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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

Private members' business—

ORDERS OF THE DAY**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS****SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS****Bill 225—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Universal Screening for Learning Disabilities)**

The Speaker: As previously announced, the honourable member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) has indicated that Bill 225, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Universal Screening for Learning Disabilities), will be their selected bill for this session and that the question will be put on second reading of this bill this morning at 10:55 a.m.

Accordingly, I will now recognize the honourable member for Tyndall Park to move the second reading motion to begin this debate.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I move that Bill 225, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Universal Screening for Learning Disabilities), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Lamoureux: I'm very happy to rise this morning on Bill 225, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Universal Screening for Learning Disabilities). It is a matter of equity, opportunity and social justice. It is the key to unlocking the potential of thousands of children who can often slip through the cracks of our education system.

I want to begin by thanking all of those who have contributed to this legislation and who have taken the time to consult with my office on this legislation. We have been consulting for well over a year now, Honourable Speaker.

Several of the people who we consulted with and who contributed to this legislation have joined us today in the galleries for this debate here this morning.

We first introduced it here in the House on March 26, and I'm very, very open to any amendments that both the government or official opposition may have. It's extremely important legislation and it has the ability to be passed here in the Legislature as early as next month with the support of all of those in the Chamber.

Now, this bill is about ensuring that every child, regardless of socio-economic background, receives the support they need to succeed. The right to literacy is a fundamental human right that will change lives. Currently, Manitoba's 37 school divisions do not have a clear or consistent direction with respect to screening assessments for reading. This bill allows Manitoba to join many other jurisdictions in Canada who mandate universal screening for all students.

The bill amends The Public Schools Act to require all students in kindergarten to grade 3 to be screened twice per school year for learning disabilities by educators using a screening tool that must be formally approved by the minister. It further states that parents and legal guardians must be informed of their child's screening results within 30 days, and school boards must use the screening results to guide further

assessments and allocate specialized resources accordingly.

Now, just for a bit of background, several years ago, it was shared with me how, for decades, Manitoba has struggled with literacy outcomes. I've since done a deep dive on the issue and, according to reports and stakeholders, there is a literacy crisis here in Manitoba. Only 40 per cent of students are reading at grade level, and for Indigenous students, the numbers are even worse.

These statistics are not new; they have remained unchanged for over 20 years. We know this in part because of a 2008 report published by the Manitoba government that found Manitoba educators and stakeholders were calling for a better method of screening learners. And despite multiple educational reforms, one thing that has remained constant is the absence of a standardized, universal approach to identify learning disabilities early on.

Now, Honourable Speaker, students with low literacy skills are more likely to leave school without graduating. If they do manage to graduate, they are more likely to be unsuccessful if they enter post-secondary education, and this extends to adults who struggle with literacy being more likely to work in entry-level jobs. This ultimately creates a cycle of inequity because socio-economic status is the single most powerful predictor of educational outcomes.

Further, those who are not literate have a high likelihood of living in poverty. Approximately 65 per cent of those receiving social assistance struggled with literacy, and 70 per cent of inmates entering federal custody have less than grade 8 level literacy levels.

Allow for me to table all of the stats that I just shared.

Now, through consultation, I learned about why early intervention is so important. For one, children's brains are most malleable in their early years, and when children struggle in silence, they will often develop behavioural changes—challenges stemming from academic frustrations.

Further, I learned that experts in speech language pathology and literacy development stressed the importance of evidence-based interventions. Take, for example, Evergreen and Louis Riel School Divisions. They have been leaders in structured literacy, implementing universal screening and seeing significant improvements, particularly among Indigenous students.

Now, Honourable Speaker, I want to acknowledge that on Friday, April 11, the government announced they would implement universal screening. I want to be very clear: I first brought this forward through legislation on March 26. I'm choosing to believe that this government made this announcement because they intend to support Bill 225 here today. I'm sure the minister is aware that parliamentary rule states that an MLA, including ministers, cannot discuss or release the details of a bill before the bill has been introduced. And furthermore, after consulting with concerned teachers and specialists about this government's news release on Friday, it was made clear that there are important clauses missing from the government's announcement.

* (10:10)

Firstly, educators must provide the results of the screening to pupils or parents—and parents or legal guardians within 30 days after administering screening; and secondly, the school board must ensure that further assessments and other specialized resources are allocated, based on the results of the screening. And lastly, Honourable Speaker, another concern from stakeholders is the vagueness of the news release, which will again facilitate inequitable access to education, as some school boards will adopt the spirit of universal screening and others may not. This vague approach to education is the reason our literacy rates continue to be well below average. We owe it to our students, educators and families to do better.

So, in closing, Honourable Speaker, a great deal of consultation and work has gone into this legislation. I am very open to any amendments that the government or official opposition may have, and I hope to have unanimous support when this bill comes to a vote here at second reading at 10:55.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Just a reminder to guests in the gallery, they're not to participate in what takes place down here on the floor.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): I would like to start off this question period by acknowledging the work that's gone into this by both the member for Tyndall Park, though as well the many, many community advocates who have been advocating for as long as they can probably remember to ensure that people that they love don't fall through the cracks of the system.

Honourable Speaker, the member and I can certainly agree that everyone deserves to reach their full potential despite diverse abilities. Having an undiagnosed neurodivergence is something that I have personally related to in the past and something that I don't wish upon anyone.

As mentioned, our government recently announced that school divisions will implement universal early reading screening tools to ensure that no student is left behind. I look forward to asking more questions on the content of the bill coming up and give Cindy another—oh, the member for Tyndall—

The Speaker: The time has expired.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank my colleague from Radisson for the great question, or shared sentiments, here in the Chambers.

I certainly appreciate the acknowledgement that I believe all parties—and, I would argue, all levels of government, whether that be federal, provincial, municipal—all are in agreement that we want to see students here in Manitoba succeed.

And in order to do that provincially, we have a role. We have a responsibility. And I believe that that includes ensuring that students are receiving fair and equitable learning opportunities.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'd like to thank the member for Tyndall Park for bringing forward once again thoughtful and well-researched legislation in this Chamber.

And I'd just like to ask her if she could elaborate on who she's consulted on Bill 225.

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank my colleague from Roblin on the very important question when it comes to any form of legislation. Consultation is such an important part of it. We need to know that it comes from Manitobans far and wide.

For this specific piece of legislation, I have met with educators, parents, school boards, child specialists, pediatricians, speech pathologists, some of

whom have actually joined us today in the gallery. And, if given another opportunity, I'll go into some more specifics about where the teachers are from and national experts.

MLA Dela Cruz: Having worked in disability services prior to my time in politics, I know that the language in this bill is particularly vague, you know, compared to what our government has already announced.

Using the general term of learning disabilities when the correct diagnostic term is specific learning disorders, from my experience, would cause some confusion both in the learning community, professional community but also for some families as well.

So my question to the member opposite is if she can continue to elaborate on who she consulted in the language of this bill.

MLA Lamoureux: I am happy to continue to list people who I have consulted with, whether it be teachers from Louis Riel School Division or Evergreen who have already implemented universal screening for students within their schools; whether it be national experts from Dyslexia Canada, as an example; child specialists, including speech language pathologists; and school division senior leadership, just to name a few more people we have consulted with.

I feel very strongly that this bill has been put through many, many different sets of eyes as far as what the content is, the language used within the bill. It is very, very inclusive and I would argue the opposite of vague. We're quite specific within the bill.

And since consulting with others over the weekend—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Does the member have a personal story or someone with a story about this bill and its importance?

MLA Lamoureux: That's a very good question. Oftentimes, legislation will stem from a person's personal experience or something they have seen or witnessed first-hand. I'm sure every single MLA in these Chambers know of people, have friends or family members, who maybe would have benefited from legislation such as this.

I know that I have family members—and I don't want to get too into the specifics without first having their consent to speak about them, but there are

definitely people who I feel have fallen through the cracks, both personally and through all of the stories that I have heard through the consultation on this legislation.

MLA Dela Cruz: Honourable Speaker, once again, I thank the member for giving this Chamber the opportunity to shed some light today on something impacting far too many Manitobans. On this side of the House, we have a strong contingent of educators who can attest to both the need for kids with unique needs to receive support and what is already on the plate of educators as is.

Screening for all learning disorders is something that not all teachers have the bandwidth to personally do, Honourable Speaker. And so my question is, how does the member see this impacting the workload of our province's hard-working educators?

MLA Lamoureux: That is a great question. And I think it is important, as the member from Radisson noted, that there are educators here in these Chambers right now as we debate this legislation. And I think that if we all come together and have a very fruitful discussion on it, Honourable Speaker, we can pass it here this morning.

With respect to the idea of educators perhaps feeling overworked, we need to make reference to the school divisions that are currently implementing universal screening. We're seeing it in Louis Riel School Division and Evergreen School Division as we speak, so they can attest to the work that has changed. It's important to note that it's not just teachers who would be administering these screening tools—a screening tool that would also have to be approved by the minister—but it's educators as a—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I'm wondering if the member could tell the Chamber a little bit more about the differences between structured and balanced literacy, and the benefits of structured literacy.

MLA Lamoureux: That's a very good question, Honourable Speaker.

The reason we need to ensure that there is more structure, especially with respect to universal screening, is so that we can essentially monitor—ensure that children are continuing to progress forward with the educational resources that they may need to be able to develop strong literacy skills and later succeed in life.

With respect to this bill, what has been recommended is that a screening would take place at the beginning of the school year, perhaps in about October, and a screening would take place for a second time in about March or April. This bill does not force schools to do this. We want to be able to work with school divisions to best accommodate their needs and their school curriculums, as well.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Dela Cruz: Perhaps this question will allow the member to continue to elaborate on the last response there.

As a government, we're increasing supports to ensure that all our youngest learners are screened for early reading skills, to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulties, including those who have experience with dyslexia.

As part of our government's rollout of this universal early reading screening tool, school divisions will need to report to the department annually. And so I ask the member why Bill 225 doesn't include this reporting requirement, Honourable Speaker?

MLA Lamoureux: I would be more than happy to accept an amendment that would enhance this legislation if the government felt that that was an important part to be included in this legislation. My hope is that the Minister of Education will, in fact, bring forward that as an amendment.

The important part to realize with respect to the announcement that the government made this past Friday, is their announcement is vague. It does not legislate the importance of universal screening. It puts the onus on the schools; if they choose to use it, they can; if they choose not to or choose to opt out, it allows for them to opt out.

* (10:20)

We need to focus on ensuring that learning is equitable. Every child, whether you're living up north, in rural Manitoba, here in inner-city Winnipeg—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Lagassé: Can the member let us know if there are enough specialists or trained experts in the education system to conduct these tests and make these assessments?

MLA Lamoureux: I thank the member from Dawson Trail for the question.

The short answer is yes. There are enough educators within our school systems right now to conduct these tests. From what I have learned, from those I have consulted with and where it is currently being practised in the two other school divisions right now in Manitoba, is it's about a five-minute test that takes place twice a year and it includes an educator sitting down with the student, just to have a one-on-one-type conversation.

MLA Dela Cruz: So, in theory, with the way that the bill is written currently, students could be—are recommended to be screened twice a year, and that would fulfill this bill's requirements. Our rollout as a government requires that students are screened in fall and then again in spring, aligning with reporting periods.

My question to the member opposite is, why does Bill 225 not prescribe when students should be screened, and are there any recommendations that came out of her consultation as to when to do that?

MLA Lamoureux: There's a bit more to the legislation that's been brought forward. In addition to the two screenings a year, it's important to reiterate that parents and legal guardians would also have to be informed of their child's screening results within 30 days. This is something that the government chose not to roll out in their announcement this past Friday.

It also includes school boards must use the screening results to guide further assessment and allocate specialized resources accordingly. Once again, this was not included in the government's announcement this past Friday.

It's important these parts are included in this piece of legislation and that in fact the topic in and of itself is legislated so that schools have to follow through with them for the benefit of children here in Manitoba.

The Speaker: The time for the question period has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I'd like to thank the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) for bringing forward Bill 225, the public schools amendment act.

If the Speaker would just indulge me just for a moment, I just want to highlight that this week is education week. And so I just want to take a moment before I get into the more substantive part of my remarks to lift up all of those educators right across

our great province. They're doing such incredible work, and I just want to really lift them up during this time, this education week. And I would recommend all members of the Chamber do so in their home constituency.

So any time that we're talking about kids and talking about different mechanisms to ensure the best education, the best supports are in place for kids, is a good day. It's a good day in the Chamber when we're bringing forward different ideas, when we're bringing forward different policies that work to support children.

We recognize that on this side of the House. I'm sure the member for Tyndall Park, you know, who's done a lot of substantive work in this field, feels the same.

Education is so important. We have a number of educators on our team and I'm very proud to be one of them. I spent a number of years, a couple decades, being a teacher, and so that's something that's very near and dear to my heart. And it's something that I feel very passionately about in terms of ensuring that kids have all of the supports that they need. And that is why I am very proud to be a part of a government that is working to take a very holistic approach.

Just this past week, as the member mentioned, our government moved another policy initiative forward where we are going to implement a universal early reading tool, a screening tool, to ensure that kids aren't left behind.

Ultimately, that's what we need to do. This is a way that we can directly impact kids' literacy. It's a way that we can do it quickly and implement it quicker than through legislation, and so I appreciate the leadership of the Minister of Education and early learning bringing that forward and making that announcement. It's something that is going to, I hope, really make a difference to the kids right across our province.

As I mentioned, education is so very important and we want to take a holistic approach to this. And so one of the things beyond, you know, policy things of, you know, screening tools and whatnot, it's important that we look at the different aspects to get it right.

And that includes the environment, and that's why we're building, you know, 11 new schools and I think that's really important. It includes the operating costs, and that's why we increased, you know, operating by \$67 million. It includes, you know, providing some of

those supports, the barriers that could get in the way of literacy.

You know, similar to what Bill 225 is working towards or addressing, things like the nutrition program, that universal nutrition program, which, you know, was brought in this past year for the first time in our province's history, trying to ensure that kids have what they need, that when they come to the table, so to speak, when they come to school, that they're able to do the very best that they can.

And so we're trying to look at all the different dynamics that impact kids. We're trying to look at all the different dynamics that impact our education system, writ large.

And you know, it being that it's education week, I also think it's important to think about those teachers and how they are impacted. There are—there's a lot on teachers' plates nowadays, and I'm not suggesting that, you know, this is just, you know, another thing to put on their plates. I'm not—I don't want to get that misconstrued. But there is a lot on teachers' plates.

And as we move in society towards, you know, more inclusion and move towards, you know, the benefits of this or that, there's been an increase in terms of the expectations on teachers. And so I think it's important to recognize that because, at the end of the day, there's only so many hours in a school day. And there's only so much bandwidth, as the member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz) mentioned, in terms of teachers.

And so I think there needs to be supports in place for those teachers. I think it's important that we don't just add something else on top of all of the multitude of really important things that teachers are doing on a daily basis, but we put those supports in place.

Education is a team sport. It's something that, you know, it's not just teachers. It's also—and I would like to use the term educators more broadly, just because it's not just the teachers in the classroom that are doing that good work, although they are. You know, it's the educational assistants, it's the secretaries, it's the front-line staff, whether they're custodial staff, whether that's the person to ensure that the kids are able to cross the street, those patrols, the patrol guards, the—you know, everyone that's involved in the education system. The administrators play incredibly important roles in ensuring that our kids get the best education possible.

And it's important that we provide supports to those teachers, and one aspect that is really critical

in this work with people with disabilities or people with learning disabilities, specifically, is the lack of clinicians that's out there. That's something that teachers struggle with because they don't have the resources to go to. They don't have those folks that they can lean on to try to ensure that those kids have the best programs for them. And that's hard because I know, as a teacher, we want what's best for kids. I believe all teachers do; I believe that all educators do want what's best for kids.

And so when they don't have those resources, when there is not enough clinicians in the system, and there's not, and so, you know, I recognize that—it's hard. It's hard on those educators. It's hard on those kids, specifically, and those families, because they deserve better. They deserve to have the supports, they deserve to have the programming, they deserve to have what they need to succeed.

And at the end of the day, literacy is so incredibly crucial. If you don't have the ability to read, if you don't have the ability to—you know, just to go through your daily life and have that functional literacy, your ability, economically, your ability to navigate life is lessened and that's incredibly tough. It's tough on people.

* (10:30)

And so I appreciate the, you know, the sentiment that this bill has been brought forward. I appreciate all of the work that has went into it. I would hope that in this bill—and I appreciate that the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) has said that she's open to amendments and whatnot. I would hope that further consultation with different groups that are—would be on the frontlines of implementing such a program would take place. I know that she mentioned a few different places—Evergreen, Louis Riel, my home school division.

But I hope that there would be a broader conversation on how to meet the needs of kids with learning disabilities or just literacy at large. I think that conversation needs to happen, and I appreciate that this might—maybe this is the kickoff, maybe this is how we start this conversation across the aisle.

I appreciate the work that our team is doing to really move the needle on important issues like literacy, and that's why we—in our announcement last week, we said that from K to 4—which I think is important that, you know, it's a broader concept that we're looking at in terms of the age range, and it's something that we're looking to do right now. Like, we're looking

to really get into it as soon as possible, and it's going to be a substantive pilot project that hits the majority of kids across our province, and that's—and then we can, you know, go to the next iteration to ensure that we get it right.

Because, ultimately, I think that every member wants to do what's right for kids. I think that, you know, there's a number of educators on this side, there's a number of educators on the other side, and I think it's important that we, you know, work together for the betterment of children. That's the future of Manitoba, and if we're going to have a, you know, a really robust economy, which is what we all want, then we need that good education policy and that includes ensuring that kids have the tools necessary to be literate and all the tools necessary to just function in our society so that they can have the dignity and just live that good life. That's what we want.

And so I appreciate the member bringing forward Bill 225, and I appreciate this conversation about education and how we can improve our education system, writ large.

So thank you very much.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I just want to once again thank the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) who consistently brings forward thoughtful and well-researched legislation when she has the opportunity to do so.

And I know that she's consulted on this bill with a number of advocates, some of whom have joined us in the gallery. I recognize a few faces up there, and I just wanted to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank them for their advocacy on this important issue.

In particular, I wanted to mention Carrie Wood who is a constituent of mine, actually, in Roblin. She's a passionate expert and a teacher and a parent herself. She knows this issue probably better than anyone, so I did have the opportunity to sit down with her, and she told me all about the differences between structured literacy and balanced literacy and the importance of a universal screening tool. And I think that it's her work in large part, and those of her colleagues and fellow advocates, and I think it's because of her that we're here today and that this legislation is on the floor of the Chamber. So kudos to Ms. Wood and her family.

I just—I would be remiss if I didn't mention the fact that this is not the first time the sitting NDP government has essentially tried to steal an idea from

the member for Tyndall Park. And, to be clear, the member for Tyndall Park does not need me to defend her. She's been here longer than I have, she knows this place far better than I do, but I do feel the need to say something because the NDP talk a big game about working collaboratively and working across party lines, but the truth is they—all they really care about is who gets the credit.

And to the member for Tyndall Park's credit, I think she'd be fine with them stealing the idea if they did it well. But the point is that they stole her idea and rushed it, and as the member pointed out in her opening comments, there's a few things missing from the government's announcement on Friday; for example, a provision that screening results be shared with students and their families and, probably most importantly, that resources be allocated based on the results of that screening—because doing the screening in and of itself is one thing, but it has to be followed up with resources and supports for students who need them in our schools.

So, once again, I just want to thank the member for bringing forward this legislation, for all the work that she's done. I'm sorry to her that, once again, the NDP care more about who gets the credit than about the needs of Manitoba students but I'm sure she's not surprised. And most importantly, I'd like to, once again, thank the advocates who've joined us in the gallery today.

Thank you.

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): C'est un énorme plaisir d'avoir la chance de parler ce matin au sujet de ce projet de loi. J'aimerais remercier la députée de Tyndall Park (DAL Lamoureux).

Quand on a la chance de parler d'éducation dans cette Chambre, c'est toujours un énorme plaisir pour moi et notre équipe, où on retrouve d'ailleurs quantité d'enseignants, d'éducateurs. Moi-même, j'ai eu la chance d'enseigner pendant 28 ans, tant en anglais qu'en français. Dernièrement, j'ai travaillé pour la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine.

Et j'aimerais prendre cette opportunité pour vraiment féliciter le travail des éducateurs et éducatrices pour Manitoba puisque c'est la semaine de l'éducation ici, au Manitoba. Et on reconnaît que nos écoles et le travail que font nos éducateurs est essentiel, non seulement pour nos communautés, nos familles, nos élèves, mais aussi pour l'économie puisqu'on sait qu'un système d'éducation est la roche-mère, la fondation même, d'une bonne économie.

Alors, ce projet de loi parle de dépistage. Et j'aimerais rassurer les Manitobains et Manitobaines, et aussi en tant qu'éducateur de longue date, que déjà dans nos écoles, dans les divisions scolaires, un énorme montant de dépistage se fait.

Récemment, au mois de janvier, à travers le Manitoba, on fait l'inscription pour la maternelle. Alors, on demande les familles de rentrer avec leurs jeunes. Des fois, c'est toujours mouvementé dans les écoles quand des nouvelles familles rentrent, avec des jeunes qui sont, disons, un peu incertains d'une nouvelle école, d'une nouvelle étape dans leur vie, des jeunes de quatre, cinq ans.

Mais j'aimerais reconnaître que, déjà quand les jeunes arrivent en maternelle et rencontrent l'équipe des services aux élèves, déjà le dépistage commence. Déjà on commence à voir si un jeune qui va bientôt rentrer en maternelle a certaines compétences au niveau de la littéracie et de la numératie, puisqu'on sait que dans un monde moderne, les exigences en littéracie et numératie sont énormes.

Je sais qu'à l'École Précieux-Sang où je travaillais, on poussait beaucoup les modes d'apprentissage. Alors que ça soit visuel ou auditif ou kinesthésique, on voulait toujours outiller les jeunes quand ça vient à leurs forces, à leurs capacités.

Je sais, quand moi j'étais un petit bout – comme on dit en français – au niveau de la famille, je sais que mes parents lisaient beaucoup avec moi. Et puis, quand je suis rentré à la maternelle, je connaissais déjà mon alphabet et je savais déjà lire. Et puis, mes profs avaient de la difficulté à croire que j'étais déjà si avancé au niveau de la littéracie. Mais évidemment, j'étais chanceux parce que mes deux parents étaient tous les deux enseignants.

Et j'aimerais vraiment reconnaître le travail d'une éducatrice spécifique : Lucienne Beaudry-Loiselle, ma mère, qui était enseignante pendant 40 ans. Et je suis vraiment fier du travail que Madame Loiselle – ma mère – a fait au niveau de l'apprentissage dans les écoles de la DSFM, de la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, parce que ma mère est reconnue pour avoir mis sur pied le Centre de ressources au Collège Louis Riel, où non seulement est-ce que les jeunes étaient outillés pour devenir des meilleurs apprenants, mais les enseignants étaient aussi outillés à travers le centre d'apprentissage pour apprendre à nous dépister tous les défis que peuvent avoir des jeunes élèves dans nos écoles.

Encore une fois, dans la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, on enseigne le français – uniquement le français – de la maternelle jusqu'à la troisième année. Alors, le dépistage spécifique qui se fait dans nos écoles de la DSFM est excellent. Et encore une fois, j'aimerais reconnaître l'excellent travail que font les enseignants et les enseignantes dans la DSFM. Et encore une fois, je suis fier, en tant qu'éducateur chevronné de longue date, de faire partie d'un gouvernement qui appuie l'éducation au Manitoba.

D'ailleurs, dans notre dernier budget, on a annoncé qu'on va appuyer une nouvelle école à Saint-Boniface, une nouvelle école francophone. Et d'ailleurs, bâtir une nouvelle école de la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine à Brandon Ouest, qui est vraiment, vraiment de bonnes nouvelles.

Je sais aussi que, des fois, dans nos écoles, on fait face à des jeunes qui ont des problèmes d'apprentissage, qui des fois ont peur – peur des fois d'être mis dans une situation où ce que soit leur défi d'apprentissage ou leur situation va être mis en cause. Et je sais que, des fois, ça prend beaucoup de courage. Et dans nos écoles, surtout dans la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, et dans d'autres écoles aussi à travers le Manitoba, on appuie aussi les jeunes au niveau de ce qu'on appelle – c'est une perspective autochtone – le Cercle du courage.

Alors, quand qu'un jeune a un défi d'apprentissage, évidemment il faut l'appuyer. Et puis, dans nos écoles, quand ça vient au Cercle du courage, on encourage nos jeunes au niveau de l'appartenance. Un jeune qui se sent en famille, qui se sent bien dans sa langue, dans sa culture, va faire des efforts au niveau de son éducation.

Alors l'appartenance est extrêmement importante. L'indépendance, quand ça vient à la numératie, la littéracie, oui, les écoles vont faire de leur mieux au niveau du dépistage, comme l'appelle cette loi, mais un jeune doit aussi se responsabiliser avec sa famille pour faire non seulement de la lecture à l'école, mais de la lecture à la maison, la lecture en famille, la lecture avec les parents.

Et on reconnaît aussi que les parents ont une énorme responsabilité quand ça vient à l'apprentissage et à la littéracie de leurs enfants.

La maîtrise, pas toujours facile, surtout en lecture, parce qu'on sait que, au niveau de la lecture, au fur et à mesure qu'on devient un meilleur lecteur, quelqu'un qui sait de mieux en mieux lire, bien, on va essayer de toujours lire à sa mesure – à sa pointure, comme on

dit dans les écoles de la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine.

Alors une fois qu'on connaît l'alphabet, une fois qu'on commence avec les livres de base en maternelle, on peut toujours avancer à des livres de plus en plus avancés. Puis en avançant dans ces niveaux-là, il y a d'autre dépistage qui se fait déjà dans nos écoles quand ça vient aux jeunes et, des fois, à leurs défis d'apprentissage.

Et puis, ensuite, une chose que j'aime beaucoup au sujet du cercle du courage, c'est la générosité et comment les jeunes, qu'ils aient des problèmes d'apprentissage ou non comme la dyslexie, vont travailler avec d'autres jeunes et s'outiller et s'appuyer.

Alors, encore, notre gouvernement, quand ça vient au niveau de l'éducation, est toujours là pour appuyer nos familles, nos jeunes. On croit que les élèves au Manitoba ont le droit d'apprendre à lire. La législation actuelle exige déjà que les élèves bénéficient d'évaluations spécialisées lorsqu'ils éprouvent des difficultés à atteindre les résultats d'apprentissage à la suite d'une intervention ciblée en classe, et qu'une communication avec les parents est requise.

Et ça c'est déjà quelque chose qui se fait dans nos écoles et qui est clé, parce que la famille est une composante importante de l'appui d'un jeune qui a une difficulté, soit en lecture, en numératie ou quoi que ce soit, parce que l'apprentissage ne se fait pas seulement à l'école, mais se fait aussi dans le foyer, en famille.

Alors, notre gouvernement a récemment annoncé que les divisions scolaires mettront en œuvre des outils de dépistage universels en lecture précoce, afin de s'assurer qu'un élève ne soit pas laissé de côté. Et encore, revenant à l'évaluation qui se fait en maternelle avec les jeunes, l'équipe des services aux étudiants, l'administration, les enseignants, les enseignantes, sont déjà dès les premiers jours au courant des jeunes qui ont des difficultés d'apprentissage de façon à mieux les outiller.

Et nous augmentons les soutiens pour nous assurer que tous nos jeunes apprenants soient soumis à un dépistage de compétences en lecture précoce afin d'identifier des élèves susceptibles d'éprouver des difficultés en lecture, y compris ceux pouvant présenter des troubles de lecture comme la dyslexie.

Notre gouvernement n'est pas là pour voler des idées du député de Tyndall Park (DAL Lamoureux). Notre gouvernement est là pour travailler en équipe avec les éducateurs qui sont déjà de ce côté, et nous

allons continuer à appuyer les élèves, les familles manitobaines, les écoles et les divisions scolaires.

Merci, Monsieur l'Honorable Président.

Translation

It is a great pleasure to have the chance to speak this morning about this bill. I would like to thank the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux).

It is always a great pleasure for me and our team, which includes many teachers and educators, when we have the chance to talk about education in this House. I myself was lucky enough to teach for 28 years, in both English and French. Most recently, I worked for the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine.

I would like to take this opportunity to really congratulate the work of Manitoba's educators, since it is Education Week here in Manitoba. We recognize our schools and that the work our educators do is essential, not only for our communities, our families and our students, but also for the economy, because we know that an education system is the bedrock, the very foundation, of a good economy.

This bill is about screening. As a long-time educator, I would like to reassure Manitobans that an enormous amount of screening is already being done in our schools and school divisions.

Just recently, in January, kindergarten registration was held across Manitoba. During registration, families are asked to bring their children with them. It can be hectic in the schools when new families arrive with youngsters who are a little unsure about a new school, a new stage in their lives. They are usually four- or five-year-olds.

But when the children arrive in kindergarten and meet the student services team, the screening begins. We start right away to determine whether a child about to enter kindergarten has certain literacy and numeracy skills, because we know that in a modern world, literacy and numeracy requirements are enormous.

At École Précieux-Sang, where I used to work, we were very keen on learning styles. Whether it was visual, auditory or kinaesthetic, we always wanted to give children the tools they needed to develop their strengths and abilities.

When I was a young child, my parents read a lot with me. When I started nursery school, I already knew my alphabet and I could already read. My teachers found it hard to believe that I was already so advanced in

literacy. Of course, I was lucky because both my parents were teachers.

I would really like to acknowledge here the work of one particular educator: Lucienne Beaudry-Loiselle, my mother, who was a teacher for 40 years. I am really proud of the work that Madame Loiselle (my mother) did in terms of learning in the DSFM schools. My mother is credited with setting up the Resource Centre at Collège Louis Riel, where not only are children equipped to become better learners, but teachers are also equipped to learn how to identify all the challenges that young students can have in our schools.

To be clear, in the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, we teach in French, and only in French, from kindergarten to Grade 3. The specific screening done in our DSFM schools is excellent. I would like once again to acknowledge the excellent work done by DSFM teachers. As I said, as a long-time educator, I am proud to be part of a government that supports education in Manitoba.

In fact, our last budget announced support for the construction of a new francophone school in St. Boniface and a new DSFM school in Brandon West, which is really good news.

Sometimes, in our schools, we have to deal with children who have learning difficulties, who might be afraid: afraid that their learning challenges or their situation will be called into question. In our schools, especially in the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine but also in other schools across Manitoba, we support children in the context of what we call the Circle of Courage, which is an Indigenous approach.

When a child has a learning challenge, we obviously need to support them. In our schools, when it comes to the Circle of Courage, we encourage our children in terms of belonging. A child who feels part of a family, who feels good about their language and culture, will make an effort when it comes to their education.

Belonging is extremely important. As far as numeracy and literacy independence are concerned, schools will do their best when it comes to screening, as this bill calls for, but a child must also take responsibility with their family for reading not only at school, but also at home, whether it be reading as a family or reading with their parents.

We also recognize that parents have a huge responsibility when it comes to their children's learning and literacy.

Mastery is not always easy, especially when it comes to reading. As children become better readers, knowing how to read better and better means they can always try to read at a higher level.

Once a child knows the alphabet, once they start with the basic books in kindergarten, they can always move on to more and more advanced books. As they progress through these levels, there are other screenings that are already taking place in our schools when it comes to the students and their learning challenges.

One thing I really like about the Circle of Courage is the generosity and the way in which students, whether they have learning difficulties such as dyslexia or not, work with other students to equip and support each other.

Once again, when it comes to education, our government is always there to support our families and our children. We believe that students in Manitoba have the right to learn to read. Current legislation already requires that students receive specialized assessments when they have difficulty achieving learning outcomes following targeted classroom intervention. It also requires communication with parents.

This is already happening in our schools, and it is key, because family is a major component of support for a child with who has difficulties in reading, numeracy or other. Because learning happens not only at school, but also in the home, within the family.

Our government recently announced that school divisions will be implementing universal early reading screening tools to ensure that no student is left behind. Assessment in kindergarten allows the student services team, administration and teachers to identify children with learning difficulties from the very first days, so that they can be better equipped.

We are increasing support to ensure that all our young learners are screened for early reading skills to identify students at risk of reading difficulties, including those who may have reading disorders such as dyslexia.

Our government is not here to steal ideas from the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux). Our government is here to work as a team with the educators who are already on this side of the House, and we will continue to support students, Manitoba families, schools and school divisions.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'd like to say thank you for everyone who's joined us in the gallery today. I know I'm not, again, supposed to entice the gallery into being part of the discussion today, but I do want to give a heartfelt congratulations to my good friend and colleague, the MLA for Tyndall Park, on bringing forward this very important bill, Bill 225.

I want to give a bit of a quick history lesson. I don't want to speak for too long, because what happens with private members' bills is there's a certain amount of time. And I know that both sides of the House want to see this passed, because I know that this isn't about credit for who's coming up with the various ideas.

I do want to give a bit of a shout-out to our former premier, Heather Stefanson, who had the forethought to amalgamate education and early childhood learning together because, as we transition from early childhood education into the K-to-12 system, we have to make sure that those organizations, those services that we do for this—for the community, speaks to one another and helps with that transition from early childhood education into the K to 12. And I think that's going to make things a whole lot easier and better for all of our students in Manitoba.

Because what will happen, and thanks to the MLA for Tyndall Park bringing this bill forward, is to then acknowledge the fact that some students slip through those cracks, whether it's coping mechanisms or just things that they've learned themselves, or the fact that we just don't necessarily have the proper tools in the tool box as educators.

I'm hoping that the NDP will pass this bill this morning, because this was a great initiative brought forward by the MLA for Tyndall Park. I know that she has worked closely with members of the—in the community. I know when I was Education minister, I've spoken to many people within the initiative and the advocating for this to be one of those tools that are recognized again back into the school system as a teacher, as well.

So, Honourable Speaker, I don't want take up too much more time. I just want to let everyone know that we, on this side of the House, the Progressive Conservative team, are in support of this legislation. We are in support of Bill 225. We want to see it move forward to committee.

I encourage the Education Minister to put a few words on the record, of course, and to

acknowledge that this was the member for Tyndall Park's (MLA Lamoureux) idea. Let's move it forward. Let's show support for this legislation. Let's move forward with another tool in the tool box for our students in this great province of ours.

We will not be putting up any more speakers, Honourable Speaker, because we want to see this pass this morning, get it to committee.

Thanks, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): It is my great honour to speak to Bill 225, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Universal Screening for Learning Disabilities).

Having just finished a 30-year career in education about a month ago and working for most of it in student services, I do understand the importance of supporting all students in their growth and development. And I think we can all agree that I think this team all works and understands how we need to support students in all areas of their growth and development.

Schools are incredible places that work as a team. They work with divisional supports, they work with outside supports, they work with parents, constantly assessing what's going on and constantly communicating.

* (10:50)

As a resource teacher, they are in classrooms all the time working with classroom teachers. As I said, classroom teachers are constantly assessing their students and any time there's a concern, any time there's an issue, they are bringing it forward to the rest of the team.

We are working as a team. We are not operating in silos so we understand the whole wraparound approach to students. We understand that it is not just about one area of the child. We understand that by bringing in the universal nutrition program that we are supporting students by feeding them so that they are able to learn in a better way. They're ready to learn.

This also supports families who are unable to afford food at all times so that we—they—that we're taking the pressure off of them as well. We are including—schools are doing incredible things with their funding. They are adding mental health support services within the schools to provide, again, that wraparound support for students. They are—we are adding the early reading tools and interventions, and we, again, we are not operating in silos.

As an administrator, it is also the job to advocate for our teachers and for our kids with the division. We have—schools have strong partnerships with the divisional clinicians and any time there's any issues, we are consulting with the experts in the division.

And so it is—again, sorry—we are bringing in—teachers are constantly meeting with their student services teachers as well. They meet with their consultants, or they meet with their resource teachers at least once a cycle in the early years, especially in that critical time from kindergarten to grade 5 where that early learning really does—helping. And as our minister is bringing in the supports for the early reading in grade 4, up to grade 4, that is also a huge help.

We also understand that behaviour is communication and so we are looking at, again, as the—at the whole child. So, potentially, if that's a mental health issue or if that's a behaviour issue, we know that's communication, and we know that schools take the next steps to find out why there's behaviour issues, potentially. So we know that.

Then we can look at other things. We can look at their academic progress. We can look at if they're struggling in one area and then, again, we can provide the supports to follow through with trying to figure out what's going on for all of our students.

As I said, teachers are constantly assessing what's going on in their classrooms. They know their kids. They get to know the students. They get to know what is happening. So when they see a change in behaviour, when they see a change in performance, they are communicating with their school team.

Teams—our schools work as great teams and they are trying to get to the root of it. We each have our areas of expertise and we learn from each other. We're also supporting each other with our professional development. There's many times where clinicians comes—come into schools, student services consultants come into schools, curriculum consultants come into schools, and they all work together to provide the best supports for students and teachers so that everyone is reaching their full potential.

I know this first-hand because I was a student services consultant for many years and we did; we collaborated, and we talked to parents all the time because parents are advocating for their students, for their child. They know their child the best and they—we work with families to be able to do that.

As an administrator, it's important too. Administrators are in classrooms. Administrators are getting to know the kids. Administrators are getting to know the teachers. And, again, we are problem solving together. There is no time where people are working in isolation. We are communicating and, again, we are talking to experts. If students have outside assessments, we are learning from those professionals as well.

And so I'm proud of the work that this team is doing. I'm proud that our ministers are working together. I'm proud that we're taking the approach of that wraparound approach. Our ministers don't work in silos because we know, when families are supported and families are doing—are working at their highest level and operating in a—at their maximum potential, kids will do better. So we are looking at all the things that need to happen to provide safe spaces for students inside and outside of schools. We're looking for schools to be safe places for parents to come and advocate. We're looking for our parents and our families to be safe in their communities.

And that's why our ministers are working together as a team—

The Speaker: Order, please. In accordance with rule 25, and as previously announced, I'm interrupting debate to put the question on the honourable member for Tyndall Park's (MLA Lamoureux) selected bill.

The question before the House, then, is second reading of Bill 225, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Universal Screening for Learning Disabilities).

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

I declare the motion is accordingly passed.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Is there a will of the Chamber to see the clock as 11?

The Speaker: Is it the will of the Chamber to see the clock as 11? *[Agreed]*

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 8—Calling on the Provincial Government to Recognize the Valuable Role that the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra plays in Manitoba Communities

The Speaker: The hour being 11 o'clock, we will now move on to private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is resolution 8, Calling on the Provincial Government to Recognize the Valuable

Role that the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra plays in Manitoba Communities.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I move,

WHEREAS Manitobans acknowledge and express deep gratitude for the treaties concerning the land and waters of the province that have provided a home to so many; and

WHEREAS Manitoba has always been home to many peoples: Ojibwe, Cree, Oji-Chree, Dene, Dakota, as well as being the birthplace of the Métis Nation; and

WHEREAS Manitoba celebrates the arts and cultural practices of its citizens including Indigenous, alongside people from many lands who have subsequently come to the province; and

WHEREAS the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra (WSO) has, over more than 75 years, been recognized as one of Canada's finest orchestras, attracting world class musicians to the province, who practice, perform, teach and serve Manitobans and who call Manitoba home; and

WHEREAS annually, the WSO produces over 60 inspiring and entertaining concerts and events to well over 100,000 Manitobans in Winnipeg's downtown, in other neighbourhoods, in schools and in many other parts of the province, and

WHEREAS the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra provides educational programming and training and fosters and showcases the talents and skills of many Manitobans, working with local and regional performers in music of many styles and from many diverse cultures; and

WHEREAS live music experiences lift the soul, combat isolation, and create a safe haven for people from many walks of life and points of view, bringing people together to foster a sense of community, belonging, friendship and citizenship.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba celebrate the historical, cultural and economic significance and contributions of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and be urged to recognize and support the WSO as an integral and necessary component of the province's cultural infrastructure.

Motion presented.

MLA Lamoureux: Honourable Speaker, I rise this morning to speak on a matter of great significance to our province: the celebration, recognition and support

of one of Manitoba's most treasured cultural institutions, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

Allow for me to begin by sharing where this resolution came from. In July of 2023, I happened to be sitting beside a musician from the WSO at a wedding I attended, and they first put on my radar how stretched thin the WSO is and how, unfortunately, Manitoba is at risk of losing exceptionally talented musicians. This conversation caused for me to reach out to the WSO, and I began talking about it just in my everyday conversations with Manitobans, neighbours, even some of my colleagues here in the House.

Honourable Speaker, it's important to state that the arts are not a luxury; they are a necessity. They're stories of who we are, where we come from and where we are going. And today more than ever, with heightened threats to our sovereignty, the arts brings us together to celebrate our unique identity as Canadians.

In this case, the WSO is not just a collection of musicians. It is a bridge between cultures, a beacon of creativity and a stronghold for economic and social prosperity right here in our province, and they contribute significantly to our community's well-being in many ways.

For example, we know that music education enhances cognitive development in children, that participation in the arts combats isolation and improves mental health, and that cultural institutions like the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra strengthen our economy by drawing visitors and investment into our province.

Every single dollar spent on the arts generates substantial economic activity, supporting both jobs and businesses. There's a strong cultural sector enhancing the liveability of Manitoba, making it a place where people want to work, live and raise their families.

Now, while the orchestra is based in the city of Winnipeg, it serves all of Manitoba. Musicians travel to schools, rural communities and Indigenous communities, providing musical education and performances that reach far beyond our city limits. They produce over 60 inspiring and entertaining concerts and events, reaching over 100,000 Manitobans every single year, including over 20,000 schoolchildren.

* (11:00)

WSO events include everything from classical music with Manitoba's world-renowned James Ehnes, to Crash Test Dummies with the WSO, to kids' concerts,

to a wide array of popular movies with orchestra concerts for families and movie lovers.

The WSO's New Music Festival brings music lovers from all around the world to the festival each January. And their touring program ensures that people in many corners of our province have access to world-class music.

They collaborate with artists across different disciplines, fostering partnerships that enrich our entire cultural landscape rather than competing with it. Manitoba's Royal Winnipeg Ballet and opera could not be what they are today without the contributions of this community institution.

Honourable Speaker, the WSO works with performances alongside Indigenous artists, collaborated with Manitoba's Filipino, Chinese and African Canadian communities and developed programs like Sistema Winnipeg, which provides free music education, five days a week, to children in Winnipeg's North End schools.

As an agent of collaboration, the WSO has also been instrumental in mobilizing prairie art organizations to attract more federal investment into the performing arts in the prairie region.

The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, for over 75 years, has been recognized as one of Canada's finest orchestras. They draw world-class musicians to our province and exceptionally talented musicians who practise, perform and teach and serve all over Manitoba. They have actively embraced the evolving cultural makeup of our province and has become an institution that welcomes all Manitobans, reflecting upon our collective identity and shared future.

Over the years, I've had the opportunity to attend a few performances at the Centennial Concert Hall with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Honourable Speaker. I know, more recently, I had the opportunity to go to *The Handmaid's Tale*, which was a performance with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, played forth by the orchestra. It's something—I had first read the book, I had watched a couple of the episodes on Netflix and to see it in person brings it into a whole another level, a whole new full-body experience.

And even more recent than that, it was actually my very first date night since having a child. My husband and I went out and we saw the orchestra play live. And it was just the orchestra, so we got to really focus in and zero in on the musicians and the talent that I know—all of my colleagues here, I trust, have been to the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. To see the

empowerment that comes from that room, it is—I love to explain it as, it is a full-body experience. You walk out of the concert hall feeling on top of the world, like you can tackle anything. And I know, even in part as I wrote this legislation, I was trying to channel that energy, to feel it and to really bring it to life here in these Chambers, Honourable Speaker.

And I'm a little bit jealous. I'm still kicking myself a little bit for not attending the inside-out performance. I know a couple of my colleagues did and I hope that they speak to it a little bit here in the Chambers. I personally find that, the more that I experience the arts, the more eager I am to learn more about them.

As I wrap up, allow for me to introduce the executive director of WSO, Angela Birdsell, who is here along with members of the WSO's exceptional staff, musicians and board: a dedicated team that continues to deliver enriching experiences despite the very challenging times faced by the orchestra, and I table their names here for you this morning, Honourable Speaker.

I ask that my colleagues allow for this resolution to pass unanimously this morning to formally celebrate the historical, cultural and economic significance to the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, an integral component of our cultural infrastructure, and to better ensure that future generations can continue to experience the inspiration, joy and unity that live music provides.

Thank you, and I'm happy to take any questions that people may have.

WSO guests: Angela Birdsell, executive director; Marcie MacDonald, senior manager of human resources; Jody Tresoor, associate director of Marketing & Communications; Simeon Rusnak, director of Classical Programming; Katie Yablecki, associate director of Development; Rachel Himmelblau, box office manager; Jeffrey Acosta, Sistema manager; Theresa Huscroft, development co-ordinator; Meg Specht, audience development co-ordinator; April Chen, finance & administration co-ordinator; Leigh Karras, development officer; Brendyn Funk, development & marketing associate; Ivan Moreno Cisneros, marketing strategist; Avi Bhatt, communications specialist; Justin Hickmott, database specialist; Anna Schwartz, development & marketing assistant; Sarah Witiuk, corporate administrative assistant; Marlene Stern, Margaret Kellerman McCulloch - board members; Alex Conway, Karl Stobbe, Aiden Kleer, Chris Fensom, Kristina Bauch - musicians.

Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I'd like to thank the member opposite for bringing forth such a valuable resolution to the House for us to discuss this morning.

I'd also like to welcome all the members of the WSO who have taken the time out of their day to spend it with us here today. We thank you for your valuable contributions to our province every single day.

I'd like to just ask the member opposite, in her preamble to the resolution that was provided to the House this past week, she talks a little bit about the different types of Indigenous cultures that we have here.

Does she have any examples of how the WSO has tried to bridge our mainstream Canadian culture with Indigenous cultures here in Manitoba?

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the minister for her comments about the resolution and for her question as well.

In working and consulting with those through the WSO, it is very, very apparent the important work and the diligence that they have undergone and continue to undergo to ensure that we are uplifting and highlighting Indigenous culture throughout the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, whether that be through musicians within the orchestra, whether that be through board members and ensuring that so many of the live performances are Indigenous individuals.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): From a chance meeting in July of 2023 with the musician and the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) brings us an incredible resolution here today.

When consulting with the WSO leadership and the members, can the member relay what they had to say about this resolution?

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank my colleague from Selkirk for the important question.

The resolution in and of itself truly does come from members of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. It's through the many conversations that I've had the opportunity to have with them, the language that they were using as they spoke with me. I think it's extremely important that, when anyone in this House brings forward, whether it be bills or, in this case, a resolution, that it comes directly from those who it is pertaining, those who it is affecting, and that's where the resolution comes from.

MLA Marcelino: I did also have a chance to speak with the director of the royal Manitoba Opera and he was able to let me know how pleased he was that our Premier (Mr. Kinew) was the very first premier to ever attend an opera showing, and, in this case, it was the celebration of Métis women, language and culture and the first full-scale Indigenous-led opera that was presented on a Canadian opera mainstage. And, of course, it was all being uplifted by the wonderful work of the WSO.

My second question for the member has to do with part of her preamble regarding the educational programming and training that the WSO provides. Would she please provide some information or updates to the House regarding that kind of educational and training? Thank you.

MLA Lamoureux: I appreciate the question and the comments shared by the minister. I'm having a little bit of a difficult time hearing her question; I think it was about just some of the education and the training that is offered by the members of the WSO, if this is correct.

She is—she raises a very important point that the WSO actually travels all over Manitoba to ensure whether, for example, students are receiving music education, musical literacy, to give children the opportunity that equality that's very inclusive for Manitoba. So I'd like to thank the WSO for the work that they're doing on this front.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Well, as a individual who's a great fan of classical music and of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, who—even during school, there were benefactors who would give up tickets that they couldn't use, and I had the opportunity to go to many concerts which I certainly enjoyed.

Can the member for Tyndall Park tell us, what kind of impact does the Winnipeg symphony have on tourism to Winnipeg and Manitoba?

MLA Lamoureux: Honourable Speaker, that's a great question, and I'd like to thank my colleague from Springfield-Ritchot for the question.

* (11:10)

The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra has a huge impact on tourism here in Manitoba. Whether it be performers all over the world, world-renowned performers coming to our province to perform; whether it be those travelling throughout Canada—every single time you go to the Winnipeg concert—Centennial Concert Hall, I guarantee you it is not just Manitobans sitting in those chairs. We have people coming from all over Canada, all over the world to hear out what is being performed, what is being shown. And it's something that Manitoba should be exceptionally proud of.

And further to that, it generates a lot of money for our economy, a lot of investments into our economy—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Marcelino: During her remarks, the member was talking about the financial health of the WSO and how this organization is currently being stretched thin.

I'm wondering if she could maybe expand on any information that she has regarding this? Maybe on the attendance rates, have they bounced back or not ever since COVID? Can, maybe, the member talk a little bit about what the WSO did during COVID and how they've tried to bounce back from COVID?

MLA Lamoureux: Again, I'm having a difficult time hearing the minister, but I believe what she's asking is what the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra is doing—if someone can help fill me in here what she was asking, I'd like to answer her question directly. I'll give her another opportunity.

Mr. Perchotte: Can the member from Tyndall Park tell us how this resolution differs from what is in place or has been announced under the current government?

MLA Lamoureux: Currently, there is nothing that has been announced by the current government on this resolution. One thing we would like to do is just build some awareness around the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. I believe that there are roles at the federal level, provincial level and municipal level all have to play in ensuring that our arts continue to grow here in the province.

And someone just whispered in my ear that the minister's question was just regarding during the pandemic, how the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra sort of proceeded through that. And Honourable

Speaker, we can say that attendance trends have fluctuated, of course, against all sectors post-pandemic, including sports and entertainment, not just the arts. But the WSO has shown resilience by adapting its programming, expanding its digital reach and developing community-based initiatives.

Thank you.

MLA Marcelino: The PC government failed to adequately fund the arts for seven and a half years with their cuts and freezes. Operating funding failed to keep up with the rate of inflation under their failed administration.

And my question for the member opposite is: From her view, how have these funding cuts and freezes impacted the WSO and other Winnipeg arts organizations?

MLA Lamoureux: Everyone in these Chambers are very aware that, when I choose to bring forward legislation, whether that be a bill or resolution, I am very intentional about keeping it non-partisan, and I would appreciate if the minister did the same.

Mr. Schuler: Further to the symphony being a conduit for young people to get to hear amazing and professional music, I would like to do a shout-out to Dr. Beamish [*phonetic*]. I don't even know if he's still alive, but he would give tickets to us so we could actually attend these magnificent concerts.

Honourable Speaker, could the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) reflect on, how does the symphony reach out to school divisions and young people to get them engaged in classical music and the Winnipeg symphony?

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank my colleague from Springfield-Ritchot on another very good question.

The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra goes above and beyond in their outreach programs. I spoke about it a little bit just in my comments here earlier.

One of my favourite initiatives that they have is called Sistema, and it's actually working with inner-city children here in the province. It has musicians go into the school and provide education, oftentimes five days a week, Honourable Speaker.

These are often opportunities that students might otherwise never have.

MLA Marcelino: The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra has been bringing people across Manitoba together

to tell their stories for nearly 80 years, Honourable Speaker.

And my question for the member opposite is, how has the WSO impacted people in her own constituency?

MLA Lamoureux: I love the opportunity to bring in Tyndall Park, especially when speaking about resolutions here in this House.

I know through consultation—again, this was first put on my radar in July of 2023. I have brought this up with many—I'd argue hundreds, if not even low thousands here, of people throughout Manitoba, just in my everyday conversations. I've raised it with my own constituents, and they speak about the wonderful experience that they have had.

I know some of them, for example Paul Ong, he's a vice-principal at a school in Tyndall Park, and he is an integral person when it comes to Sistema, the program that I just spoke about, working with inner city youth.

It is critical, it affects all Manitobans, and I would just like to use my last few seconds here to thank everyone who has come out and joined us today in the gallery for all—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And the time for questions has expired.

House Business

The Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 34(7), I am announcing the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Transcona (MLA Corbett). The title of the resolution is New Schools.

The Speaker: It has been announced that pursuant to rule 34(7), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Transcona (MLA Corbett). The title of the resolution is New Schools.

And before we move on to debate the resolution, I must remind members as we called it 11 o'clock, it actually was 10:55, so we'll be calling it noon at 11:55.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I'm really excited to get up and put some words on the record regarding the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. I want to thank the member opposite for the resolution and everyone, really, for their comments and questions.

The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra is—it really is an institution and a beloved institution for Manitobans. And I just want to say hello and welcome to everyone who's come here from the WSO today. It's a really lovely to have you all here.

So I just want to, like I said, put some words on the record. Our government really has made a promise to Manitobans that we would work to uplift our province's rich cultural history, to strengthen our communities and build a province for the next generation.

Just yesterday we celebrated Turban Day with the Manitoban Sikh community here and Sikh Heritage Month which was really an incredible event. Our government recognizes that supporting our cultural history and the arts is incredibly important. And this is something that members opposite didn't do when they were in government.

Having already met with many arts groups and performers throughout this province since I have been appointed minister, I can confidently say that our government is there for the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and for the Manitoba's arts community. We're listening and we're acting to support musicians and arts across the province.

Our government broke a 20-year freeze to arts funding in Manitoba by providing more funding for arts and culture to demonstrate our commitment to supporting artists. Last year our government announced an investment of \$13.7 million for the Manitoba Arts Council. This was an increase of 8 per cent. Much of this investment directly supports the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, alongside the Manitoba Opera and the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre.

Mr. Diljeet Brar, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Budget 2025 builds on this funding for the Manitoba Arts Council with an additional \$250,000.

We've also provided \$500,000 to the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for a total of \$3 million in funding to supporting the Centennial

Concert Hall and Manitoba's performing arts organizations.

On this side of the House, we lift up the WSO. It's a historic Manitoba institution, as I said, one that's brought us music and art for over 75 years, which we're extremely proud of. Since the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's first performance in 1948, they have been providing incredible concerts to the people of Manitoba.

The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra has also been the starting point for many talented and accomplished musicians. The W-S-A—the WSO is also a nationally recognized and honoured institution of the musical community which is celebrated nationwide, and something we as Manitobans should be incredibly proud of.

* (11:20)

They've received the Canadian Music Centre's award of excellence for their work to promote the Canadian voice, and they won a Juno award in 2017 and received a Juno nomination in 2018 for the best classical recording, which is really wonderful to see them being recognized.

So Katarina Kupca, the board chair of the Manitoba Arts Council, was someone who told the Province that our increased investment in the Manitoba Arts Council and the WSO is, and I quote, an incredible show of support. And that's what our government is doing. We are committed and we are here to support the arts. We know how incredibly important it is for our province and all Manitobans.

Because really, for years, we had a government who—I mean, let's be honest; they didn't support the Manitoba's art centre, the community or the WSO. Year after year, the previous PC Stefanson government froze municipal funding; this is a wide-known fact. They slashed budgets for community centres, cultural events, community groups and they put the WSO at risk.

Our government is here, and we are investing more than ever before to ensure that Manitoba and the arts scene is healthy and strong. And I couldn't be more proud to be in this role and being able to do this work.

It's always been said that a well-funded arts program, it drives a significant part of our economy, as the members opposite said, and creates tens of thousands of jobs here in Manitoba. This is such an important thing to recognize.

Honourable Speaker, the arts and cultural sector in Manitoba is a \$1.6-billion industry, accounting for 2.4 per cent of the province's GDP and providing jobs for over 20,000 individuals. In 2023, arts and culture tourism contributed a total of \$377.6 million in value added to Manitoba's economy, which is just incredible. Tourism in Manitoba has seen an incredible growth over this past year. Every day, more and more people are visiting Manitoba and they're here to enjoy our beautiful province, our rich history and our world-class hospitality.

Honourable Speaker, in 2023, our province welcomed 10.4 million visitors—10.4 million people visited Manitoba—and they contributed over \$1.82 billion to our economy, which is something that we can all be very proud of. Tourism is a cornerstone of Manitoba's economy, driving growth, opportunity and community development.

Last week, I had the great privilege and honour of celebrating tourism week—National Tourism Week, and we experienced Manitoba—it's really what makes Manitoba unique and what draws Manitoba—folks to Manitoba. And I can confidently say that the WSO is one of these attractions. Our NDP government is committed to working close and in collaboration with the WSO and other organizations to ensure Manitoba's arts community thrives in the years to come.

There is a story that I'd like to share before I end my time, and it is—it was one of my favourite things that happened within the first month of me becoming Minister for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism. I was invited by the WSO to go and take part in their 'Twas the Night Before Christmas concert, and I had the opportunity to be the narrator for the WSO, reading the story out as the WSO played.

And it was an incredible experience. It was so much fun. The WSO and all of the people there, the musicians and the folks who run the WSO, were so welcoming. I was a little nervous. I went to the rehearsal—the dress rehearsal, and it was a bit intimidating being there with all the musicians and being the person reading out the story, but I had so much fun. The conductor was amazing, made me feel really at ease. And it was just, honestly, one of the very best experiences I've had.

And I will say, you know, I have family members who have had season tickets to the WSO. We've been able to go together. I'm a lover of classical music. And one of my very favourite dates that I've been on with my husband was at the Centennial Concert Hall, when the WSO was performing to Charlie Chaplin. It was

during the Valentine's Day time they had that running, and it was such an incredible evening. My husband and I still talk about it, how the WSO brought to life this silent movie.

And, you know, music really does that for people; it really brings joy to their lives. And I just want to end my time here by thanking the WSO for giving all of Manitoba that. Manitobans—I mean, you can talk to so many different people and they'll all tell you their favourite story about attending a show with the WSO, and so they really are a cultural institution and something that our government is really committed to supporting and ensuring that the WSO is around for years to come for Manitobans to continue enjoying.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order, please. Before I recognize the next member, I would like to welcome 14 students from Niverville High School, which is from the constituency of Springfield-Ritchot.

You are welcomed to the Chamber.

* * *

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd just like to ask for leave of the House to add the names of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra guests to Hansard.

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Is there leave? *[interjection]*

Is there leave to add the names of the guests in Hansard after the member for Tyndall Park's (MLA Lamoureux) speech? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Very proud to rise today. First off, I want to thank the members from the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra for coming here today on this very important resolution. Everything they do brings joy and entertainment to the people who have the ability to attend and all the programs that they put on through the schools and inner-city youth. So thank you once again for being here in attendance and all you do.

The WSO does so much more than create music. They give people a safe place to be. The world can get tough. We know in our daily lives, things are hard. We've got challenges that face us every day, and everybody's challenges are unique. And when you have an opportunity to go to the WSO and listen to that incredibly talented musicians play in harmony, it transcends you. It takes you away from your daily life and it brings you somewhere extremely special. And

it creates memories, and those people that you're attending with, it's memories you'll share for the rest of your life.

And one of the—in the text of the resolution, there's a whereas line that says whereas live music experiences lift the soul, combat isolation and create safe haven for people from many walks of life and points of view, bringing people together to foster a sense of community, belonging, friendship and citizenship. And I could not agree with that line more.

I've had the opportunity to attend the WSO a few times, and every time you leave, you feel enlightened. You feel that you've received a gift that only you have gotten, something very special. And I've said before that time is a gift, so be careful where you spend your time because you can't get that back. And every opportunity I have at the WSO, that's a gift of my time that I'm gratefully giving because the rewards I get back are so much greater than what I could ever possibly give.

* (11:30)

I have seen over the years the very young students, my daughter being one of them in middle school, becoming a part of a junior symphonic held at the local high school. And I remember fond memories of dropping her off early in the morning so she could attend the junior symphonic where she learned to play clarinet, as well as I'd pick her up after that and race her back to her middle school to be on time for class.

And at nine years of age, my daughter, she got the bug for music, and so she learned to play guitar at nine years old, something that I wish I would've taken, but I'm very grateful for her ambition and the ability that she has to not only play the guitar, but to play in the clarinet in the junior symphonic. And I watched over the years as my daughter attended high school and played with the symphony in the Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive Secondary School, how they went from being really good when I first witnessed the early production, to something amazing by grade 12.

Then you step into the halls of the Centennial Concert Hall, and you listen to these amazing musicians and what they can do. And it is incredibly impressive that these individuals have such a craft that they can share with us. It is beyond belief the true talent that people have.

And when the member from Tyndall Park brought this forward, I was excited to see this. We had spoken about this, and one of the opportunities that I've had is to actually attend their program called From the Inside

Out, and if you haven't attended that, it's absolutely amazing. You sit amongst these incredible musicians, and my wife and I had the opportunity to sit right in the bassoon section. And watching all these musicians play and your eyes darting back and forth and the sounds that were coming were absolutely incredible. It was uplifting of my soul. It brought me to a place where I just felt utter content and overjoyed with happiness.

But something else happened. I was able to interact with the musicians and to speak to them to find out a little bit about some of them, their backgrounds, where they come from, and how they managed to find their way to Winnipeg and to be able to play here. And we have a tremendous gift in this province, and that is the WSO, and they continually give, but it's time that we gave something back. In speaking to them, there's something that I refer to as a clam shell—I think that's what they call it—the clam shell that brings the sound, and they said, well, if you attend and you like the sound, it would be so much better with the proper equipment to portray that sound to the audience.

We've seen where the financial losses over a number of years from COVID or otherwise has made the practicality of being financially viable tougher. We need to assist, as government, to make sure that we can help them make a profit. We need to encourage advertising, promoting the arts that we have here. The PC government spent over \$100 million in the ACSC Fund to give back to communities and arts programs.

And we need to continue to do more of that. We need to function. Going to the—watch the WSO does more than just a night of entertainment; it's mental health, and we all have mental health at varying stages. Some of us are healthier than others, and some mental health is poor. And if this is an opportunity to get that mental health in a better stage, it is a natural way, listening to music, being with loved ones, enjoying that, sharing memories.

And this is something we need to come together, across the aisle, and not have partisan politics but take a look at what this really does for the people in our province. It is a gift that we need to make sure that the WSO has the ability to keep giving, to keep giving to the community, to the members, to the students, to the intercity youth, to the people who don't necessarily have the opportunities.

And we have an opportunity today to come together and say thank you to the member of Tyndall Park for bringing this forward, very well-thought-out,

very addressing the needs of what we have in our society, and to say thank you and vote yes to support this. And I encourage everybody in the House to do that.

Thank you very much for the time to speak.

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Really happy to be able to stand up. I'm going to speak fairly quickly because I know there are a ton of people that wanted to speak on this today. Everybody was very excited about it.

I have a very personal connection to the WSO, and I know the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk) often likes to point out in a sort of narrow-minded view that I'm a firefighter and I may not understand things outside of whatever that view might be, but we all contain multitudes. And I'm going to give you a quick story about my history.

So in the '90s, my dad, Vic Pankratz was a part of Manitoba Opera. He got to sing a whole bunch, all the way through the 2000s. And we ended up hanging out a fair bit at the concert hall with the WSO. So it was very formative. A lot of time was spent for me at the Centennial Concert Hall, being a part of concerts, seeing the musicians, listening to what they were doing. I was fortunate enough to get to know Bramwell Tovey a little bit, who is just an absolutely transformative composer here—or, sorry, director and conductor here in Winnipeg with the WSO. And, you know, I spent all this time with my family in music early on just sort of watching what was going on and seeing the amazing work that the WSO did. And it sort of came full circle.

So, you know, a part of my life I was actually a touring musician later on in my early 20s, before becoming a firefighter later on. And I would say one of the highlights of that career as a musician was actually later on, in 2013 on Canada Day, I got to be at The Forks. I was a drummer, got to get on stage, and with the WSO, on stage, got to click in the WSO for a song as fireworks started to go off.

And I'm not sure if any of you up there were a part of that concert, but if you were, thank you, it's one of my finest memories as a musician. And I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with such incredible human beings and musicians who have dedicated their life to making music and art for other people in our community.

And I also want to just quickly touch on the fact it is such a huge economic impact, the number of people and industries that are sort of affected by this

work that is done across the board in the arts. It's \$1.6 billion a year. With the WSO specifically, I just want to mention, because we talk a lot about small business in this Chamber, my very good friend Matthew Harder and Garth Lee, actually have a luthier company and they fix instruments. So if there are any string players up there, I'm sure you've also used their services at some point. And I'm sure that they have done fantastic work for you. So another small business shout-out here for Manitoba supporting the WSO.

So, you know, as a government, I think it's very clear that we have done a ton of work and, you know, despite what I've heard a little bit from the other side, I will just respectfully say that the time in office, the seven and a half years, my family members who work in that world were not pleased—that's all I'll say, I'll leave it right there—when it comes to the economic impacts and the funding impacts of the previous government.

And we're changing that. We fully support our Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage—has done an amazing job working on this file and will continue to do that and develop that relationship.

So, knowing that there are so many people here that are so passionate about the WSO, I'm going to leave it there. I would love to chat with some of the musicians who are here afterwards, if they're still sticking around at 12 o'clock, love to say hi. And I am so grateful for the incredible work that the WSO does here in Manitoba.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I would like to take the Chamber back approximately 14 years ago. There was a concert one evening, and I'd like to lay it out for you. The concert hall was packed. It was full and there was a buzz in the room.

On stage, approximately four, five hundred students—four to five hundred students from River East Transcona School Division and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. And the place was packed. The performance, I think the only way you could describe it was epic. It was just unbelievable, the music second to none and the students just rose to the challenge.

* (11:40)

Now, I try to say the next part of this, because there is a better part to this, and try not to get emotional as one does from time to time. There was a soloist that then came forward and performed a solo with the choir and the orchestra. And I happen to

remember that student's name; that student's name was Brigitta Schuler and the performance was amazing.

And these are some of the opportunities that are given to our students, and I, in some of my questions, mentioned a MLA—me—who was allowed to come to symphonies and listen because of the generosity of people who could afford those tickets. Money was a little tight then, so I couldn't afford them myself. So it was quite the opportunity. I actually did pay for my ticket that time, to hear my daughter, so.

Eight years ago, same venue, packed hall, 500 kids on stage, the whole symphony and again, an epic performance. And, like, sometimes you felt they were going to just bring the roof down. That's—like the choir was just unbelievable and I think the combination of choir and orchestra is just heaven. I can only imagine that's what heaven's going to sound like. It was that amazing.

And again, there was a soloist and I happen to remember that soloist's name as well. That was when a Corina Schuler and she came forward and did a performance, and I may have broken some rules and videoed that on my phone—may have—and I may still have a copy of it. And it was just amazing. And I'd just like to point out the opportunities that you afford young people.

Actually, Corina went on then through Rainbow Stage to Sheridan College in Oakville and is currently on a Disney cruise ship performing a song—she's one of the performers in—on a cruise ship right now. So she's taken her talents and moved on.

That's what you do for our society. You give our young people an opportunity, you give them a chance, all of those students, 500—and I know it's not just River East Transcona. There are school divisions around this province that are chosen and you do it with them. And I would encourage you to do more of it.

A for parents. I mean, it was just electric. And for the students, what an opportunity. And it gets them to buy into classical music and even more contemporary music. But how learning an instrument is so important, and it's good for you. It's good cognitive development, it's discipline, it's all of those things and that's what you afford an opportunity.

So I—for a very short period—for a year, I was minister responsible and we ended up putting quite a bit of money into the outside of the building where pieces were falling off and buildings need it. It's a harsh climate we live in and we must have investment

put into our buildings. Unfortunately, I didn't have the opportunity to get the funding for the shell; my time was too short there. Did have a great tour and one Trudy Schraeder [*phonetic*], who may be known to members of this House, gave us a great tour of the building and the shell is one of those things that it has to be repaired. It is truly a one-of-a-kind orchestra shell and it should be repaired and it should be used—functional. I know a lot of work is being done to try to fund—raise funds for that, so I would encourage all of us, occasionally, if we could put aside our partisanship.

Funding of the arts is important. It what—it's what differentiates us from other countries, is because we have such a robust culture and whether it's the symphony, ballet, or whether it's Folk Arts Council or hockey or football, whatever it is that you enjoy, we provide that for you. These venues do need money, these organizations do need help. COVID was terribly tough on the symphony, and I know they're trying to get back. They've got the five-year plan going—good on you—and get back to financial sufficiency.

So I want to encourage all of us to continue to support the arts. It's what makes life so beautiful.

And thank you to all of you are here today. We love the Winnipeg symphony, and we love the fact that you produce absolutely one hundred per cent quality product every time that you have a concert.

And we'll allow somebody else to put some words on the record.

Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology): I'm very anxious to put some words on the record. There may not be a constituency in the province more committed to the continued success of the WSO than my own constituency of River Heights. I count amongst my constituents members of the WSO board, musicians of the WSO, staff members and, of course, importantly, patrons of the WSO all live in River Heights.

And I have to tell my colleagues here that it might not be something that occurs in your constituency, but of the list of issues that I hear about on an ongoing basis—there is, of course, health care, education, affordability and the health of the WSO. So it comes up in conversation all the time.

As well, as a former high school theatre teacher, I always am looking for opportunities where I can stand and raise up people who are in the arts. And so an opportunity here with this resolution, thanks to the

member from Tyndall Park, to lift up the work of the symphony, I'm always anxious to do.

I do have a bit of a bone to pick, though. Angela Birdsell and I are very close in proximity in the constituency. I am a little shocked to discover through the speech of the Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage that there was, in fact, a participation opportunity with the symphony that I was unaware of. You'd think that Angela might hook a neighbour up, and yet, nothing. So, I'll try and contain my grief at not being included in that. Perhaps another time—perhaps another time.

I do want to talk a little bit about how forward-thinking I think the WSO is with its current work. I am really encouraged by its reshaping of some of the programming. Particularly impressed, as one of the previous members had said, about the inside out opportunity.

I had an opportunity to also attend that show. It was—[*interjection*]/—yes, we saw each other there, that's correct. It was really an amazing opportunity to sit on stage with the symphony, to see the way it works together to create such beautiful music.

I did share too much. I was sitting with the French horn section; I shared a little bit too much. I let the French horn player know that, in fact, it was a little bit of PTSD for me to sit next to a French horn player. When I was much younger, I dated a French horn player who dumped me for a sax player, and I was suffering a little bit of flashback at the time. They were very good, very helpful; helped me get through the evening. So I want to thank them for that. I don't know if they're up there. Yes—oh, there we go. Yes, he remembers the story. Yes, so again, so important that you can help audience members through that kind of trauma.

I also want to give a shout-out, as well, for some of the other really cool programming that's gone on. As I said, some of the musicians live in my constituency. Alex Conway is one of them. I don't know if Alex is here. Is Alex here today? Alex is here today. Alex and I had an opportunity to run into each other at the Academy Road Street Fair, and we were talking about the symphony and kind of challenged each other to see what we could do to be a bit more supportive of the symphony.

* (11:50)

And what we wanted to do was try and convince people that what they thought they knew about the area in and around the symphony was quite incorrect. We wanted to create an opportunity to draw people

into the area who perhaps hadn't been before, get a chance to see the symphony in a way that they hadn't experienced. And so what we came up with, working with Synonym Art collective, was the idea of having the symphony, some of the players, play a drag show for local drag performers.

And over the course of a couple of months, we put what I thought was—and I think others will agree—an excellent event together for the first Friday in September. And we had about 500 or so people packed into the entranceway, the main lobby of the concert hall. A lot of those folks had never been to the concert hall before. It had felt quite distant, quite formal, quite removed from them.

And so to pull the symphony players in, to see the really tremendous drag performers working with them on that show, and to see the reaction of the audience was just really wonderful. And it's one of the events that I will always treasure as I think about my life working with performers. And I want to thank Angela and, of course, Alex, and all of the players who participated in that event. It really was kind of ground-breaking.

And it fed right into a concert that the symphony had already planned to do, and that is working with well-known drag performer, Thorgy Thor, who was there—was, I think it was November that Thorgy was there. Again, a packed house, people really enjoying the beautiful music and the interaction with the performers. It was just wonderful.

And so I wanted to, as I say, I wanted to get to my feet to celebrate the symphony, celebrate the players and the hard work that the board and the staff were doing to continue to grow the symphony, to continue grow its audience and to really kind of provide what is a real outstanding performing arts opportunity to Manitobans.

And with that, I'll take my seat and allow others to speak. Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Honourable member for Tyndall Park.

Point of Order

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): On a quick point of order, I just wanted to take a moment before 11:55 and hopefully to see the resolution pass here unanimously, to invite all of my colleagues out, following the resolution, to take photos with all of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra musicians, directors and board in the Rotunda.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): This is, of course, not a point of order. But I welcome the remarks as conveyed.

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): The question before the House is the resolution, Calling on the Provincial Government to Recognize the Valuable Role that the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra plays in Manitoba Communities.

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

I declare the resolution carried.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): It is will of the House to recognize the clock as 12?

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Is it the will of the House to call it 12 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 12 p.m., the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

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