thank you. Thank you and through you, thank the clerks, the pages and everyone else who has made this virtual Parliament and this virtual Legislature happen.

It couldn't have occurred without your good work, that of your staff and everyone around you and, of

course, the participation of all my colleagues here who have made an effort to ensure that despite the health conditions that we're under, despite the health criteria and restrictions, that we continue to ensure that democracy is served here in Manitoba.

We've seen other jurisdictions here in Canada—I look out west. I believe Alberta actually had to shut down their legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but here in Manitoba—and I think right now if memory serves right, I believe there's a total of maybe four or five people in—within the actual Chamber right now, but I have no doubt that that symbolism is of utmost 'purportance,' and it's the symbolism of legislation like that we are debating today that why we are here.

It is that opportunity to bring forward a private member's bill that is incumbent upon all of us as legislatures. As members of the legislator of Manitoba, we each have that opportunity to bring forward legislation, to bring forward ideas that we hear from the citizens and constituents back in our home communities.

And in this case, this—the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) has listened to his constituents. He has reflected on the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, I want to just remind the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) to get back to the relevance of the bill.

Mr. Martin: As I was noting and I was tying in the member's legislation this morning and his previous involvement with some international anti-corruption meetings that were held on a—on—he had referenced and that had involved jurisdictions from far away as Australia to Jamaica, and that is where the impetus of this legislation that he brought forward comes from, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just—on those very few brief words, I want to thank again—I want to thank the member for Brandon East for participating in the democratic process, for sharing this legislation with us, with the House today so that we have an opportunity to have that debate and have that discussion.

I listened carefully to the comments from the member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino), and I have no doubt that the member for Brandon East will take those comments into consideration as these—as the bill continues to move forward through this debate that we're having here this morning and, more importantly, as it is voted on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and ultimately brought forward at committee stage so we can have

Manitobans come forward and share their comments on the member for Brandon East's (Mr. Isleifson) proposal that he has brought forward on this day.

So again, with those few brief comments, again my heart and my prayers go out to the families of the 215 children. It is our national shame, and to that I acknowledge the privilege that I have, that my children have and that we all have as legislatures to participate in the parliamentary process.

So again, a blessed summer to all my colleagues. Stay safe. And thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): This bill amends The Elections Act to require the disclosure of personal financial information by the leader of a political party for a 20-year period.

Bill 237 would require leaders of all political parties to disclose their total income, income taxes paid as an adult and tax notices received for the past 20 years. This in itself is bizarre. The CRA requires individuals to keep their tax information for only seven years, so 20 years is—arbitrary and punitive requirement.

This bill is a stark example of PC hypocrisy. Why would a PC member bring forward a bill that their leader won't even follow? In 2016, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) refused to release his taxes when called upon to do so in that election.

He called the idea of releasing his taxes a stunt. He said calls to release taxes were reminiscent of American-style politics, which he rejected, and he called the idea of releasing taxes in an election campaign a distraction from the real issues that matter to families. Do you think there might be some other real issues going on right now that matter to families?

The PC Party stated at the time: Greg Selinger's last-minute election stunt is desperate, American-style politics from an old, tired government trying to divert voters' attention from the real issues that matter to families.

Well, we're hearing from an old, tired government now, aren't we, Mr. Deputy Speaker? On May 13th, it was reported by the CBC—and I'm reading verbatim here so I hope that it's okay to include proper names of members of this House—the CBC reported that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There's no—like, the advise-ment to the member is to make sure that if you're

making comments, even in quotes and papers and stuff, that you still use the member's constituency or position's name.

Ms. Naylor: Thank you.

Manitoba Premier insinuated the Leader of the Manitoba NDP committed tax evasion before back-tracking Thursday at a news conference, where he was once again questioned on his taxes. The Premier tried to shift the focus from his own taxes to those of the NDP leader, after CBC news reported Thursday the Premier received a tax break on money he owed the Costa Rican government. He didn't disclose the tax amnesty when he showed proof he paid his taxes in 2019. End quote.

The article went on to quote the Premier saying: He—referencing the Leader of the Opposition—hasn't given any evidence that he paid his taxes. End quote.

Like much of what we have heard out of the Premier's mouth through the media this year, this is a ridiculous accusation with no grounding in reality. In 2017, during a leadership race, the now Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) was asked to produce his tax returns and he did so.

As reported by CBC, and I quote: The Leader of the Opposition was never accused publicly of failing to pay his taxes, as Pallister wrongly suggested on Thursday—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to remind the member again not to use a person's last name. Use their title or their constituency name.

Ms. Naylor: My apologies—as the Premier wrongly suggested on Thursday. End quote.

Given that this Premier has been adamant about refusal to release his taxes, this PMB introduced at this time is a very strong indicator that the Premier will be stepping down soon. In fact, I would say it's very clear his caucus members are more than eager to have him step down from his role, or why would they bring forward a bill that basically ensures he won't run again and is—in fact, may be getting set to run away sooner rather than later.

It's a strong message from that caucus. They do not want a leader who has refused to release his taxes and has found ways around paying his tax

bills in other countries and then didn't disclose that information.

* (10:50)

This is a fact. The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kiew) is the only current party leader who has revealed both his income and taxes paid, which he did when called on to do so in 2017. And I will remind the Premier (Mr. Pallister) that if he would like to release his income and tax information such as the Leader of the Official Opposition has done, he can do so at any time without legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the intent of this bill is clear: it is meant to perpetuate a racist myth about Indigenous people in Canada that don't pay taxes. Just this morning, the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) invoked the memory of the children who were killed in Indian residential schools, and we have heard many comments from the other side of the House about the seriousness of this issue and the collective grief and collective responsibility of Canadians.

But colonialism is not just something in our past. Racist myths and racist policies continue and they continue in this Legislature. The best way that members in this Legislature can express their empathy and outrage about the crimes of this country's past is by deleting our racist policies one by one, starting with this bill.

Today is Indigenous peoples day. It's a day we recognize and honour the achievements, histories and rich culture of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada, yet here we are actually debating a bill based on the common racist stereotype about Indigenous people only weeks after the Premier falsely accused the Indigenous Leader of the Opposition of that very thing.

The facts are that personal tax exemption occurs only in specific, well-defined cases, and Indigenous people pay significant amounts of tax every year. Inuit and Métis people always pay taxes. First Nations people without status and registered First Nations people living off-reserve pay taxes like the rest of the country.

Registered First Nations people working off-reserve pay income tax regardless of where they reside. Registered First Nations people are sometimes exempted from paying personal taxes as part of the federal government's statutory obligation as outlined in the Indian Act.

And there are many taxes beyond personal income taxes: income taxes on corporations and unincorporated businesses, federal and provincial sales tax and federal excise taxes. Based on data from 2016, Indigenous people in Manitoba contributed over \$230 million in taxes annually. So let's put this racist myth to rest and not further perpetrate it here in the Legislature.

In addition to building on the racist myths about Indigenous people and taxes with its call for 20 years of tax records, this bill is targeting those who have lived in poverty, those who've been unemployed or even those who have made mistakes in their past.

Reaching back to the age of 18 or 20 years in the past is a long reach that does not allow for anyone who has struggled financially in their past or made mistakes with CRA to ever be in a significant public role 20 years into the future. This targets marginalized people in general and anyone who's not had the benefit of taxation education or support at a young age.

Let's not forget all the ways that people with wealth find ways to not pay their fair share if they don't want to. For example, the Premier likes to claim he always pays his taxes, but we already know that's not true. And when he broke the taxation laws of Costa Rica and was discovered, he threatened to sue the Winnipeg Free Press for bringing it to light. He has never apologized to the Free Press for this threat, even when they were proven right.

And then, last year, we found out he's been taking advantage of an application-only amnesty program to lower his bill even more. The taxes the Premier dodged were meant to support housing programs for the poor in Costa Rica and he failed to pay these taxes on his luxury villa for 10—over 10 years.

This bill appears to exclude monies made—held in trusts, incorporations from disclosure, which means a substantial portion of the Premier's personal interests will be kept in the dark. Pallister investment holdings 22 corporation owns properties, stocks and other income-generating assets that the Premier has an interest in, yet this would be excluded from the required information for disclosure under this bill.

This bill was not included in the recent changes the government made to the conflict of interest act for members and leaders of recognized parties in this Chamber. It is a hypocritical attack from a party whose leader has repeatedly refused to comply with the standard this bill sets.

It's ridiculous to think that this is the government's priority and Manitobans everywhere—as Manitobans everywhere are still fighting through the third wave of this pandemic—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In accordance with rule 24, as previously announced, I am now interrupting this debate to put the question of second reading of Bill 237, The Elections Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

* * *

Ms. Fontaine: Deputy Speaker, a recorded vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, I must advise the House that, according to rule 23(7), a division during the private members' hour on Tuesday must be deferred to the private members' hour the following Thursday.

Accordingly, this recorded vote shall be deferred until 11:55 a.m. on the next Thursday when the House is sitting. It's considered private members' business, so it'll be after the—probably the 6th of October, so—if I got the right date.

So, now the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen).

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you canvass the House and see if it's the will of members to call it 11 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it will of the House to call the hour 11 p.m.—a.m.—11 a.m.? [Agreed]

We're adjourned—no.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 27—Calling on Federal Government to Revise and Improve the Federal Government's Journalism Subsidies

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 11 p.m.—a.m.—sorry, 11 a.m.—it's so early in the morning, the private members' bill debate is now closed and we're going on to private member's resolution. And the resolution today is in the name of the honourable member of Borderland—the honourable member for Borderland.

Is he on the—the honourable member for Borderland.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): My apologies, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hopefully you can hear me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, we can hear you.

Mr. Guenter: Perfect. Let me get my text here.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt),

WHEREAS the rural, northern, and community newspapers are an important part of the fabric of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS local publications serve an important role in their local economy, such as raising awareness of local issues and informing its readers of events and opportunities taking place in their communities; and

WHEREAS the Federal Government created a subsidy program that fails to adequately support these rural, northern, and community newspapers in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Federal Government's Journalism Subsidy fails to include the majority of newspapers in the province; and

WHEREAS these subsidies unfairly support large, urban newspapers and ignore the needs of the newspapers that provide news for the communities of Manitoba that rely on their local paper for community news coverage; and

WHEREAS this federal subsidy is an example of the failure of a government program, missing the mark of its stated intention to support local, independent journalism in Canada; and

WHEREAS instead this subsidy has conditions that only large corporate news organizations can satisfy in order to get approved in the program; and

WHEREAS a multitude of options would have taken into account the struggles that Manitoba's newspapers are facing, but the Federal Government has ignored these challenges in the creation of this journalism subsidy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call on the federal government to improve and revise their journalism subsidy program to enable more rural, northern and community newspapers to be eligible for the program and help them continue to provide the valuable services to Manitobans.

Motion presented.

Mr. Guenter: It's a pleasure to rise virtually in the Chamber today to introduce this motion. It's an important resolution and strives to support our hard-working, often mom-and-pop operations at our local community newspapers, trusted sources of information in especially rural Manitoba and especially in these times where we are dealing with—obviously, we've all heard the term fake news and there's an erosion of trust in institutions generally and in the media and in various outlets, and there's the hyper-politicization of news these days.

People more than ever in—need reliable sources of information, and community newspapers are exactly that, and local newspapers are an integral part of any community. They help new businesses get started by getting the word out. They generate their own advertising revenue, often at lower rates than the larger dailies.

They keep local politicians accountable. They serve as a voice. Their comment boards are often very interesting to read, and I always look forward to Thursday every week when I get to read my local papers and read the perspectives of folks in my community on the issues that they're talking about.

* (11:00)

And so, local—really do serve to provide that trusted source of information at the local level and I think it's important that we do all we can to support them. I think it's disappointing that the Liberal journalism subsidy fails to support these local newspapers and so I'll get into a little more detail on that.

So basically, the 2019—federal 2019 budget introduced the journalism subsidy. That's a \$595-million package divided between three initiatives and the first and most costly is a 'labe' tax credit to bolster the salaries of working journalists on

a qualified Canadian—journalism organizations will be able to claim a 25 per cent refundable tax credit on the salaries of eligible workers, subject to a cap of \$55,000 for a maximum tax credit of \$13,750 per employee.

The second initiative will allow not-for-profit news organizations to apply for charitable status, allowing them to receive donations and issue tax receipts to donors. But the media fund doesn't just apply to the journalist who wants to make news lists—that employ them. Canadians who pay—did claim a 15 per cent tax credit for a maximum of \$75 per year for subscriptions purchased from January 2020 onwards.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

One of the things that is also a matter of concern, I think, is that to receive some of this money, you have to be qualified—a—organization has to go—or, an outlet has to be qualified as a—qualified—just looking for the term here. It's a qualified Canadian journalism organization that's—and I guess that designation is handed out or applied by a—an advisory panel that is established by the government. And my understanding is that definition is still being determined.

So at the end of the day, what's troubling to know is that the QCJO designation—qualified Canadian journalism organization designation applies to the Winnipeg Free Press, Winnipeg Sun, Brandon Sun, the Carillon. These are all papers that are able to access federal subsidies, and yet we have local papers in rural Manitoba that—and across Manitoba, that fail to qualify. And so what you see is what we saw last year, I believe, with Postmedia shutting down 15 local papers, which was a huge blow to rural Manitoba.

And I'm especially concerned, as a representative of an area where vaccine uptake is too low, and where we're doing all we can to try to encourage people to take the vaccine. You know, local papers—as I've seen, I've been very appreciative of the fact that they've been carrying perspectives and testimonies and, you know, getting doctors on the record and getting the facts on the record—I—with that—through that local perspective, that local lens that helps people at a local level better understand, in their own language, you know, what it means to get the vaccine and better explain and unpack some of the issues that we're going through. And to not have that local voice is a great loss.

And so, as I said, with the shuttering of the 15 papers across Manitoba by Postmedia, I was—we

were blessed as a local community to have the South Central Post come into being, through the resilience and determination and hard work of local journalists. And so we now are blessed with a great paper that carries—is a trusted source of some of this great news and is an important voice, again, on things like vaccine hesitancy and encouraging people to get the vaccine.

So it's important that we have these local sources of information but it's important that they be supported, because, again, as I said, they're often mom-and-pop shops or they have two or three—maybe one reporter on staff, two or three people working at the paper.

And, as I said, they charge significantly lower rates for their advertising revenue. It's all, you know, done through the—through their own effort, really. And they're supported by the local community and they, in turn, support the local community, and yet they're on—left on the outside. So it is something that needs to be addressed.

The problem with the federal program for newspapers is that it only includes, as I said, news organizations that have an online subscription and charge a fee to access this service. Many of the valuable community newspapers offer their paper for free or do not have an online subscription option and this makes them ineligible.

The only papers in 'manito' that are eligible for the benefit are, as I said, the Winnipeg Free Press, the Carillion, the Winnipeg Sun and the Brandon Sun

So, community newspapers, as they touched on, are facing a real risk of shutting down and the federal government has created an incentive program that only helps drive subscriptions to large conglomerate news chains and this is, again, very serious as I said. As we're talking about, we're living the age of fake news and vaccine hesitancy and all the rest of it. To not have—you know, to have some of these local papers struggling right now is a real problem.

Canada's federal government announced plans in 2019 for three initiatives to support Canadian journalism; as I said, it's \$595 million. The federal government's own panel of divisors, interestingly, indicated that this program alone will not be enough to prevent the disappearance of many essential sources of information, especially small local news media outlets that are not covered by the Budget 2019 measures and that are extremely vulnerable, and that other programs should be considered.

I'm just going to share a couple stats here as well. So it's estimated that foreign-owned digital media such as Google and Facebook will take \$7 billion in advertising out of the Canadian economy this year. That's astounding; \$7 billion to Google and Facebook.

Daily newspaper ad revenues are half what they were a decade ago. More than 250 Canadian news outlets have closed in the past decade. One third of journalism jobs disappeared in Canada over a six-year span. And foreign-owned digital companies are not funding the creation of Canadian news in any significant way, despite benefiting from the work done by traditional news outlets.

The federal government's advisory panel—own advisory panel shared, as well, that the tax credits program is 'posivisi'—as it is will not suffice to counter these disastrous effects. They said that they've made a number of recommendations to improve the program and to further help written journalism organizations, especially smaller outlets and those representing minority language and ethnic communities. These publications, print and digital, are vital to their many readers and are often the only independent news media serving a community, and most do not qualify for existing government assistance programs.

So local and community-based newspapers are essential and yet they are neglected from these federal programs. Local news sources cover issues specific to communities they serve. They are one of the last sources of reliable information available to people about what their government is up to and keeping them accountable. The requirements set out the—these—many of these many papers are free and distributed openly and so the—I think the issue is fairly clear here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

My apologies for interruptions here, but I am pleased to submit—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I'd like to ask the member: Was he present at the caucus meeting where his party decided to end the requirement for government to provide public notice in local newspapers?

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I invite the member for Concordia maybe to be a little more specific. I think if he's referencing Bill 8, we—good government listens and I think he'll find that if he goes back and checks the record, we listened and we made amendments.

* (11:10)

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): And there are some great news—local new—or local news organizations out there that have been excluded from the federal plan, especially the local ones.

And I'm wondering if the member would like to comment on their—on the ability for these local organizations to get access to—for funding in the future?

Mr. Guenter: And I thank the member for Portage la Prairie for the question.

And he's absolutely right. We have a lot of great papers in our area, and, of course, he's a rural member, as well, representing Portage la Prairie and understands the importance of local papers and the importance of them accessing the same help that the large dailies in this province do. So, we want to keep local journalism alive and it's important that the federal government expand their program to be able to do that.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I'm a little surprised that the seconder on this motion is the owner of a string of newspapers in rural Manitoba which has received support from the government of Canada.

Can the member for Borderland explain why we're calling on the federal government to do something and why this government isn't just doing something to help?

Mr. Guenter: Yes, there's a number of directions we could go with that, I guess.

You know, it's the federal government's program and, you know, I mean, they've got financial tools that we obviously don't. They've got a—clearly, bags of money that we don't have here in Manitoba and that provinces across Canada don't have.

And so, just—it's interesting that they would leave out little—or, local newspapers and only subsidize the

hyper-political, the large organizations flush with reporters and three dozen members on their staff and that sort of thing. So—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate that the member confirmed he supported Bill 8.

Did the member question the minister when he repeatedly misled this House with regards to Bill 53, which just passed a few weeks ago, which also removed the requirement for notices for municipalities for upcoming meetings with regards to advertising in local newspapers?

Mr. Guenter: Yes, I think the important thing is that the member for Concordia and members opposite join us in demonstrating support for our local papers, local journalism. You know, as I said, we're dealing with fake news and vaccine hesitancy and all the rest of it and it's important that we support our local papers.

You know, the Internet is a reality, as well, and it's here to stay, and so, if he wants to go back and re-litigate legislation that's been before the House, you know, we can do that, but this resolution is about supporting local papers.

Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley): I'm just wondering, I know I've been to rural Manitoba through my role as special envoy for military affairs and appreciate the coverage that they gave me when I did my summer Legion tour.

Do these organizations that are eligible for the federal support program adequately serve your community and the needs of all Manitobans?

Mr. Guenter: I thank my friend, the member for Waverley, for the question.

And yes, community-based newspapers are a key part of any community as they, as I said, help to, you know, get the word out as small businesses, you know, get started. It's an opportunity for them to get the word out and post advertising at lower rates.

And they're effective because people in communities do read the local paper and, of course, it's local; it's kind of got the same effect as people going to, you know, Facebook or social media and, you know, sharing perspectives and that sort of thing. The local paper really is an important and trusted source of information for a lot of these folks—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wiebe: Did—what did the—exactly did the member say to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) when he, unprompted, spoke out directly against these federal subsidies that the member is now advocating for? When the member or the First Minister seemed to imply that journalists would be—would not be impartial if they received these federal subsidies, did he pull the Premier aside and chastise him at that point?

Mr. Guenter: You know, I thank the member for Concordia for the question. I'm a little bit surprised, though, that he isn't at least somewhat troubled by the prospect of losing more local community newspapers. But then, again, you'll never see an NDP member in rural Manitoba, at least historically that's not been the case. So, you know, of course, this is perhaps an issue that exists outside the Perimeter and therefore they care little about that.

Mr. Wishart: I'm wondering if the member would care to comment on why he believes that the federal plan really just supports a selected few large organizations and not the broad base of local community?

Mr. Guenter: I thank my friend, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), for that great question. I think the House should know that the Winnipeg Free Press has received \$6.2 million under this program. That's an astounding sum of money.

You know, a lot of the local weekly or biweekly papers in rural Manitoba, you know, don't—aren't able to access that kind of help because they're excluded because, I says—as I said, they don't have an online presence or they don't have a subscription service. Many of them are offered free, but the work that they do is great and it's the same as anywhere else. I mean, why would a local rural reporter not be—or outlet not be supported in the same way that a lot of the large hyper-politicized ones are? Six point two million dollars for the Winnipeg—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wiebe: I take it from the member's previous answer that he didn't speak to the Premier and he didn't pull him aside.

Did he also sit quietly by when his party sent out an email implying that the Winnipeg Free Press was fake news and that it was something that needed to be fought and used that as a fundraising tool? Did he speak up to his party and to his Premier at that point?

Mr. Guenter: I'd invite the member for Concordia to get on board. We're dealing with vaccine hesitancy in the province. We're dealing with a historic pandemic, and the vaccines are going to get us back to our normal lives and help mitigate loss of life and suffering and our hospital crisis, and we need people to take the vaccines. We need local, trusted sources of information to be able to carry that message out.

You know, the bigger dailies are the bigger dailies and they're political and all that. They have a role to play and that's fine; but we need our local, trusted sources of information to be able to carry the news out about encouraging folks to get the vaccine, and how can they do that if they're struggling and not receiving support under this program? Why are they left out?

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I'd like to ask the member from Borderland, what would the loss of the community paper in your local area and in other rural areas mean for you and other representatives' areas?

Mr. Guenter: I thank my honourable friend, the minister.

I—it would just be devastating. I think we would lose our—you know, we went through a period of that, where we didn't have a paper locally and there is a sense of loss of local—you know, a local voice. You lose an important avenue for people to be able to give voice to issues and perspectives and share that—you know, the happenings and the goings on in the community. It's a significant loss for a lot of these communities and helps to, you know, this feeling of detachment and isolation—

* (11:20)

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record and to push back on this particular resolution before the House.

You know, this is a perfect example of the post-truth party that this member belongs to. You know, it's increasingly becoming clear that the party that the member represents and that all members in the Chamber sit in lockstep with is increasingly, you know, having a disconnect between their words and their actions.

They feel that they can say whatever they want; in this case, that they support local newspaper, and yet the actions of this government clearly show that they do not support local newspapers. In fact, it is the official opposition that has continually stood up time and time and time again to push back and to fight for those local newspapers and the right that they have and the responsibility they have to represent the local voice.

You know, this member, in his answers to my questions, refused to let the House know what he said to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) when in—when this, you know, exact funding that this resolution speaks to was released by the federal government. The Premier came out, completely unprompted, speaking to media and said that, you know, he was worried about the independence of journalists. He felt that they would be compromised if they had part of their paycheque covered by Ottawa.

The Premier came out to the media and said, quote: How easy will it be for the media to criticize anybody else or any group that is in receipt of federal funding in years ahead. It would seem that there'd be a crisis of principle at that point in time and that there'd be a natural reluctance to criticize the hand that is feeding one's organization.

So this is the Premier that this member supports, that all members opposite support, who's coming out and questioning journalists in a time when, you know, trust in media is at an all-time low because of the actions of parties just like the Premier's. He continues to attack the media over and over and over again.

The member opposite talks about vaccine hesitancy. You know, this is a major issue in his constituency. I invite him to become active on that issue, to speak out and speak up about that. But his own Premier and his own party continually call into question the role of the media.

The Premier argued that journalists may feel a, quote, sense of obligation or perceived sense of duty to the government that funds them. The Premier has to know that journalists in this province and across the

world have a code of conduct and take their responsibility and their role in our democracy seriously, and yet, the Premier continues to question.

He did so when he questioned the reporters in the Free Press who reported on a factual story about Costa Rica and about his tax bill there, which, you know, despite what the Premier would like to have happen, is a story that's not going away and is part of his legacy to this province, where he walks away from his tax obligations elsewhere and then rigs it in his own favour here in his own province.

This Premier actually, you know, suggested that he would sue or did sue the Winnipeg Free Press, unbelievably, and for a story that was—turned out to be completely factual and completely true. The Premier said that they required them to print an apology on the front page of its Saturday paper and that this apology would be accompanied by a photo that the Premier would choose himself and that the newspaper and its reporters would be required to reveal their sources of their story.

I mean, this is the kind of stuff that we may expect from Donald Trump in the United States, but Manitobans here reject that kind of talk and reject that kind of attitude towards our local newspapers.

So where was the member when the Premier was saying this? Where was the member when his party sent out an email, a fundraising letter to their supporters, calling the Winnipeg Free Press fake news, suggesting that it was fake news, you know, and using the language that the Free Press—the free media needed to be fought. I mean, this is just—this is the kind of stuff that I think most Manitobans would reject if they knew what this government was up to.

But you have members here who continue to use language of, oh, we support local journalism. We support local newspapers, yet their actions are clear that they don't.

The fundraising letter in question said Manitobans, and quote, most news outlets understand the value of the importance of fairness, balance, especially at a time when there is so much misinformation out there. So is this the misinformation that local journalists are doing? Is that what the fundraising letter was referring to?

It talked about how biased reporters were against this government, as if their own failures weren't fodder enough to write the plethora of articles that have pointed out all the ways that they have failed Manitobans. And then, as I said, the letter conclude by

asking their supporters to make a donation so that they can, quote, fight back—fight back.

After what we saw in the United States, the big lie, January 6th insurrection, this government continues to use language like, fight back against journalists here in this province. It's sickening. It's not where Manitobans are at and it's only where this member and his party are at.

On a practical level and on a day-to-day basis, this member continues to support a party that has taken away revenue and sources of income from local journalists and no-local newspapers. Bill 8, the member says he was at the caucus table. He stood in lockstep with this government to take away the notices that were required by government as our party, as the official opposition stood up and fought back against that taking away of notices for local newspapers. He stood by while this government took away subsidies for recycling for local newspapers which hit their ball-bottom line significantly, and yet he speaks—he doesn't speak up about that.

And yet, just a few weeks ago, I looked back in the Hansard. I looked for references just a few weeks ago as Bill 53 went through the stages in this Legislature. I looked for the member opposite to bring forward words against his government about this taking away of notices for municipalities, a further erosion of the responsibility and role for local newspapers. I saw nothing. I saw no reference from the member opposite.

And yet his own minister stood up in the House, repeatedly misled the House as we asked direct questions, said no, no, no, that's not what—is the intent of this bill is; and yet we see that local newspapers are getting hit hard.

Time and time and time again, it is our party that is standing up for local newspapers, speaking up for local voices and speaking up for local choices. This government continues to attack journalists. You know, it might be Rosemary Barton one week; it might be Dan Lett the next week. Manitobans understand that they want the true information from journalists. They want a strong, independent media in this province, and that does include those local voices.

So we'll stand up on the practical level every single day to support those local newspapers to ensure that they have the revenue, to ensure that they are sustainable going into the future. But we'll also stand up for their voices in terms of the journalism that they

do, to speak out against this government as they so choose or as they see fit.

We support the work that they do on the local level to bring to attention when members opposite are silent when it comes to issues in their constituency. We will fight for their right to do that and we will fight for all newspapers and all journalists, whether it's the Free Press, the Winnipeg Sun, whether it's any other print media or any other journalism.

There's an important role to be played and despite what this member wants—he wants a post-truth Manitoba. He wants to be able to say one thing. He supports his leader when his leader goes out and misleads and doesn't tell the truth. Well, that's fine. We will not stand by. We'll call them out every single chance that we get. We'll call them out and we will not fall into this post-truth world that the member opposite wants to bring.

* (11:30)

Words matter, but actions matter, too. So if the member really supports local newspapers, I invite him to actually stand with us as we fight for them, to withdraw this resolution and stand by local journalism every single day of the week.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): It gives me great pleasure this morning to put a few words on the record to this great resolution put forward by my colleague, the member from Borderland.

Before I get into some of the misinformation/disinformation that the member from Concordia once again puts on the record from his narrow, narrow view from a small, small corner within the city of the Winnipeg. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as evidence proved that when he—when it took the time to actually mention a few newspapers, didn't mention any.

So, as far as, you know, besides the—some of the big ones within the city of Winnipeg—but that, as my colleague from Borderland had mentioned earlier, speaking to the resolution, is the fact that the NDP, yes, they stand up for local newspapers if it's so local as to—just within the city of Winnipeg; that's who they stand up for. But it is going to give me some great pleasure to put a few factual words on the record in regards to the federal government's program.

But before I get going, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to ask the member for the Liberal—the Leader of

the Manitoba Liberal Party, that when he gets an opportunity to stand up and speak to possibly this or the next opportunity in the House, is to actually stand up and apologize to the House for putting disinformation on the record.

Unfortunately, the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party—and I see he's very inquisitive, listening intently to what I'm going to say next, but the fact is is that the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) has many, many, many years of experience in the community newspaper industry. He was involved for approximately 40 years. But, in fact, the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party should do his homework, as many of his former students should have done, do some fact-checking before you go and put disinformation on the record. And this is going to the liberal—to the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party that the member for Riding Mountain actually does not own any shares in any community newspapers here in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I will wait to listen to the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party apologize later on for putting that disinformation, and the reason why I'm saying not misinformation is because I do believe he did it deliberately, but if he wants to correct the record and say that he was misinformed by his speech writers, then that's fine, too. So we'll wait for that later on.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I would just like to remind the minister that using the words misleading is—or deliberately misleading is not the proper parliamentary language. So I would ask the member to retract that and continue with his speech.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thanks for the advisement. I didn't believe that I did say misleading, but I did definitely say misinformation and disinformation, but I'll take your words as gospel and retract my misleading comment. But I do know for a fact that the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party was definitely putting disinformation on the record.

So I will continue going on with the resolution. I think the member from Concordia missed the boat a little bit, as he often does. And I'm not sure, I was sort of hoping that, you know, I know that their party doesn't like to talk about the small watercraft such as canoes, but—so I'm going to refrain from talking about any type of steering small watercraft and anytime—it's a—of a more positive direction.

But the fact is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the federal program to support journalism, there's three

separate tax measures put out by the federal Liberal Party, and that's basically that the Canadian journalism labour tax credit, which is a 25 per cent refundable tax credit on salaries or wages payable in respect of an eligible newsroom employee for periods beginning on or after January 1st, 2019.

There's another one, the digital news subscription tax credit, a 15 per cent non-refundable personal income tax credit for digital news subscription costs paid by an individual to a qualified Canadian journalism organization which applies to qualifying amounts paid after 2019 and before 2025.

And a new type of qualified donation recipient called a registered journalism organization for not-for-profit journalism organizations, which is in effect as of January 1st, 2020. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the problem is who's eligible for this?

And the reason for the resolution this morning is so that we stand united as the member from Concordia mentions, he likes to say that his party stands up and is in favour of community newspapers, the small and the large ones. We know that in order to be eligible for these said federal Liberal tax credits or incentives, is basically that the budget stated that the news outlets must be qualified, in quotation, qualified Canadian journalism organizations—so, QCJO for short—in order to be eligible for the funding.

However, the designation of a Q-C-G-J-O is still being determined by the government.

So, basically, what we're trying to do and what the—you know, the resolution's trying to do is show that Manitoba is standing in solidarity, basically asking the federal government to make sure that they're taking a look at who qualifies for those tax subsidies, the program. So that's what the resolution's doing, is basically that we here in Manitoba are standing up for newspapers.

We know that—I mean, I have the pleasure of, out in the Lac du Bonnet constituency, having three small community newspapers right now. I mean, we've got: The Clipper, which is divided up into the original Clipper and then the Lac du Bonnet Clipper; and then we've got The Dawson Trail Dispatch; and then we've got the Carillon; and recently, unfortunately, the Winnipeg River Echo has—is going through some changes, so they're not printing right now.

But this just speaks to the fact that some organizations—the—you know, the federal Liberal government needs to consider some of these other newspapers when they are talking about putting

forward these types of tax credits. I know that the member from Concordia, you know, of course, mentioned the Winnipeg Free Press and some of their editors and that, and he also did mention the Winnipeg Sun to be fair. But the four that are eligible right now is the Winnipeg Free Press, the Winnipeg Sun, the Brandon Sun and the Carillon which is fine, but the federal government needs to take a look at community newspapers as well.

I know that many businesses—many, many small community newspapers are free subscription and they get their revenue from paid advertising and small business support within their newspapers. I know that right now the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party's racking his brain out on how he's going to be apologizing right away.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the biggest problem with this program and—is the fact that for newspapers, it only includes those news organizations that have those online subscriptions. And, again, the only papers right now that are eligible are the four that I've already mentioned: the Winnipeg Free Press, the Sun, the Carillon and the—and good on them, absolutely.

But the fact is that community newspapers are facing a real risk of shutting down and the federal government has created an inceptive program that only helps drive subscriptions to the large conglomerate news chains.

And so we've already heard the member from Concordia mentioned a few of his favourite journalists, you know, and I'm not going to put any disparaging comments on the record in regards to anybody—or anybody that is getting a paycheque writing some stories.

* (11:40)

But that being said, this resolution basically focuses on the fact that we are calling—through the member from Borderland, calling on the federal government to revise and improve the federal government's journalism subsidies. That's all. This is not—a non-partisan thing, this is a standing-up-for-Manitoba thing, and definitely for our small rural community newspapers, and there are some also within the city of Winnipeg.

So I would like the member from Concordia also just to stop putting partisan politics up front, and let's

pass this resolution unanimously this morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Thanks for the time.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I would like to begin by acknowledging that I, currently, as I am sitting remotely, I'm sitting on Treaty 5 territory, and I do want to acknowledge that the Legislature, where we are sitting remotely and via Zoom, is on Treaty 1 territory, home of the Ojibwe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, Dene, Inuit peoples and homeland of the Métis nation. Now that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a PMR that should be a priority of this government, not the PMR that currently exists before us.

And I understand the member from Borderland, who also contributed to talking out the land acknowledgement PMR, I might add, brings forth a private member's resolution at this time to really show the lack of priority by this government and its representation of the entire province.

The member from Lac du Bonnet pointed out that my esteemed colleague from Concordia represents a small, small corner of Winnipeg, when, in fact, now, here I am speaking, representing the big, big corner of the province, and I'm sure it'll just take a google search to be able to see that, in fact, the biggest corner of the province. So when you google the notes that you seem to be putting out on behalf of supporting your lacklustre resolutions, then look at that as a priority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a number of things that lead me to wonder exactly why, during this time of a global pandemic, these various private members' bills, private members' resolutions are being brought forward as a priority when there's other things that are currently going on of more importance, and not specific to the North, not 'sepsific' to urban areas or rural areas, but specific overall.

The member from Borderland had talked about how vaccine uptake is extremely low in his constituency, but yet he chooses to take this PMR as a priority instead of prioritizing how to increase that vaccine uptake. I think that's something that his time would be much better spent on doing, so that we can all overcome this pandemic together.

But, in speaking directly to the resolution at hand, it just goes to the—to show the disconnect that this government and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has, and the member from Borderland has with what's going on today. While we call on greater supports for the media, this government's own words contradict that, and the supports that are being called on—and there's

a number of resolutions and a number of private members' bills, resolutions, media, tweets, social media posts, releases that are given out by this government that consistently calls on the federal government for this, calls on them for that, for increased supports. But yet, at the same time, those same supports are not existing from this current government.

So, for this government to go hat in hand and ask the federal government for additional funds or maybe one of their bags of money that they claim that they have, when, meanwhile, you're not actively engaging in spending your own financial resources at this level to help either local businesses or help during the pandemic, it cites the—I've heard the words, and it reminds me back to my childhood of Scrooge McDuck, who's kind of trying to hold all the money but look like they're coming off like the rich people in the province to be able to overcome, but not spending the money when it should be spent, so that the priority of this government is just totally lost on everybody.

It's—and it's lost on the member from Borderland, obviously. And I understand that there gets a point where he has to look like he's contributing to the workings of this government, but we all know that that's a top-down approach, that if you're not in the inner circle you really don't have anything to contribute and anything to add. And you just have to continue on with the marching orders that are being put forward by you.

So when we talk about the local investment, and in particular with this resolution to local investment and local media and local papers, that message being brought forth and that sense of urgency being brought forth, that the member from Borderland is not being supported by his own party, is not being supported by his own Premier.

Perhaps, maybe if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) ever got to be able to do that and actually go and contribute and make a contribution to the paper, it would all—it would come with a clause. It would come a disclaimer saying that if we support the local newspapers, you have to for sure have my face on the front page nine out of 10 editions, you have to promote me nine out of 10 times, you have to use that to prop that up. And really, that gets into being propaganda. That doesn't get into being any kind of media.

So, if we called on these federal supports and we support his resolution to call on federal subsidies, is that something that would then have to be in place by the Premier? Would the Premier insist on, well this is all great, but you have to support us, you have to be

able to allow me, allow us, allow our party to be able to do what we want to do and not be unbiased, you have to be biased in my favour.

Because we all know how the Premier reacts to, quote, unquote, fake news. You know, when the facts of your dealings in government, the facts of your failures, the facts of your ineptitudes are being brought forth, that's not fake news. That's news being brought forth in a concise way for all the people of Manitoba, no matter where you reside; whether you reside in the smallest corner of Winnipeg or rise in a biggest corner of the province. Those facts are on the record and those facts have the right to be heard and the right to be seen by all, without partisan politics and being able to be manipulated in any sort of form.

And that just doesn't exist from this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There's always a catch. There's always a catch to a support. There's always a catch to a financial contribution by this government, and in particular, I mean, I gets me back to the tax rebate, you know. They want to have a 'hen'—a cheque signed by the Premier or signed by the minister.

Again, there's a catch to it, an advantage in a rebate program. Goes back to the \$200 subsidy that was given back to elders in our province—came with a personal letter signed by—well, we all know the Premier's first name; signed personally by that. But you know, would not sign layoff notices to Hydro workers, would not sign layoff notices to civil servants.

So, when we get back to the lack of supports from this government, this government consistently talks about the failures of the federal government in being—not being able to step up, not being able to do various things for the communities, and of course, in this time we're dealing with primarily the pandemic [*inaudible*].

The Premier likes to point out that the failures of the pandemic, the failures of the federal government in the supports, but never once—very own government in not being able to support those same things.

Even just over the last few days, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's been a number of calls for the Premier to now be a leader. He touts himself as being a greeter and the best leader in the province, the best Premier in the province. He's in the top 10, you know, he is 10th, but it is the top ten, nonetheless, in terms of favourable premiers in the province, but I'm sure that's a spin—that's the kind of spin that he would want to put on that.

But failing to lead—you know, why wait for the federal government to make contributions? Why wait for the federal government to step up and why—and then attempt to fill in any kind of potential gaps that may exist after the federal government? Why not be the leader? Why not be at the forefront? Why not be the initiator of various programs? Why not be the initiator of supports for these newspapers?

And in—thinking in the last couple days, why isn't the Premier (Mr. Pallister) being the leader in calling for the call for the search for residential school mass grave sites? Why not be the leader? That was asked in Estimates yesterday and that wasn't—it wasn't made a priority. Instead, this PMR today is being listed as a priority.

Why isn't it a priority to the Premier then to be the leader and initiate and get out there and say, this is what we're going to do, this is what we want to do for the people of Manitoba. But instead, the private member's resolution brought today by the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) that is calling on the federal government to revise and approve the federal government's journalism subsidies is the priority. And that's just a simple failure.

* (11:50)

In this last day of the Legislature and this last day of sitting, that's the priority. With all of the emerging issues and all of the people in Manitoba that are suffering; suffering financially, suffering ill health, not knowing whether they're going to survive payday to payday, paycheque to paycheque, the priority is still to bring forth this PMR, and it's just embarrassing, it's just embarrassing to be able to think that this is what the government feels is a priority. And instead, let's call in the feds, let's call in the feds to do this, let's call in the feds to do that. And at the same time, not stepping up to own your own responsibility. And it's just shameful, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yes, I mean, I'll address the comments by the MLA for Lac du Bonnet. The fact is, is that the MLA for Riding Mountain, when Bill 8 came forward, recused himself because he said he had a conflict of interest because his family is involved in running a series of newspapers who would benefit directly from this.

The Minnedosa Tribune, on its online site, says supported by the Government of Canada because these newspapers, as many rural newspapers have,

have been receiving the Canadian wage subsidy, which is completely legitimate.

Like, I actually believe in supporting rural newspapers, in supporting reporting and democracy, but you know what, there's a way that we can get the message about vaccines into those newspapers and it would be for the provincial government to buy ads. They are newspapers. They work through buying ads. They don't have to work through subsidy.

That—and one of the things about newspapers versus advertising, is you get to control the message in an ad. If you—the entire expectation of this government seems to be that if you're paying a newspaper you get to tell them what to print; that's only in the ad section, it's not in the reporting section and it's not in the editorial section.

This government went out of its way to undermine newspapers—and look, I agree, could the federal government be doing more? Yes. But I don't understand why this government is always asking the federal government to do more when they're not doing anything. We keep asking people to do—why don't you do a better job of something when the people asking aren't doing anything.

And it's clear that there is a much deeper issue with—here with trying to discredit the Winnipeg Free Press; the PCs have been very clear about that. The fact is, is that the way these programs have been designed is that it's designed to support reporting. And some of that reporting is going to be about things that we don't want to hear. That's life. That's politics.

But to make a political issue of this, to spend our hour debating this when the entire government side is in a position to put forward money and talk to the Premier or the Finance Minister and say, you know what, we should spend some money encouraging people to get vaccinations in rural newspapers. That would be a pretty simple fix, and it would actually be this government's job, because this government is overwhelmingly expected to just do an announcement a day and then let reporters and journalists do all the heavy lifting about communications, and that's not acceptable or appropriate.

I think over a year ago we called for more investments, we called for independent, non-political advertising—and this is also a government—for all that the federal government is supposed to have bags of money, this is a government that has never had any problem finding money for—\$300 million for the PST, \$250 million for property tax cuts, for pipelines, or

for, you know, \$200 million for Investors Group stadium. It's a question of priorities, and if this were really a priority of this government they would be putting money into it themselves, and it's not.

That's all I have to say.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I'd like to thank the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) for putting this forward. As he noted in some of his comments, I also represent an area where local journalism and local newspapers have always been a very important part of our community.

In fact we're one of the few small communities outside of Winnipeg that had—did have a daily paper for many, many years. And it was a victim of the massive changes in terms of advertising that we have seen that is somewhat related to the development of advertising on social media. It's also probably a little related to the fact that businesses are now much larger and want to advertise across the whole province and,

of course, pursue that in the large province-wide newspapers rather than little local ones, which I think is a mistake on their part because they certainly lose loyalty in the community.

And we went through the whole process here in my constituency of going from a daily to a three times a week process to finally to a weekly and then, for a very short period of time, having no newspaper at all, other than an online version. And of course, as the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) noted, many of these small papers are going to a very strong online presence and that's something that I know our government has been working towards—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order. When this matter is again before the House, the member for Portage la Prairie will have eight minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 o'clock, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 1, 2021

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