



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 218—The Climate Action Month Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)**

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): I move, seconded by the member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz), that Bill 218, The Climate Action Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); Loi sur le Mois de lutte contre les changements climatiques (modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Loiselle: Honourable Speaker, I rise today to introduce Bill 218, The Climate Action Month Act.

Every year in Canada and across the world we recognize April 22 as Earth Day. It's a day for us to reflect on the importance on preserving our environment. This bill would extend the spirit of this day to the entire month of April, ensuring that we raise awareness on the impact of climate change on our environment and encourage everyone to protect our planet.

Every human on Earth will be severely impacted by climate change and its—and it threatens not only our water, air and land but affects our vital infrastructure and our communities. It's up to all of us to take collective action to stop climate change, and we must act now. With this bill and the help of every Manitoban, we can work together to save our planet for generations to come.

Miigwech, merci.

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

The honourable member for Fort Garry—the motion is accordingly passed.

**Bill 219—The Police Services Amendment Act
(Obligation to Respond to Police Wrongdoings)**

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I move, seconded by the MLA for Tyndall Park, that Bill 219, The Police Services Amendment Act (Obligation to Respond to Police Wrongdoings), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm proud to introduce The Police Services Amendment Act, legislation that strengthens public accountability and reinforces trust in law enforcement.

Right now, Manitoba law does not require police officers to intervene or report when they witness wrongdoing by a fellow officer. This bill would create a clear legal duty to act, requiring officers to step in when they witness excessive force or criminal offence by another officer and to report that conduct within 24 hours.

This bill also establishes meaningful consequences. Officers who fail to intervene or report can be fined or imprisoned and barred from working as a police officer for 12 months following a conviction.

There can be no properly functioning justice system without the trust of communities, and that trust depends on transparent, responsible policing. This is about building a culture of accountability in policing and making it clear that silence in the face of misconduct is not accepted in Manitoba.

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

And so the motion is accordingly carried.

**Bill 227—The Free Trade and
Mobility Within Canada Act**

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), that Bill 227, The Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, I'm thrilled today to rise and introduce Bill 227, which is aimed at removing interprovincial trade barriers and improving labour mobility across our country.

With the threat of tariffs and ongoing economic uncertainty, it is more important than ever to reduce our reliance on foreign markets and build up our provincial and national economic independence.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: And I have some guests in the gallery that won't be with us for very long, so I would like to take this moment to introduce them.

We have seated in the public gallery, from Niverville High School, 39 grade 9 students under the direction of Chris Burns. The group is located in the constituency in the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler).

And just as a note, a special welcome goes to Emme Morris, who is the daughter of our Legislative Assembly payroll manager, who is here with the group also.

* * *

The Speaker: Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Initiatives for Just Communities' El'dad Ranch

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Accessibility): A couple of weeks ago, our Families team had the incredible privilege of visiting Initiatives for Just Communities' El'dad Ranch, a truly remarkable place changing lives every single day by supporting Manitobans with intellectual disabilities.

Through their Day and Alternative Justice program, El'dad Ranch provides not only vocational training and education, but real pathways to self-determination and purpose.

Participants aren't just learning new skills, they're rediscovering their confidence, building meaningful lives and shaping a brighter future, a more inclusive future for themselves and their communities.

Care extends across a wide range of supports, including their Supported Cluster Program, residence—Residence Program, Outreach Program and Home Share Program, each one tailored with compassion, dignity and deep respect for where people are in their journey. Whether someone needs 24/7 support or is working towards greater independence, El'dad ensures

that they are never alone, always supported and surrounded by kindness and love.

The heart of El'dad Ranch is its extraordinary staff. Their warmth and commitment and humanity are nothing short of inspiring. They lead with love and integrity, offering cultural supports like smudging and sweats and medicine picking and expressive arts. These are healing practices that nurture the spirits of participants.

I lift up some of these incredible leaders: Murray Still, Don Shackel, Kevin Drain, Jen Brisson, Trevor Utech, Kelly Woods and Tim Barron Jr., just to name a few. Your dedication is changing lives. You lead with compassion, and Manitoba is better because of you.

I want to give out a very special shout-out to Meeko, who welcomed us so generously, sharing his stunning artwork and allowed us to witness the incredible journey that he is on. Meeko, I am so very proud of you. Your strength and your talent and your pride and your story is incredibly moving. I'm so, so incredibly proud of you.

Miigwech to everyone at El'dad Ranch and Initiatives for Just Communities. Your love, your compassion and your vision are making a real difference in the lives of Manitobans living with disabilities—intellectual disabilities. You help them not just to live, but to thrive.

The El'dad Ranch joins us in the gallery, and I ask the members of this House to join me in honouring and lifting them up for their extraordinary service and for the love they so generously give to our communities, and I include their names for Hansard.

Tim Barron Jr., Jen Brisson, Dawn Bruce, Kevin Drain, Chris Fillion, Allegra Friesen Epp, Tiffany Gass, Holly Jonker, Katie Larabie, Ashu Maan, Meeko (Michael) McDonald, Don Shackel, Murray Still, Trevor Utech, Kelly Woods.

* (13:40)

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Honourable Speaker, I would also like to welcome those individuals from El'dad Ranch here to the Chamber today.

Today I rise to recognize and honour the remarkable work of Initiatives for Just Communities and their El'dad Ranch program.

Based in Steinbach, El'dad Ranch is a deeply impactful initiative that provides residential support, vocational training and assistance in designing a future

of choice for men with intellectual disabilities. Its work empowers individuals to gain skills, build confidence and move toward greater independence.

El'dad Ranch began in the early 1980s as a program of Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, initially serving as a second chance for young men who had come into conflict with the law. Over the years, it has grown into a comprehensive and multi-dimensional program that continues to evolve in response to the needs of the community.

Today, El'dad offers a wide range of services, including a day program that focuses on life skills, education and vocational training; a home-share program that provides safe, supportive environments for both men and women; and a justice program designed to assist individuals involved with or at risk of involvement in the justice system.

Honourable Speaker, it is an honour to recognize the dedication and compassion of the staff, volunteers, and the leadership behind El'dad Ranch. Their work has made a lasting difference in the lives of individuals and families not only in Steinbach, but throughout Manitoba. They continue to demonstrate what true community support looks like, rooted in dignity, inclusion and hope.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to moving on, there are some guests in the gallery.

I'd like to draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us some of whom have already been introduced, but not all. We have Don Shackel, Kevin Drain, Jen Brisson, Trevor Utech, Kelly Woods, Ashu Maan, Chris Fillion, Dawn Bruce, Tiffany Gass, Tim Barron Jr., Murray Still, Katie Larabie, Meeko "Michael" McDonald, Holly Jonker, Allegra Friesen Epp, and they are guests of the honourable Minister of Families and the honourable member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine).

And on behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you all here today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Transcona Community Network

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Honourable Speaker, there's no doubt that we inherited a mess from the previous government. Prior to taking office, the financial house was in disorder, health dollars were

being sent out of province and kids were left hungry in school.

Our government is making tangible progress in repairing the damage done by the failed PCs. Where opposition members cut, cut, cut, we continue to build, build, build: more net-new health-care workers; extended clinic hours at the Concordia Hospital; 90 new beds for Park Manor Care; a new school in Devonshire Park; and, finally, a long-awaited independent office of the seniors advocate.

Though, Honourable Speaker, our government is only as successful as we are able to pull in the same direction as grassroot community builders. That's why I rise today to recognize the hard work of the Transcona Community Network, run out of the ACCESS Transcona in the great constituency of Radisson.

This is a network of great people doing incredible things for the Transcona community. Co-chaired by Stacy Boone, a community facilitator for the WRHA and a decorated individual in her own right, as well as Carol Fletcher, a retired minister of the Transcona Memorial United Church, the TCN plays a central role in convening local organizations, service providers and community members.

It's the work of the TCN to align our community for the benefit of all. The TCN is behind countless community drives, vaccine clinics, wraparound supports, addiction care, care home volunteer organizing and even a grocery shuttle for seniors.

Stacy Boone and Carol Fletcher's ability to bridge sectors and support grassroot engagement has changed the social fabric of the area for the better. With a respective grounding in social work and a faith practice rooted in empathy, collaboration and equity, Stacy and Carol exemplify community leadership.

Honourable Speaker, I invite the House to show our gratitude for Stacy, who joins us in the gallery today, and Carol, who watches us virtually, and thank them for their ongoing contributions to shape a more inclusive, more informed and more interconnected Transcona.

Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, today, I rise to recognize the significant contributions and tireless efforts of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

For over 25 years, AMM has been the unified voice of local governments in Manitoba. It plays a vital

role in shaping the future of municipal government and helping municipalities across this province address the complex challenges that they face each day.

The AMM supports local councils, strengthens municipal leadership and fosters important collaboration between municipalities and the provincial government. It also helps ensure that the voices of Manitobans are heard loud and clear in their communities and here in the Legislature.

This week, municipal leaders from every corner of the province are gathering in Winnipeg for the 2025 AMM Spring Convention. Under the capable leadership of president Kathy Valentino; vice-presidents, Brad Saluk and Scott Phillips; and executive director, Denys Volkov, the AMM continues to lead the way in advocating for strong, sustainable and effective municipal governance.

As someone who has spent many years in municipal politics and has worked closely with the AMM, I can confidently say that real solutions are born from gatherings like this. The conversations happening at the spring convention will help shape the direction of our communities, and I can't wait to hear the great ideas and practical solutions coming from our local leaders.

Honourable Speaker, the AMM remains a powerful and respected voice for municipalities across Manitoba. To quote their vision: we are ready to move forward with determination to advance the interests of Manitoba municipalities across the finish line.

To the AMM, our PC caucus proudly stands with you. We remain committed to working alongside you to strengthen our communities and to ensure that local governments have the tools they need to succeed.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Aida Harrison

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): I am pleased to rise today to recognize Aida Harrison.

In August 1999, Aida Tahhan and her husband, Jonnie, and their two children, Grace and Jamil, immigrated to Canada from Bethlehem in Palestine. They moved to Brandon to live in a safe community with a better future in mind. Her husband was a registered nurse working at the Brandon general hospital until, after a battle with cancer, he passed away in 2014.

In Bethlehem, Aida was employed by Bethlehem University in the business administration office. When she came to Brandon, she entered the ACC culinary arts program and successfully graduated from there. This led to employment at the Brandon general hospital kitchen.

However, Aida wanted to cook, and the hospital kitchen was not for her. She moved to the Rideau Park Personal Care Home, working as the head chef.

While Aida was employed at Rideau Park, she became active in a number of committees, such as the ethics committee, wellness committee, social committee, as well as becoming the union representative for her workplace.

When Aida's children were ready to attend university, she decided that she could not pay the bills associated with university on a single salary. With 'determinatia,' Aida accepted a second job teaching part time at the ACC culinary arts program from which she graduated. The style of food and the taste of her dishes were such that her students convinced her to open her own restaurant.

As a result of Aida's hard work, both Grace and Jamil graduated university. Grace is currently employed as a senior office at Global Affairs Canada and Jamil is active in business and accounting ventures in Brandon.

In 2014, Aida had a vision for a catering business. She bought a house near the university and retrofitted it to include a commercial kitchen to facilitate a new catering business. In September 2015, Aida's Catering opened and is enjoying continued success. Aida expanded her catering business in 2021 and opened a new business venture, The Backyard on Aberdeen.

A community leader, Aida has sat on many boards, such as the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, Westman Immigrant Services and has a seat on the YWCA. This past February, Aida planned and hosted the Palestinian pavilion at the Westman Multicultural Festival.

Colleagues, please join me in celebrating an icon in Brandon's hospitality and culinary scene and a shining example of entrepreneurial spirit, Aida Harrison.

* (13:50)

Bell's Trailer Hitches

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize a remarkable local business and the dedicated individuals behind it at Bell's Trailer Hitches located in Headingley and proudly operated

by Craig and Jack Bell, the fifth generation of the Bell family to carry on a legacy that began over a century ago.

Founded in 1917 by their great-great-grandfather Robert Bell, what started as a humble livery stable and tractor repair shop, Bell's Trailer Hitches was known predominantly for stabling horses and repairing early automobiles.

As time went on, the second and third generations of the family expanded the business. They still ran the garage, but also started hauling necessities like gas, heating oil, diesel and water to various homes and businesses in Headingley. The business has grown and evolved with the times and is today a trusted name in trailer hitches and automotive accessories. They are one of only a few businesses in Manitoba that specialize in installing and repairing trailer hitches, and they don't like to brag, but the biggest hitch manufacturers in the world know them by name.

What truly sets Bell's apart is not just their longevity in business but their enduring commitment to our community. For over 100 years, the Bell family has been more than business owners; they have been community builders. Today, Craig, Jack and their team continue that proud tradition. From active involvement with the Phoenix Recreation Association and volunteer support for the Phoenix Winter Carnival to generous contributions toward the new RM gymnasium and their support of the Chamber of Commerce, their contributions run deep.

In addition to their community spirit, Bell's Trailer Hitches is also a place of opportunity and inclusion. They currently employ four individuals, including a recently arrived Ukrainian refugee, offering a warm welcome and a path forward to someone starting a new life in Canada.

Honourable Speaker, Bell's Trailer Hitches exemplifies what it means to be rooted in tradition while looking toward the future with compassion, generosity and a true sense of civic duty. Please join me in recognizing and celebrating this outstanding local business and the family behind it.

Education Week

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Honourable Speaker, this week we celebrate Education Week, which is intended to acknowledge the importance of kindergarten-to-grade 12 education and 'educashors'—educators' crucial role in ensuring all children and youth have a sense of belonging and succeed in reaching their full potential.

À l'occasion de cette Semaine de l'éducation, nous tenons à souligner l'importance de l'éducation au Manitoba, et nous souhaitons exprimer notre grande reconnaissance envers les enseignants pour le travail exceptionnel que ceux-ci accomplissent chaque jour auprès de tous nos élèves, et spécialement auprès de ceux qui ont besoin – des besoins particuliers.

Grâce à eux, chaque élève se sent soutenu, compris et capable de réussir, peu importe les obstacles. Les enseignants sont des personnes importantes dans le parcours des élèves, et leur expertise enrichit la vie scolaire de ceux-ci et soutient également les familles manitobaines.

Translation

As we mark Education Week, we want to emphasize the importance of education in Manitoba, and we want to express our deep appreciation for the exceptional work teachers do every day with all our students, especially those with special needs.

Thanks to educators, every student feels supported, understood and able to succeed, no matter what the obstacles. Educators are important people in students' educational journeys, and their expertise enriches students' academic lives and supports Manitoba families.

English

We acknowledge K-to-12 educators as well as business and apprenticeship partners who work within and across our provincial education system to support young people as they prepare for the careers and challenges of the future.

It is our hope that the observance of Education Week will encourage all Manitobans to reflect on the historic and enduring influence of education in our province and the education system's continued relationship to the health of our communities and workplace. After all, Honourable Speaker, education is the great equalizer.

A famous quote from Horace Mann which speaks to the importance of our education system as we celebrate education week here in Manitoba as well as across Canada. Education encourages and promotes diversity, equity and inclusion, and celebrating education week is also a way to celebrate belonging in our schools, our learning centres and communities across the province.

Au nom de notre gouvernement, nous disons un immense merci aux éducateurs manitobains. Nous sommes fiers de pouvoir compter sur vous et de vous

avoir aux côtés de nos familles et de nos élèves aux quatre coins du Manitoba.

Merci. Miigwech.

Translation

On behalf of our government, we would like to say a huge thank-you to all Manitoba educators. We are proud to be able to count on you and to have you at the side of our families and students throughout Manitoba.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions, there is another guest in the gallery that I'd like to introduce.

Seated in the public gallery is Desiree Pappel from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, who is the guest of the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle).

We welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Non-Renewal of Hydro's US Energy Contracts Future Power Supply Needs—Value of Hydro Assets

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I welcome El'Dad Ranch to the gallery today, as well as our other guests. And I know that El'Dad Ranch is an absolute gem of another organization within Eastman area that works with our community members, with adults with disabilities. So for that, we all thank you.

Honourable Speaker, Hydro is not renewing expiring contracts with Xcel Energy. These contracts involve the sale of 375 megawatts of summer power, as well as 125 megawatts of annual power to the northern states' power. There are areas of Manitoba classified as abnormally dry and all the way to extreme drought. During drought, Manitoba Hydro and its customers often rely on our southern neighbour's power supply.

What is the government's plan to keep Manitobans' lights, furnaces and air conditioners on if we see another hot and dry summer this year, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to say a big shout-out to all of our guests who are joining us here today. To all the young people: I hope that you see yourself in your democracy, and I hope that you know that you could be elected here as an MLA and maybe even premier sometime in the future.

When it comes to Manitoba Hydro, we're very, very reliable; we're a great partner to our American

neighbours. Even after what we've announced this week, we'll still be exporting more than 1,300 megawatts of power. We've got reliable power; we're reliable people. That's who Manitobans are.

Of course, the members opposite, they want to prioritize the interests of the Trump administration, at a time when everyone else is standing up for Canada. And if you don't believe me, just look what they announced in the House yesterday: They are blocking a bill that would make sure that kids in Manitoba sing O Canada.

On behalf of everyone out there, all I have to say is: How dare they?

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

Mr. Ewasko: So, again, Honourable Speaker, Premier stands up, puts misinformation on the record. There is not one student in this great province of ours that is not able to or is not singing O Canada as we stand today.

The Premier talks about supporting Canadian energy and infrastructure. This is the same NDP that used Manitobans' money to build the American transmission lines. With the Premier ending Hydro contracts, Manitobans are left questioning the value of these assets. The Manitoba-Minnesota Transmission Project was to provide additional capacity for new export sales, allow for imports during droughts and enhance reliability.

With the non-renewal of these two contracts, is the Premier abandoning his mentor Greg Selinger's investment?

Mr. Kinew: You know, when Gary Doer built up Hydro, he did it in partnership with the US but with a priority on Canada.

What we're announcing this week is that we're going to make more money for Manitobans by doing business with our Canadian partners, which sounds like a good deal to me.

But when we talk about abandoning, I'd like the member opposite to share with the House whether he's abandoning his soon-to-be boss. Did they check in with Wally before they blocked the bill to have kids sing O Canada? I don't think Wally would be a big supporter of blocking the bill that will make sure kids sing our national anthems in classrooms across the province forevermore.

And here's the concerning thing: This is only one of number of major mistakes that they made yesterday.

So let's hear this; let's hear it from the members opposite: Did they check with Wally before they blocked these bills?

The Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question. *[interjection]*

Order.

Interprovincial Transmission Plan

Mr. Ewasko: So again, it's shameful that the Premier stands in his place, puts misinformation on the record and also is part of a government sitting next to the Education Minister that's trying to get rid of our Royal Anthem, Honourable Speaker.

The NDP have not been interested in an east-west power grid. Instead of years, they push south, ignoring our provincial neighbours.

The Premier provided almost no details yesterday: 50 megawatts to Nunavut, but only if the federal government or someone else pays for it; 450 megawatts for our Canadian neighbours, but not a single plan to deliver this, Honourable Speaker.

While repatriating our energy sounds good, without any details, it's just another in those—one of those endless plans of no action, Honourable Speaker.

* (14:00)

The Premier says he's advised Governor Walz months ago of this decision.

What specific financial commitments has this Premier solidified from the federal government to fund east, west and north transmission lines, or has he even had a conversation, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: Well, I'll take it from the member opposite who says our announcement on Manitoba Hydro sounds good; sounds good to us, sounds good to Manitobans. What's all the quarrelling about?

Well, perhaps, maybe the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) didn't get that check in, that shoulder check before they announced the plan to delay bills.

You know, Bill 30, the election financing amendments that we brought forward here, do you know why we did that, Honourable Speaker? We did that because they did the worst thing in the history of Manitoba politics. Those landfill ads? That is why we brought that bill in. And what did they do? They got

together in their caucus and they decided to block that bill. That is shameful.

They bring forward an apology, but their actions speak so much louder. Bill 30 is the bill to stop a political party from running shameful, landfill-style attack ads again. Why would they block that bill, if for no other reason that their other frontrunner in the leadership candidate, the member for—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Education Property Taxes Increase Concerns for Homeowners

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Again, Honourable Speaker, the Premier stands up to put false narratives on the record. Is he in the majority, or is he not?

He can fast forward these bills, but he chooses not to. Or he just doesn't know the rules, Honourable Speaker.

Not—this is typical of you-know-who, the member from Fort Rouge.

As members of AMM meet at their spring convention, NDP school tax increases are an intense topic. The NDP have broken their campaign promise to keep the 50 per cent rebate and I table that platform today, Honourable Speaker.

Their broken promises sounded just like Trudeau's carbon tax spin that 80 per cent of homeowners would be paying less. But we know that's not true. With the stroke of a pen, this NDP government raised taxes on Manitoba's residences, cottages and businesses.

When will the Premier apologize to homeowners for not being honest about the NDP plans to raise taxes? Would he please answer one question?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Go to the doors in Lac du Bonnet and ask people if they want that \$1,500 tax credit on their property tax bills. Go anywhere in the province and ask people if they want that to go up to \$1,600 every year.

I know what people will say in Flin Flon to Fort Rouge, Honourable Speaker. They'll say that's making life more affordable. Now, for the member opposite, is anyone in Manitoba going to be thinking about Justin Trudeau the next time we vote in a provincial election?

I don't know, but I know people in Manitoba will be thinking about the landfill ads that the PCs ran in 2023. We knew that that did not line up with your values,

which is why we brought in Bill 30, the election financing amendment act. It would ask for political parties to show some class; to, at the bare minimum, show some respect; to never run ads attacking murder victims again.

Now, the PCs had the opportunity to vote in favour of this, as they have for other parts of our legislative agenda. But instead, they announce that they're blocking it. If it wasn't the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) who they're rallying around to be their next leader asking them to block it, then who on the opposition benches thought it was a good idea to prevent legislation standing up against the landfill ads.

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, Honourable Speaker, we're standing here today and asking questions of concerns of Manitobans, and this Premier refuses to answer anything. One year ago, this Premier patted himself on the back and the Finance Minister, promising a homeowner tax credit.

But the media have taken this challenge and shown that even the small increase to the education credit—education—or in, I quote, won't keep pace with the assessment increase in huge property tax increases approved last month—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —by Manitoba school divisions, let alone next year's school tax increases, end quote.

Under the NDP's property tax plan, Manitobans are falling further behind as this Finance Minister raises school and property taxes.

When will the Premier stop off-loading higher education taxes onto homeowners, or is he content with Manitobans continuing to live paycheque to paycheque—which is one thing he does not do, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: We're saving you \$1,500 on your property tax bills this year. That's going to go up next year to \$1,600. We're working with you to make life more affordable.

We're also working with you to make this one Manitoba, a province that we can all be proud of. Part of the reason that we talk about one Manitoba is because they tried to divide Manitobans with their landfill ad campaign last year. The member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk) knows full well this kind of politics, because this is what he puts out in his local communiqués.

But the reality is this: Manitobans don't want that. Manitobans never want to see politicking like the landfill ads again.

That's why we brought in Bill 30. Why did the members opposite delay it? There is no reason that they are willing to state publicly. You just saw the proof of that right here. So why don't you bring something forward as the opposition, into the House, and if you don't have anything decent to say, get out of the way—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —and let us pass legislation for the good people of Manitoba.

The Speaker: I would just remind the First Minister to always direct his comments through the Chair, not directly to members opposite.

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, Honourable Speaker, rules don't seem to apply to this Premier because of his extensive large ego. He just can't help himself.

The Premier likes to point fingers and look backwards. This Premier needs to stop campaigning and for once start governing, Honourable Speaker. To quote the Brandon Sun editorial, and I quote: the previous Progressive Conservative government cannot be credibly blamed for the higher school taxes and lower rebates that many Manitobans are experiencing, end quote.

Honourable Speaker, 7 per cent property tax increase in Brandon, 15 per cent property tax increase in River East-Transcona, 11 per cent property tax increase in Seine River. All these increases are the result of this NDP Premier's failures.

When is the Premier going to actually keep his commitment that 83 per cent of homeowners will be better off under his plan?

Mr. Kinew: We're saving you \$1,500 a year on your property tax bills, and we're properly funding education. That means one hundred per cent of Manitobans are better off.

But you know the personal invective that he launched at me there? You know what I say? If that's what you put in your attack ads the next time around, great. Attack me. Don't ever attack the families of murder victims again.

That is a simple proposition, and I think every Manitoban would support the principle behind Bill 30 except, of course, the PC caucus. A leadership contest is about choices. I know there's members opposite there who view themselves as perhaps having a long

career in politics. Why would they block legislation like this? Everyone in Manitoba knows—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —that the landfill ads were a mistake. PC candidates rushed out after the election to condemn the landfill ads. The PCs had an opportunity to put action behind what's looking like the empty words of their apology. Instead, they came in here and blocked this legislation—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Crime by Repeat Offenders Need for Bail Reform

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): A new day and another bail, not jail convict released by this minister to prey on Manitobans once again. Prior to highlighting this failed minister's endeavours, it's worth reminding him what his boss said, and I quote: there's no need to wait for other levels of government to take action on bail reform, end quote.

February 22 to April 5, an individual was involved in almost 25 criminal acts, ranging from credit card theft to grand theft auto. What is particularly shocking about this arrest is that the person has also been charged with six counts of failing to comply with his condition of release.

Why does this minister release him only to revictimize Manitobans?

The Speaker: The honourable First Minister. *[interjection]*
Order.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Our Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is doing important work. Just earlier today, he stood with the leadership of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities to not only reaffirm the work that we're doing on bail, but also to call in the federal government to come to the table.

But I have to ask, through you, the Chair, this member: Where did he stand on the decision to block the legislation saying there should be no more ads like those targeting the landfill families? He used to work in law enforcement. How is it then, the 2023 campaign, somebody who came from the front lines decided to stand with the leader, Heather Stefanson, who would attack the family of murder victims?

That doesn't seem like serve and protect to me. That seems like divide, target and use a very cynical approach to politics that no Manitoban ever wants to see again.

* (14:10)

So before he tries to pit Manitobans one against the other again, I would like him to stand in his place and explain why they are blocking Bill 30 so that they can run more disgusting attack ads again.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, I'm surprised that the Premier didn't bring forward the ample questions about the failed policies of this Justice Minister during the AMM today.

Just yesterday, Winnipeg Police Service advised that they had made an arrest following another violent stabbing assault aboard the transit bus that occurred on April 2. A 21-year-old victim, just trying to get home, was robbed and stabbed, requiring emergency medical aid—so much for this Premier's promise, and I quote: we will end violent crime.

What Manitobans I talk to are so upset about is the most recent act involved not only all of these charges, but failed to comply with conditions of a release order, once again.

When is this minister going to slam shut the door on violent criminals re-offending because he insists on continuing—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: Our Minister of Justice is making sure—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —that we have bail reform in Manitoba. He's taken the policy steps here at the provincial level, he's hired more law enforcement officers and he's standing with AMM, municipal leaders, to ensure that we work with the feds.

But one of the things that we're working on 'prevending' is we're trying to prevent the PCs from re-offending the sensibilities of the people of Manitoba. Those landfill ads were the worst thing to happen in the history of Manitoba politics. The member opposite from Brandon West stands in here and asks questions about safety? What about the safety of Indigenous women? What about the families of Mercedes Myran and Morgan Harris?

The member opposite needs to stand up today and announce why he can remain part of a caucus that would block legislation to take important steps, not only to make everyone in our province safer, but also

to prevent the PCs from doing the terrible kind of politicking they tried in 2023.

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

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, clearly this minister and myself stand on totally opposite sides when it comes to law enforcement.

On April 14, the Winnipeg Police Service reported from March 25 until April 13, three individuals committed a series of violent commercial robberies. Knives were 'branished', money was forcibly stolen. And what do these individuals all have in common, other than robbery times two, possession of a weapon, theft under \$5,000, break and enter? Well, Honourable Speaker, guess what? All of these criminals were also released back into the community under this failed minister's watch.

Does this minister not understand that jail, not bail, is the simplest way to protect Manitobans?

Mr. Kinew: Our minister's hiring more law enforcement; he's working with municipal leaders; he's working with the federal government to make you safer.

But what do the members opposite have in common? The members opposite in the PC caucus are the only people in Manitoba who have not condemned the 2023 PC election campaign. Everyone else, including in their own party, Rochelle Squires, Wally Daudrich—they've all gone out to condemn those landfill ads.

Now the member came out to offer an apology. What about this member for Brandon West, who now heckles from his chair? Why is he silent when questions about the landfill ads come forward? He's fired up when the mic's not on, but when we put the question to him, he's got nothing to say.

They're blocking legislation to hold them accountable—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —for the shame that—shameful behaviour in 2023. Why do they continue to avoid accountability for the worst thing to ever happen in Manitoba politics?

Cancellation of School Bus Charters Safety Concern for Students Taking Transit

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Winnipeg parents are now forced to worry about the safety of their kids getting to school, and for good reason.

Winnipeg Transit is cancelling school bus charters across the city at the same time random violence, on

and around public transit, is escalating under this NDP government. Two people were assaulted on transit just this week, and now this Education Minister expects parents to trust the safety of their children on general transit buses.

What is the Minister of Education doing to protect these kids now that safe transit options are being taken away?

The Speaker: The Honourable First Minister.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Our Education Minister is doing an amazing job. Not only are we making communities safer by feeding hungry children in classrooms, we're also ensuring that children, all children, including trans children, are safe in the classroom. We're going to keep working with parents in this part of the city to ensure that your kids get home safely from school.

And bringing Manitobans home safely is the reason we searched the landfill. These members opposite tried to run—well, they didn't try; they did. It was terrible. Everyone hated the landfill ads, and now that we try to bring in legislation to allow Manitobans to be free of terrible attack ads like that in the future, what do they do? They block it. That is not only shameful; it is doubling down. They're trying to keep open the opportunity for them to run ads like that again, and they need to be called out on it.

So the member opposite from Agassiz should weigh in. Did she support this decision to block legislation that would hold—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Ms. Byram: Maybe this Premier can allow his ministers to stand up and answer a question in this House.

Since January 1, there have been 10 separate Winnipeg Police news releases tied to stabbings, robberies and physical and sexual assaults on transit, and I'll table that for the House.

Middle-school students should not be forced to feel unsafe in their bus ride to school. Parents should not have fear to—for their kids who might run into issues on the school bus or on the transit bus. Charters solve that problem, and now, under this NDP government, that option is completely gone.

What additional resources will the minister commit to ensure that students are safe on Winnipeg Transit?

Mr. Kinew: Well, the member opposite voted against more money for the Winnipeg Police Service. On the other hand, just yesterday, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) met with the Amalgamated Transit Union in order to advance the safety of your children and everyone in Manitoba.

But what about the kids who had to drive by on a transit bus past that billboard on Route 90, the one that said, stand firm against the landfill dig—intentionally wordsmithed to cause the maximum amount of division and pain for the families of the landfill victims.

So, member for Agassiz, through you, the Chair, where do they stand, I wonder, when it came to blocking legislation to hold them accountable for the worst thing ever to be done in Manitoba's political history? Are they going to be silent like everyone else there or are they going to show the courage to distance themselves from those terrible, despicable ads?

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

Ms. Byram: One Winnipeg mother told me, and I quote: In September, my 11-year-old daughter has to cross Main Street and take the bus by herself with the general public where every bus shelter either gets smashed or has someone living in it.

The NDP allowed school tax hikes across the city, hitting families hard in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Byram: Yet, despite these tax increases, critical services like safe student transportation are now gone.

How can the minister justify raising school taxes while cutting essential services like safe rides to school and forcing families to fend for themselves?

Mr. Kinew: Our Minister of Education is working with the Minister of Justice and everyone else on this team to make sure the kids in Manitoba are safe and can reach their full potential.

I'll table the letter that was written to Heather Stefanson during her time as premier, asking for action to make transit safer. We'll cut to the spoiler at the end of the story. Nothing was done. What Heather Stefanson instead focused on was running ads attacking the families involved with the landfill search, a search that we have now concluded—well, perhaps not concluded but been able to deliver on for at least two of these families.

But this member from Agassiz—again, there's so much criticism of every single thing that they read about in the newspaper, but where is the accountability when it comes to what they did in the 2023 election campaign?

And here's another spoiler alert. Everyone else who is getting up today is going to have to add to these questions of accountability. The worst thing done in the history of Manitoba politics—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —will not soon be forgotten. We brought in Bill 30 to hold them accountable. Why did they block it?

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

* (14:20)

Mandatory Overtime for Manitoba Nurses Staffing Levels and Patient Safety Concerns

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Despite repeated and misleading claims from the NDP of improvement, Manitoba nurses worked more than 1.1 million hours of overtime last year, the highest level ever recorded.

These aren't just numbers; they represent missed breaks, lost time with family, physical and mental exhaustion and, most importantly, increased risk to patient safety. The Manitoba Nurses Union has called this not just a staffing crisis, but a patient safety crisis.

While in opposition, the minister promised to eliminate mandatory overtime entirely. Nurses are still waiting.

So when will this minister deliver a real plan to rebuild the front lines of health care that doesn't rely on nurse burnout?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, our Minister of Health is doing amazing work staffing up the front lines.

We've already seen a 40 per cent reduction in the use of—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —mandatory overtime at the Health Sciences Centre, and we're going to work with the MNU and the front-line nurses and you, the patient, to deliver more.

But when we're talking about safety, what about the safety of the families involved with the landfill search? No answer now. *[interjection]*

No heckling now, save for the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk). But again, when's the last time he ever got up to say anything in the House?

The members opposite opposed these families' call for dignity, for humanitarianism. We did not; we listened; we search the landfill, and now we brought in Bill 30 to hold them accountable.

So was it the member for Roblin who refused to join the interim leader's approach here, or did she support it? Is she standing in the way of the PCs facing accountability for the 2023 campaign? She should weigh on—weigh in on this.

Manitobans deserve—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: In a recent post, the Manitoba Nurses Union revealed that at Thompson General Hospital, just 13 nurses in—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —the obstetrics unit logged nearly 14,000 hours of overtime—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —in a single year. That's the equivalent of—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Health will come to order.

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, 13 nurses in the obstetrics unit logged nearly 14,000 hours of overtime in a single year. That's the equivalent of seven full-time jobs on top of their regular workloads.

Does the minister truly believe it's safe or sustainable to run our health-care system this way? How is it fair to patients or nurses to rely on exhaustion and crisis staffing instead of actually hiring and retaining the full-time staff we need?

Mr. Kinew: Our Minister of Health has hired more than 1,200 new net front-line staffers. The member opposite was an adviser to Heather Stefanson who fired more than 300 nurses.

So, again, fly back in the time machine two years ago and ask yourself why you caused the nurse staffing crisis. At the same time, you perhaps might want to warn the PCs through you, the Chair, and say that the landfill ads are going to be the worst decision made in the history of Manitoba. I know it seems like in the backrooms of the PC Party in 2023 it seems like

a good idea, but no, stop. This thing is going to be a disaster.

Manitobans spoke on election day. They rejected that form of politics. They gave us a mandate. We're bringing in Bill 30 to prevent that from ever happening again. How would any reasonable Manitoban justify blocking that legislation? How does the member justify blocking that legislation?

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

Mrs. Cook: Perhaps the Minister of Health would like to take some of their heckling energy and turn it into action on behalf of nurses who expect real answers to the questions.

The Manitoba Nurses Union is sounding the alarm again and again. Just yesterday, their president told the media that, quote: Our overtime rates are still more than we've ever seen before. The use of agency nurses is still extremely high.

And, earlier this year, she questioned this NDP Health Minister's claim—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Health will come to order.

Mrs. Cook: Earlier this year, Darlene Jackson questioned this NDP minister's claims of staffing up our health-care system, asking, quote: Where are they? Because nurses are not seeing the impact of having more nurses in the system.

So I'll ask the minister directly: Where are these so-called reinforcements? They're not showing up in the overtime numbers; they're not on the floor of our ERs, and they're certainly not reflected in the wait times patients are facing in Winnipeg and across the province.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: The nurses we hired are working on the front lines. The PCs cut nurses. There were fewer nurses in Manitoba after they left office than when they started.

But the member opposite should know this: just a few weeks ago she was in a such a rush to criticize Wally, but why not criticize Heather Stefanson? Where's the urgency now on an issue that actually did determine public perception of her party? She styles herself as perhaps a future leadership candidate after the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) flames out?

Well, she is going to need to address this issue, and it would start to lay the groundwork—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —for such a public position if she spoke out against the interim leader's misguided attempt to block Bill 30. Bill 30 is about preventing landfill ad-type attacks from being mounted in Manitoba again. If they want to make this a doorstep issue—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Oak Tree Towers Resident Case Concern

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, there was lots of talk of getting rid of criminal activity out of rental apartment units. Yet, in Oak Tree Towers, a resident was jailed for six months and he was welcomed back with open arms at Oak Tree Towers to continue his illicit activities.

Honourable Speaker, can the minister tell us why this person is still residing at Oak Tree Towers?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, our Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) is doing important work to Manitoba safer by addressing issues at the root cause.

If the member opposite has casework that he wants her to focus on or specifically wants to connect with constituents, I know that she'll be happy to do so. She's going to do that later today, actually, in a very public forum.

But this member opposite was part of a team that was elected under those shameful landfill ads. Where does he stand? Did he support—did he feel good, perhaps we should wonder, going to the doorstep in Portage la Prairie while Heather Stefanson was trying to attack the families of murder victims? How did he—he shrugs his shoulders today. Apparently, it didn't bother him.

Well, here's the news for you: it bothered everyone in Manitoba. And for any PC member who hopes to be re-elected again, they are going to have to address these serious questions. It is a question of judgment, it is a question of temperament, it is a question of character.

We are the humble servants for you, the people of Manitoba. We're bringing in legislation to stop those—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

MLA Bereza: After much advocacy done by the residents of Oak Tree Towers, there is now 24-hour security on site, yet the criminal activity has moved to on-site cottages.

Honourable Speaker, when will this minister provide security for all residents at Oak Tree Towers, not just a few?

Thank you.

Mr. Kinew: Our minister is working hard with the folks at the Oak Tree Towers to make sure that everyone is safe. The member concedes that in his answer that she's listening.

Now, there's still much more work to do. But when we were talking about a question of standing up for only a few and leaving other folks behind, could there be any worse example of that than the landfill ads, trying to bring one group of—[*interjection*]

And he's heckling, by the way, Honourable Speaker. I'd advise the PC members to perhaps just listen when we're talking about their ads saying stand firm against the landfill dig. Very disrespectful language, intentionally calculated to try and leave some folks behind. Intentionally calculated to try and target one group of voters.

Here's the good news: Manitobans rejected that and joined together to send the PCs packing and they elect us with a mandate to do what? Among other things, ensure ads like that will never run again.

Bill 30 does exactly that. Why did this member oppose it? Why does he sit in a caucus with people who opposed it as well?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Manitoba Housing Suite Vacancies

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): There are many vacant suites in Oak Tree Towers for the past 18 months, as well as the Stephens Apartments in Portage, another Manitoba Housing building, with some people telling me they've applied up to four different times with Manitoba Housing, and they're still couch-surfing.

Honourable Speaker, when will this minister be opening up to the—opening up these suites for the people that are in need, instead of letting criminals remain in those suites?

* (14:30)

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): The Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) is opening up suites and housing people, getting people out of tents right now. And do you know why? Because we believe that every single Manitoban deserves to have a place to call home. Home: reflect on that.

Consider where people would've been left as their home if they had had their way when it came to the landfill search. We stood up and we did the right thing. It was not easy because of the attack ads that were being run by the PCs. But we are bringing two Manitobans home because of the leadership of the families.

Now that their PC 2023 campaign has been thoroughly debunked, why is it that not a single former candidate can now stand up to defend it? And yet why, at the same time that they don't want to talk about it, would they stand in this same House and announce that they're going to block the legislation to hold them accountable?

Well, it seems like the PCs want to continue with the action without abating the accountability. It seems like they—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

WRHA Centralization of Home-Care Scheduling Impact of Delays and Cancellations on Patient Care

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Recent reports have highlighted deep concerns from health-care professionals following the WRHA's overhaul of its home-care scheduling system. These disruptions have resulted in delays, confusion and difficulty in providing timely quality care to patients who rely on home-care services.

What immediate actions is the government taking to resolve these issues and ensure that vulnerable patients don't have any more cancelled visits?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I really appreciate the member for—the question—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —from the member for Tyndall Park, and I always appreciate, quite frankly, her approach in respecting all communities and all Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, this is a really important issue. I've had the opportunity to meet with many health-care workers, nurses, health-care aides, home-care providers, and I want to reassure those folks that we've been listening to their concerns. The WRHA is actively

taking steps to address those concerns, actively hiring on more folks to do the scheduling work, making sure that they're having daily huddles with the front lines to communicate what is happening to close those gaps that they identified existed, want to reassure folks that many of these concerns have been addressed.

We're going to keep working with them and directing the WRHA to continue to address them and listen to the front lines.

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

Home-Care Workers—Burnout Concerns

MLA Lamoureux: The Manitoba Nurses Union has expressed significant concerns during the planning phase of this centralization process and recommended piloting the new system before full rollout. Unfortunately, there was no pilot project and the full-scale transition has contributed to staff burnout.

Is the government considering rolling back this decision, or what steps are they taking to assist home-care workers now experiencing burnout?

MLA Asagwara: Again, very, very important question. I want to reassure that member and all health-care workers who are providing home care with WRHA that we're working very quickly, supporting the WRHA to take immediate action to address their concerns. Some of those concerns have already been addressed; we recognize there's more to do.

We directed the WRHA to maintain open lines of communication with the front lines; they're having daily huddles. They're actively hiring folks to fill the gaps that they identified when they rolled this out, and they're going to continue to do that work, making sure that the scheduling system, which came as a result of review done under the PCs, due to their failings in Home Care, that those concerns are meaningfully addressed and we have a stronger Home Care program as we move forward as a result.

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

Impact of Delays and Cancellations on Patient Care

MLA Lamoureux: Centralization of scheduling was supposed to streamline operations, reduce administrative inefficiencies and improve co-ordination.

However, the feedback from front-line workers suggests that these intended benefits have not materialized as expected. The most important thing is that patient outcomes are not compromised.

How does the government plan to evaluate and address the impacts that this is having on patients?

MLA Asagwara: Again, a really important question. We know that the changes to home-care scheduling came as a direct result of a review that was done when, under the PCs, a Manitoban was unable to receive home care in a timely manner and passed away before that care was received.

It's really important that we adhere to these really strong recommendations. Centralized scheduling is being rolled out, recognizing what work needs to be done to support the front lines and make sure Manitobans get appropriate care. Our government's going to make sure that we continue to support the WRHA in addressing those concerns and meeting the needs of Manitobans.

Anne Oake Family Recovery Centre Funding Announcement

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Earlier today, our Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) and Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) announced a historic investment that will get more addictions treatment to women who need it in Manitoba. Since day one, our government has been committed to supporting women recovering from addictions, helping them live full and free lives.

Can the minister please tell the House how our government is getting women in Manitoba the addictions treatment they need to build a strong future for themselves and their children?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity): Miigwech to my colleague with the best question of the day.

This morning, our government announced \$1.5 million to support the Anne Oake Family Recovery Centre. A new centre offering hope and healing to women, this investment reflects Manitoba's deep commitment to creating pathways for Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse relatives to be empowered, supported and ultimately, to be safe.

We take a whole-of-government approach, with \$1 million for construction from Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag and half a million for start-up from Housing, Addictions and Homelessness. We believe and we know that every woman deserves the opportunity to heal, not just for herself, but for her children and—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And the time for oral questions has also expired.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: We have some more guests in the gallery—in the public gallery. I'd like to introduce Clayton Canart, reeve, Wallace-Woodworth; Mark Custance, councillor, Two Borders. And they are guests of the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) and for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk).

We welcome you here today.

PETITIONS

Schools in Tyndall Park

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition.

The back—to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) In October 2024, the Province halted plans to build nine new schools in the province, even though they were already in motion.

(2) This decision directly affected the building of a much-needed school in Tyndall Park, where the population continues to grow rapidly.

(3) The provincial government has stated many times that it is committed to building schools that respond to the needs of students and educators across Manitoba by working with all school divisions on this issue.

(4) Students in many public schools are having to learn in hallways, gymnasiums, libraries and music rooms, which, year in and year out, is unacceptable.

(5) Schools in many areas of the province are experiencing dire infrastructure needs, from basic issues like leaking roofs, aging boilers and updating older school buildings, to larger problems relating to the capital projects that are required for the accommodation of the growing student populations.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to follow through with the previous plans to build a much-needed school in Tyndall Park.

(2) To urge the provincial government to ensure that these schools have plans to address critical needs for public transportation and child-care facilities; and

(3) To urge the provincial government to increase budgets for infrastructure replacement, repairs and maintenance in order to preserve and upgrade existing schools in Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

The Speaker: Seeing no other petitions, grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Could you please call second reading of Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Indigenous Languages of Instruction); followed by Bill 27, The Income Tax Amendment Act; followed by Bill 14, The Insurance Amendment Act; followed by Bill 16, The Municipal Councils and Schools Boards Elections Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act; followed by Bill 20, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act; followed by Bill 22, The Environment Amendment and Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act; followed by Bill 33, The Public Health Amendment Act; followed by Bill 41, the reporting of supports for child survivors of sexual assault act, trained health professionals and evidence collection kits, amendment act; followed by Bill 7, The Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act.

* (14:40)

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will now proceed to second readings of Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Indigenous Languages of Instruction); followed by Bill 27, The Income Tax Amendment Act; followed by Bill 14, The Insurance Amendment Act; followed by Bill 16, The Municipal Councils and School Board Elections Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act; followed by Bill 20, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act; followed by Bill 22, The Environment Amendment and Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act; followed by Bill 33, The Public Health Amendment Act; followed by Bill 41, the reporting of supports for child survivors of sexual assault act, trained health professionals and evidence collection kits, amendment act; followed by Bill 7, The Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act.

So we will—the honourable Government House Leader.

MLA Fontaine: Could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to not see the clock until the question has been put on second reading of the following bills, or 6:30, whichever is earlier: bills 18, 27, 14, 16, 20, 22, 33, 41 and 7.

The Speaker: Is there leave to not see the clock until the question has been put on the second reading of the bills the Government House Leader just announced, or 6:30, whichever is earlier?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS

Bill 18—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Indigenous Languages of Instruction)

The Speaker: So we will now, as announced, move on to second reading of Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Indigenous Languages of Instruction).

The honourable Minister of Health—oh, sorry. The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Indigenous Languages of Instruction); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (enseignement en langue autochtone), now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Schmidt: Pardon me, thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Our government, led by the vision of our Premier (Mr. Kinew), is taking important steps to revitalize Indigenous languages in Manitoba.

It is impossible to talk about Indigenous language revitalization in Manitoba without addressing the harms of colonization and of residential schools, notably that generations of speakers were banned from speaking their own language at school.

And even today, Honourable Speaker, despite what we know to be true, and despite our societal commitment to reconciling that colonial history, even today only French and English may be taught as the language of primary instruction. Indigenous language instruction can only take plus-place for less than 50 per cent of the day.

Bill 18 seeks to change that by allowing for Indigenous language immersion programming in Manitoba. The importance of Indigenous languages now being taught in schools, the very environment where they were once taken away, is not lost on our government and on our team.

Teaching Indigenous languages in schools creates the opportunity to ensure that Indigenous languages, lessons and traditions are passed on to future generations. As we all know, the ability to learn and speak one's own language has deep ties to culture and community and to our world view.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action No. 14 recognizes the fundamental importance of Indigenous languages and the need for them to be protected and revitalized. This bill takes a significant step down that path. We know that the more time students are exposed to a language students are exposed to a language during classroom instruction, the more they develop their language skills, which in turn supports their learning more broadly.

Bill 18 proposes to change The Public Schools Act to designate Indigenous languages as languages of instruction when authorized by a school board. This would enable school boards to authorize immersion programs in Cree, Dakota, Dene, Inuktitut, Michif, Ojibwe and Ojibwe-Cree. This bill was informed by previous work undertaken by the Manitoba Aboriginal Languages Strategy. This was a collaborative effort between four organizations, including Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, to advance the preparation of teachers in Manitoba to deliver education in Indigenous languages and promote Indigenous language programming.

Currently, there are three public schools that are offering bilingual Indigenous language programs. The school district of Mystery Lake at Wapanohk Community School provides an in-pardon me-Ininimowin language program. The Seven Oaks School Division at Riverbend Community School offers an-pardon me-Anishinaabemowin program. And in the Winnipeg School Division, Isaac Brock school offers both of those languages in programming.

We also know of other schools around our province that are offering great language courses. We have the—some folks on our team had the opportunity to meet with Michif French teachers that are offering those courses in St. Laurent School in the Interlake, and we want to lift up their work here today, as well, with this bill.

Our government is working hard to support an expanded Indigenous language program in Manitoba. This bill is an initial step we are taking to support this work in our education system. This bill also proposes an amendment to The Public Schools Act, to require at least two of the members of the language advisory committee to have expertise respecting and—the teaching

of Indigenous languages. This will ensure that Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing inform any future discussions of this committee.

Honourable Speaker, the proposed amendments to The Public Schools Act align with the policy direction in Mamāhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With, Manitoba's Indigenous education policy framework for the K-to-12 system. The department will continue to engage with our partners, as well as the sector, to clearly communicate and implement these changes.

Honourable Speaker, thank you very much. Merci, miigwech.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I appreciate the Education Minister putting some of the information in her opening four-minute statement on this bill.

So can she itemize and list who she consulted with or the department has consulted with on Bill 18?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): As mentioned in my opening comments, this bill was informed by previous and ongoing collaboration with the Manitoba Aboriginal Language Strategy. So that's a partnership of four organizations, being the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning, the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, the University College of the North and Indigenous Languages of Manitoba.

I can also share that our government and our Premier (Mr. Kinew) has been meeting with Manitobans over the last 18 months on the good work that we are pursuing, both with this bill and across government with many government bills and initiatives. We think that this bill is long overdue, and we're very excited for it to receive the full support of this House.

Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: I'm glad to hear that the minister is coming today with Bill 18 and prepared to bring a list of partners that the department has consulted with on Bill 18, and I appreciate her mentioning the good work of preparing Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With.

Can she let the House know: What is the process if a person wants to have instruction carried out in an Indigenous language?

* (14:50)

MLA Schmidt: It is true that today in Manitoba, under our current legislative framework, that there are Indigenous language programming—there is Indigenous language programming offered across our great province, thanks to the great work individual educators, again, some of which I mentioned in my opening comments, the teachers and the educators that are at the St. Laurent School, which have developed their own Michif French language course. There are also bilingual language programs offered at some of the school divisions and some of the schools which I read in my opening comments.

What's not happening today in Manitoba, Honourable Speaker, is that there is no room for Indigenous language—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Can the minister tell us when the schools that she cited in the list that are already providing Indigenous instruction, when did they start those programs within their own schools?

MLA Schmidt: Yes. I can thank the member opposite for that question. I don't have those dates in front of me today. If he's interested I'd be happy to follow up and provide him with that information at another time.

Mr. Ewasko: That would be great if we could get that prior to this next round of bills that are coming forward by this Education Minister.

I would like to know if there is an appeal process, because it is up to the school board on making this as a Indigenous instruction in the schools. So is there an appeal process that—if the school board does not allow it?

MLA Schmidt: Unlike the members opposite, we are not here to pick fights with school boards. We are not here to question their decision making. We believe, and has been evidenced by the school boards that are offer—already offering excellent Indigenous language programming, those in the school district of Mystery Lake, those in the school division of Seven Oaks, and

the Winnipeg School Division, to make decisions that reflect their community.

That's ultimately what school boards are there to do. The community will bring forward a proposal or sometimes a school or sometimes an educator, and sometimes it comes from the community. And on this side of the House, we trust school divisions to make decisions on all of their programming based on the best interests of their students, and we know that they will do so.

Mr. Ewasko: And it's a different—bit of a different tone today. I mean, same tone, just different answers today, Honourable Speaker, in regards to what school boards are being allowed to or not allowed to do under this Education Minister.

I do want to know if the courses that will be instructed in an Indigenous language, are we talking all immersion courses, and how is this minister prepared to back up and to support those schools and school divisions with—that choose to do this language immersion?

MLA Schmidt: I appreciate the question because it gives me an opportunity to both thank and highlight the excellent work coming out of the branch of Indigenous education within our department.

So here's just a few of the things, Honourable Speaker, and I fear I'm going to run out of time, so I'm going to get right into it. Here's a few of the things that we're doing to support this work: we've invested \$120,000 to the University of Winnipeg's Teaching Indigenous Languages for Vitality program; we've invested more than \$32,000 to the Misipawistik Cree Nation to support their language programming at family camps; \$25,000 to Norway House Cree Nation to support their summer Cree language program; \$70,000 to the University College of the North to support the annual Manitoba Aboriginal Languages Strategy symposium that's happening in May of 2025.

And just very recently—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: I'd like to ask the minister: How does Bill 18 help with the shortage of not only teachers we have in this great province of ours, but specifically Indigenous language teachers?

MLA Schmidt: I believe I answered some of the member opposite's question in my last response. We are making investments across the province to ensure that we have Indigenous language teachers in this province to be able to teach a program such as an Indigenous language program.

But we are doing a lot of great work, but I would be remiss to say that, you know, we have a significant hurdle before us, thanks to the colonial history of this country and the ongoing impacts of the residential school system. The truth of the matter is there are just not enough Indigenous language speakers in this province, and so there is a lot of great work being done, again, by Jackie Connell leading our Indigenous—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: I guess part of my question was originally, and one of my more previous questions, I guess, is what specifically has the Manitoba School Boards Association have had to say in regards to how they're going to be able to implement this, and has the Manitoba Schools Boards Association asked this minister for additional supports and resources to carry out this initiative?

MLA Schmidt: As I've said previously, we absolutely understand that there are significant supports and investments that are going to be needed to make, and that we are making, in order to make sure that a program like this is successful.

But don't—but we have to act now, Honourable Speaker. If we do not act now, we are going to lose further Indigenous language here in the province. This bill is designed to make sure that we are teaching the next generation of Indigenous language speakers so that Indigenous languages can proliferate and be supported and spoken across our great province.

That's what this bill does.

Mr. Ewasko: So I guess, moving forward, my question to the Education Minister: When someone or a community member or a school chooses to come forward with this, would they be coming forward with a SIC, or would they be coming with a SIP?

MLA Schmidt: So there are currently several school divisions that are teaching Indigenous languages programming across the province. Those are brought forward through an SIC.

What we know about this bill is that this bill is going to allow school divisions, if they so choose, and if they see the need in their community, to bring forward a proposal to offer an Indigenous language immersion program in their school. That's something that this government believes in; that's something that we support.

My question for the member opposite is: Does he support the revitalization of Indigenous languages in

our province, and does he support immersion Indigenous programming in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Ewasko: It's interesting that the interim Education Minister is already preparing to ask questions for the next go around when we form government. Oh, I sit—I stand corrected, Honourable Speaker, the Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister.

So my question to them is: Because this is considered—there's SICs available now, how does she see this changing and moving forward? Is this a one-off course, or do we see an absolute, fully-immersed programming that covers math, science, social studies and, of course, the language of the particular Indigenous subject that the teachers—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Schmidt: For those Manitobans that might be unclear, there is a difference between bilingual programming and immersion programming. And that difference—I mean, there's a few differences, but fundamentally, the difference is how much of the day can be instructed in that language.

So for a bilingual program, something like a German bilingual program, a Punjabi bilingual program, a Spanish bilingual program, all of which we have here in Manitoba—those are fantastic programs—they are only—that language, that secondary language, can only be spoken for less than 50 per cent of the day.

An immersion program, which is something that can be taught more than 50 per cent of the day, something that can be taught throughout the day, currently in Manitoba right now, you can only do that for the English and French language. We believe that that's wrong; we believe—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

* (15:00)

Mr. Ewasko: I guess I'm going to ask the Education Minister—so she's already mentioned a few of the other languages being taught presently in our Manitoba school system.

Is—has there been thought, or has she consulted with other groups to include those other languages also in Bill 18?

MLA Schmidt: I thank the member opposite for that question because I think it's a really important part of this discussion. And certainly, here in Manitoba, our government, we respect all languages. We love that there are Spanish bilingual programs, German bilingual

programs, Punjabi bilingual programs and we hope that there are more in the future.

I think that this bill, though, recognizes the really distinct, cultural, historical significance that Indigenous people and Indigenous languages have here in our province. In the same way that English and French have been recognized, we believe that Indigenous languages deserve that same recognition and that same level of—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: I'd like to ask the Education Minister: With Bill 18, how specifically—how exactly is Bill 18 contributing to the calls of actions 62 and 63 that was given out in the truth and reconciliation Calls to Action?

MLA Schmidt: We know that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action touched on many things including Indigenous languages and the need to have them be revitalized, including the need to eliminate educational gaps that exist, employment gaps that exist and the need to preserve—thank you—revitalize and strengthen Indigenous languages, communities and cultures across our beautiful province.

We believe that this bill does exactly that.

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the minister and I encourage the minister to brush up on those Calls to Action, but I appreciate the answer.

I would like her to—she mentioned Mamāhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With—when, specifically, was Mamāhtawisiwin brought in? And I applaud the fact that she has not cancelled that great program and the initiative to keep moving in a strong way to Manitoba schools.

MLA Schmidt: We haven't cancelled it, Honourable Speaker, but I'll tell you this: we are certainly going to improve it.

And it does—when Mamāhtawisiwin was released is a matter of public knowledge. The member opposite knows this. Unfortunately, what the member opposite chooses to do in this Chamber, instead of thinking about Manitobans and how we can serve Manitobans with legislation, he would like to exalt himself and his work. He would like to talk about—he would like to try to reminisce and recollect about the time that he had in government as the failed Education Minister. That's really unfortunate.

On this side of the House, we are here to talk about bills and legislation that are going to make the

lives of Manitobans better. That is our focus. Unfortunately, the member opposite is focused on himself and his own record of failure.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Once again, Manitobans—the thousands of Manitobans that tune in to watch this on a daily basis—has seen the true colours of the Education Minister in her last response.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Again, it's unfortunate. You know, much like we saw earlier, honourable Speaker, on the bill that was brought forward by the MLA for Tyndall Park on screening tools for students with potential disabilities in the K-to-12 system, but specifically K to 3, K to 4. And this minister took it upon themselves to do a news release late last week and stealing that idea.

The nice thing, honourable Deputy Speaker, that the bill passed this morning. We heard very few things—matter of fact we didn't hear from this Education Minister at all this morning. And then she stands up in her place during question period, during this Q-and-A time for Bill 18 and wants to, again, throw anger, shade on this side of the House.

But basically, I just wanted to point out in my last question the fact that we, as the Progressive Conservative government, and the Education ministers—not only including myself, but others on this side of the Chamber—were actually consulting and working with our Indigenous cultures, or our Indigenous partners throughout this great province of ours and made sure that we were listening.

And I did want to put a couple words on the record, honourable Speaker, on some of the things that, of course, the Education Minister, in her four minutes talking about Bill 18, she stands there and says how important this is for Manitoba students which, us on this side of the House, are not disagreeing with that, because we, on this side of the House, are the actual ones that brought forward Mamāhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With. And it was, you know, time stamped 2022, copyrighted.

And so, you know, unlike the partisan politics that the Education Minister likes to put on the record, honourable Deputy Speaker, is the fact is, is that when curriculum documents, when these policy documents

are brought forward in the Education Department, in the Ag Department, in Transportation Department, in other departments, it doesn't mean that these documents can't be strengthened.

And so, unfortunately, this Education Minister is so stuck in their ideology that can't handle the fact, much like her Premier (Mr. Kinew), can't handle the fact that there might be others that are doing good public service work in this great province of ours, and brings forward ideas. It doesn't mean that in the next year, couple of years, whatever else, that a lot of that good work doesn't continue.

But then, as time rolls along, you might have to actually consult with some of the education partners in the province, specifically on these topics, on education topics, and yes, honourable acting—or, honourable Deputy Speaker, some of these things do get tweaked, changed. What's working? Leave it alone. What's—you know it could use a little bit of a tweak, so you make those tweaks. Or what's not working at all, and you sort of move away from it.

But I am glad to see that Mamāhtawisiwin was referenced in the Education Minister's answers. And, you know what I'm really, assistant speaker—Deputy Speaker—what I'm really thrilled to hear today is the fact that on Bill 18, this minister has acknowledged the hard work of the department working with the education partners in this great province of ours and actually consulting with them.

Because the other day, we didn't really hear that. But again, as I mentioned the other day in bill debate on another bill that was brought forward by this Education Minister, all I said was—all I basically asked was—who did you consult with? The Education Minister was unable to, but I took that time to help—because we, as new members, honourable Deputy Speaker, we, as new members, at times in the Chamber, we don't know what we don't know.

So sometimes it takes, you know, members who have been here for a few more years, or whatever else, to sort of lend that helping hand, even if it has to be across the aisle, to inform other members, sponsors of bills, whether that's ministers or MLAs within this great Chamber of ours that are maybe doing a private member's bill or a private member's resolution, but to sort of give you a bit of a heads up that one of the, sort of, the canned questions on any type of legislation or anything that we're doing in this Chamber, is who did you consult with? And so I'm thrilled to hear today we had some answers in regards to who the minister—

actually, the minister's department consulted with, so that's great.

* (15:10)

I did want to reference, of course, the new assistant deputy minister of Indigenous Excellence in Education who started with the department on January 29, 2024: Jackie Connell.

I had the pleasure of working with Jackie over the year and a half, I guess, that I was an Education minister, but also as a educational leader within her school division, as well. She was a wealth of knowledge and definitely helped with many of the committees and outreach that we were doing from the department, so it's really great to see that she would—was hired on and—in this newly created position. I know, very, very much so, that the variety of Indigenous knowledge that Jackie's bringing to the table on equity-based policies and research related to Indigenous education; she's definitely a huge asset to the department.

And I strongly encourage—and I'm not saying, honourable Deputy Speaker, I'm not saying this to suggest that the minister's not doing this, because I don't need some aggression coming from that side of the bench—but I would strongly recommend that the minister has those good conversations with Jackie, but also her other senior bureaucrats in the department, because they absolutely are incredible individuals who have the thoughts of Manitoba students at—on their mind.

March 31, we know, is National Indigenous Languages Day, a day to celebrate and honour Indigenous languages right here in Canada. And the day reminds us all of the importance of supporting the reclamation, revitalization, strengthening and maintenance of the Indigenous languages. Absolutely.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I've shared in this House, on more than one occasion as well, specifically when we're talking about Bill 18 and bringing forward Indigenous languages to be part of the immersion program if it's seen fit by school boards. It was a little interesting that the minister started to take offence for some reason on a couple of the questions, because, you know, I know for fact, and other members on the NDP side know as well, that—of the challenges that we have, not only in Manitoba, recruiting and retaining teachers.

And I think that under this Kinew government, where we've seen and heard that education is lower than No. 5 on the priority list, it's unfortunate,

honourable Deputy Speaker, but I think more and more Manitobans are realizing the absolute harms—you know what? I'm not even going to say solely on this Education Minister's shoulders. It's a team effort over there between the Education Minister, the Finance Minister and, of course, their Premier (Mr. Kinew) on the fact that they went and are—have cut funding to education.

And so that's why in the Q-and-A time on Bill 18, I was trying to ask, you know, how are the resources going to be applied to these school divisions that agree to carry on with Indigenous language instruction? Knowing the fact that you're going to need to hire some proficient teachers in the language, which there are many out there, Deputy Speaker. But it's going to be interesting to see how this continues to move forward.

And when we talk about a true immersion program, we are talking about not only the language instruction on a specific language, but it's to also then start to incorporate math, science, social studies, you know, other subjects that the schools—the school divisions and the schools—will see fit.

I guess where I was going to go earlier, honourable Deputy Speaker, was briefly on the fact that we've seen various different languages come and go in different schools and school divisions in our province. I know at one time—and this shows on how, of course, we continue to evolve.

And when I asked the minister—and no doubt, moving forward, the minister will have some answers in regards to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation committee—that in the schools that I had attended—and I'll even back up to many of the historical pieces in regards to school divisions and schools in this great province of ours.

There were times when there was only one language allowed to be taught, and that was English. And then over time, you know, French, as we're amending this piece of legislation, French was being then included, and now, moving forward with Bill 18, we're actually seeing Indigenous languages be included in the legislation as well.

The minister made a comment—I had a quick question for the minister and again in principle, we absolutely agree with this piece of legislation. And I guess, as time rolls along, maybe the minister's going to be bringing forward amendments; I don't know. We've seen the minister, in the last few days, steal other pieces of legislation from other parties, try to

create their—to, you know, their own. And then let something pass.

What troubles me with the piece of private members' legislation that was brought forward this morning that was passed on to committee is we're going to see what the Liberal member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) has to do in order to jump through whatever hoops this Education Minister and her Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) is going to put in front of the member for Tyndall Park in order to actually bring that bill to committee.

So, honourable Deputy Speaker, we've seen, in the past, school divisions and schools have different language instruction. We've seen Ukrainian, we've seen German; French, of course, but that is in the legislation now. We've got Indigenous language. There's a process in order to allow languages to be taught. The minister did mention, you know, to—answered my question on the SICs which is a school-initiated credit. And I guess one question that I didn't have for her, but I guess as time will roll along, because, of course, we're going to—I look forward to seeing Manitobans come to committee and speak to Bill 18.

But I guess part of it is, will this fall under the optional credits? Or will this fall under compulsory credits, depending on the school or the school divisions' decisions? And if there's a group of parents or guardians, they're not either thrilled—or if she actually goes and actually does some consultation with some of the education partners and they see or want something else, what is the appeal process later on? There's nothing in here, honourable Deputy Speaker, where it then comes back and falls on this Education Minister, who is making these changes.

Or if there's not—if they offer a specific language in Ojibwe next school year and if that teacher carries on and ends up getting a position in another school division or something like that, then what ends up happening that following year?

* (15:20)

Well, she's saying that it totally falls on the school board, which is great, because that's where we were on Bill 40 the other day. But she took issue with that and she really didn't feel that some of the programming and—that we said falls upon local autonomy and that's why school boards are elected.

So, today, she seems to be—what's the terminology? She seems to be flip-flopping like her Premier a little bit, like a pickerel on a dock, I think used to be the old saying.

But I've changed that in the last few speeches I've done and, you know, to talk about a language, a good friend of mine—and for those members on the NDP side that either didn't hear this or didn't catch it—a good friend of mine who speaks fluent Cree shared with me, and so this goes with how I changed like a pickerel on a dock, flip-flopping, I've changed it to jackfish because in Cree there's a saying where you don't trust an individual who smiles like a jackfish. And so I brought forward that in a debate a little bit ago.

But it's amazing, Deputy Speaker, that the members of the NDP side can't help themselves. I really think that the whole notion of self-control over things are really lacking in the NDP caucus and I strongly encourage them to sign up for some training to help them out with that.

I think there's an opportunity for those NDP members that are—obviously want to share a few words, to get up and put a few words on the record for Bill 18.

But I did want to, again, highlight Mamāhtawisiwin policy as the holistic approach that we developed with—in conjunction with our Indigenous partners, all across this great province of ours, so that we aim towards excellence in education, helping Manitoba educators to incorporate Indigenous languages, 'culturals'—cultures and identities.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, what I find is—interesting is that the Education Minister, who spoke for four minutes on Bill 18, now wants to get up and say a few more words. And I know that we'll have another couple of bills, later today, maybe, that she'll want to add into that. And I just wanted to highlight the fact that her four minutes was less than the six minutes that her Premier (Mr. Kinew) put on the record on this year's budget.

So it just really means that there's not a whole lot of good things that they have to say about anything that they're bringing forward, honourable Deputy Speaker.

So back to Mamāhtawisiwin and the fact that it's helping Manitoba educators to incorporate Indigenous languages, cultures and identities into their teaching and practices, and from what I'm hearing and what's nice that the Education Minister is moving forward with this, is the fact that when Premier Stefanson amalgamated early childhood learning with the K-to-12 system education, one of our goals, when I had the pleasure of serving as an Education minister, was—again, when we saw Mamāhtawisiwin come in, but to also then start to incorporate Mamāhtawisiwin into the teachings and the practice of our early

childhood learning as well. So I think that's big kudos, you know, to the department and all of our incredible Education staff, whether that's in the K-to-12 system or in the early childhood learning system.

So we also released the Treaty Education for All plan in 2023 to offer all teachers, school staff and students educational resources about the original spirit and intent of the treaties. As we know, honourable Deputy Speaker, you can't have reconciliation without the truth and I think it's very important to make sure that those things are happening on a day-to-day basis and, you know, we encourage our educators and our staff to, you know, to move forward on making sure that we're building those bridges and repairing those bridges as we move forward with any education.

But what I fear a little bit, honourable Deputy Speaker, is the level of cuts to education made by this Education Minister, Finance Minister and the Premier. We've seen, in the former days of the Selinger, you know, government, and the Doer government, where when we're talking about excellence not only in teaching, but excellence in our education world right here in Manitoba, we saw that when the NDP government took over power in 1999, they—we did some testing.

And it's nice to hear this—from this morning that the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) championed a bill, even though the Education Minister tried to steal it—you know, they're not big fans of rules, Deputy Speaker, but that being said, back when we started, you know, testing various different things, numeracy and literacy, in 2003, matter of fact, Manitoba was third in the country in numeracy and literacy in 2003, following many years of the great Filmon error—era as the PC government.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I don't know if I'm not going to speak directly to the Deputy Speaker, because, again, I don't need to be reprimanded. But when it came time, when I was elected in 2011, do you want to know where Manitoba sat on that scale to all provinces in this great country of ours? On numeracy, literacy and science, we were ninth and tenth in those three.

By 2014, honourable Deputy Speaker, under almost 17 and a half years of debt, decay and disaster by the former NDP government, the Selinger government, we were dead last in all three. Dead last. And further behind ninth. We couldn't even see ninth any more under this NDP government. And what I fear, and I'm hoping it doesn't happen for the sake of our—of Manitoba students, is to go back, to slide back.

Because what we saw in a mere seven and a half years of being in government under the PC government, the most recent PC government—even with two years—two and a half years of COVID, we had gained traction and we got back up to six and seventh in the country, honourable Deputy Speaker.

So I take a look at what this Education Minister is doing with the cuts to education. We on this side of the House, honourable Deputy Speaker, are encouraged because, of course, a lot of the things moving forward in regards to truth and reconciliation, the Calls to Action, have started to be actioned by our government. Treaty education, making sure that Indigenous language and instruction and culture is all being taught as well in the schools, because you don't know what you don't know.

And so with that, honourable Deputy Speaker, I look forward to seeing Bill 18 go forward to committee, and we'll see if the minister has some amendments to bring forward, or if the public—you know, once she starts actually consulting with additional people and organizations and partners in this great province of ours, we'll see if they want to see any amendments to this piece of legislation.

So with that, honourable Deputy Speaker, thank you for allowing me an opportunity to put a few words on the record.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak in debate?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Indigenous Language of Instruction).

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

Bill 27—The Income Tax Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 27, The Income Tax Amendment Act.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 27, The Income Tax Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

* (15:30)

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 27, The Income Tax Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

MLA Sala: It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to this bill that we're bringing forward here today for second reading.

The tax changes included in Bill 27 will make the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit permanent so that it will continue to support the printing and publishing industry here in Manitoba.

This tax credit offers a refundable tax credit to Manitoba printers equal to 35 per cent on salary or wages paid to Manitoba employees employed in their book-printing divisions. For years, the decision to leave industry wondering whether this credit would be maintained or eliminated created uncertainty. And in these times of uncertainty, when we are in the midst of a two-front trade war, government should be taking action to improve the investment climate here in Manitoba.

We need more certainty in our economy, not less, and that's why our government has made other important changes with Budget 2025 that will increase economic certainty and drive investment while improving productivity. For example, we're making a permanent cut to the payroll tax to help small- and medium-sized businesses build and hire; we've introduced a permanent cut to the gas tax to help make life more affordable for Manitobans.

And there's a simple message here: when this government makes a commitment, you know we'll follow through. That's why Manitoba businesses know they can trust us when we say we will deliver the largest capital plan in Manitoba's history and put nearly 18,000 people to work. Manitobans know with certainty that we will build schools, build highways, health-care facilities and trade-enabling infrastructure. Manitobans know with certainty that we'll build more affordable housing and more child-care facilities.

Honourable Speaker, the message with this legislation is that our government is helping to drive economic certainty, whether that's in the printing and

publishing industry or in other sectors right across our wonderful province.

Honourable Speaker, as I conclude my remarks, let me say words about the uncertainty we are facing in this two-front trade war. My message to Manitobans and Manitoba businesses is that we'll have your back. We're here to support you. We'll get through this together building one Manitoba, together.

Thank you.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I appreciate the opening comments that the Minister of Finance has made, and I have no doubt that he and his team will support Bill 227 to remove interprovincial trade barriers and improve labour mobility, that we brought forward today.

So my question, as it relates to this bill that he has brought forward, The Income Tax Amendment Act: Can the minister just explain why these changes—or he's decided to make these changes through a separate piece of legislation rather than including these amendments in BITSA?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Yes. We won't speak to House strategy here, but we will say that this is, of course, an important bill that will create certainty with businesses in Manitoba, businesses that are facing a lot of uncertainty right now, unfortunately, because of the overall environment that folks to the south have created, specifically President Trump with his tariff tax.

We need to do everything we can as a government to ensure that businesses in Manitoba have that confidence about the path forward. This is one thing that we can do as government to do that. And, again, we're proud to be supporting publishers here in Manitoba.

Mrs. Stone: Can the minister just explain a little bit about how the—considering this bill is predominantly focused on making the cultural printing tax credit permanent, can the minister explain how that works

and how many printers and authors making this permanent will benefit within the province?

MLA Sala: Thank you so much for the question.

So we know, again, that Manitoba's cultural printing industries have benefited from this tax credit for years. Under the former government, it was renewed year over year, creating uncertainty for those businesses as to whether or not they were going to be able to continue doing the important work they do, creating the good products that they create and creating jobs for Manitobans.

This bill will help to, again, just create certainty by making this tax credit permanent to ensure that businesses that qualify can get that 35 per cent credit on salary or wages to help them continue doing the important work they do of, again, creating great products and supporting good jobs here in Manitoba.

Mrs. Stone: So this bill is specific to the cultural industry tax credit. However, is the minister also committed to keeping all other tax credits, like the Book Publishing Tax Credit, the Film and Video Production Tax Credit and the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit?

MLA Sala: Yes, today we're here to talk about the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit, and it's a tax credit, again, that today we're proud to bringing forward here, second reading, where we're focused on creating certainty for businesses in Manitoba that, again, for many years, didn't have certainty because of the sort of year-to-year approach that the former government took.

And I mean, frankly, this is, you know, only one type of uncertainty that the members opposite created; there was, of course, a much broader concern with the uncertainty they created through their actions over seven and half years. I could go on about listing their failure to create new energy to support businesses, their huge cuts, like with chainsaw-like cuts to health care, their failure to create new child-care spaces.

So for seven and a half years, we had a government that was not focused on creating a great climate for business here in Manitoba. We're ensuring that we do—

The Deputy Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: So other than the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit, this bill also looks to remove some of the outdated references. So can the minister please explain these changes to the calculations that

he's creating through this bill? Will they have any retroactive impacts on taxpayers?

MLA Sala: So the bill does propose some minor technical changes that simplify calculations to make it easier for businesses to understand this credit. And again, this is about working to support businesses, making sure that, you know, those businesses working in the sector can easily understand how this credit works so they can do more of the good work that they're doing: creating jobs, creating great products here in Manitoba. That's something we can be proud of.

And again, this is about ensuring that, on year-on-a year-to-year basis, they're not wondering whether or not they're going to have access to this credit, which helps to support the important work that they do and, again, creating great opportunities for Manitobans in the process.

Mrs. Stone: So the minister just said that this will simplify the formula for the specific tax credit of the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit, but can the minister please tell us if there are other, non-refundable tax credits that will be impacted or affected by the changes that he's bringing forward in this bill with those formulation and calculation changes?

MLA Sala: To my knowledge, the answer to that is no. But again, this is a great bill that will help to support the good work of these printers that are, again, creating great jobs and great products here in Manitoba, something we can all be very proud of, to have this type of industry here in Manitoba.

So this will, again, change the overall environment that those businesses are operating within and ensuring that, on a year-to-year basis, they don't have to guess any more as to whether or not this benefit will be there to help them do the important work they do. They'll know that our government has made this permanent, so that on a year-to-year basis, they can be confident that they can access this credit that will help them to do the great work that they're doing—again, creating opportunities for Manitobans.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I do appreciate the opportunity and the time today to rise to put just a couple words on the record on Bill 27, The Income Tax Amendment Act. And I know we have quite a few bills to get through over the next couple of days, so I'll make my comments relatively short today.

You know, as we heard throughout the question period session, the most notable piece within this piece of legislation is making the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit permanent in Budget 2025. So I do want to say, and make it clear, that the printing industry does play a very vital role in Manitoba's cultural sector, and the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit supports both local cultural groups as well as Manitoba authors and publishers.

* (15:40)

Small businesses in Manitoba, where the business is printing, assembling or binding books, have been able to claim the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit to date, and businesses in Manitoba's printing industry have been able to apply for the 35 per cent refundable credit on salary as well as wages that are paid to Manitoba employees who are employed in the printer's book printing division.

You know, so as has already been brought up today in previous remarks, the former PC government supported the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit and reviewed the tax credit during their time in office. In cases where the tax credit was set to expire between 2016 and 2020, the former PC government renewed it in those instances. So the annual maximum tax credit that can be claimed is—I believe it's \$1.1 million per corporation. So it is important to support our small businesses in Manitoba, as small businesses are the backbone of our provincial economy.

Unfortunately, what we have seen with this current NDP government is that they have chosen to actually increase taxes on businesses in their budget. They're adding additional taxes to many of these businesses that they are actually claiming to support through this bill. So as we saw, just as a couple of examples, deputy honourable Speaker, as we saw in the budget, the NDP are adding a new PST charge to cloud computing software. As most businesses are shifting their IT services to cloud, the NDP is capitalizing on that and are actually charging a PST on that. This increases the red tape—significant red tape—in an era of modern technology that is actually supposed to make things simpler and cheaper for our small businesses in Manitoba.

So I do want to put a few words on the record about how Manitoba does have a very vibrant cultural sector. We know and we have seen it that there—it has become a hub for film, animation, arts, music and festivals across our great province. And our cultural industry in Manitoba does support a significant amount of jobs within our provincial economy, and it's an

important part of Manitoba's diverse—very diverse—entertainment scene and enhances our quality of life.

I personally support our arts and cultural sectors through attending plays, performances at Rainbow Stage, Winnipeg Symphony that we spoke about earlier, MTC and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. What we have seen over the past number of years is film production has continued to grow within our province, and it is a common occurrence now to see Hallmark movies being filmed across the city and the province.

We're also thrilled to have Jette Studios in Niverville, which recently opened a 25,000-square-foot movie studio to accommodate those large-scale productions. And my colleagues, the MLA for Springfield-Ritchot and the MLA for Steinbach attended that ribbon cutting and grand opening not so—

An Honourable Member: Lac du Bonnet was there as well.

Mrs. Stone: And the MLA for Lac du Bonnet attended not so long ago.

And owners have directly said that Manitoba's tax credits make Manitoba a desirable location for those productions. So it was great to see Jette Studios do—have their ribbon cutting and officially open in Niverville, and I congratulate them on their new business and their facility here in southern Manitoba.

So successes like Jette Studios are why the former PC government renewed and enhanced tax credits that supported our growing cultural and arts industries here in Manitoba.

So I want to speak to a few of the tax credits that the former PC government supported and enhanced that included the Manitoba Film and Video Production Tax Credit, included the Manitoba Interactive Digital Media Credit, the Book Publishing Tax Credit, as well as the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit. And this is just naming a few, deputy honourable Speaker.

The other aspects of the bill, such as removing outdated provisions and simplifying tax credit calculations, although good in theory, we do have questions about its impact to Manitobans and Manitoba taxpayers: so the changes to the formula and the calculations for those non-refundable tax credits are questions that we do continue to have when put in practice. And we need to ensure that those changes do not actually harm Manitobans.

You know, I do find it curious that this minister has decided to bring this forward in separate legislation, as opposed to through BITSA. So if these changes are

mainly procedural, with limited impact to a taxpayer, we do have what—questions on what those impacts truly are and continue to remain skeptical. Because, as I can say, deputy honourable Speaker, and as we've seen over the past 18 months, the history to date with this NDP government on income tax changes has shown their policies actually hurt Manitoba taxpayers, because since taking office, they have made significant changes to income tax at the detriment of Manitobans and Manitoba taxpayers.

We saw this last year through their budget, where they created a tax on skilled professionals, doctors, engineers, nurses and small-business owners and farmers. They clawed back the basic personal amount for middle-class Manitobans and completely eliminated it for others. So that's what we saw after they were only in for a few short months, making changes to income tax legislation that actually hurt Manitoba taxpayers.

And again, we saw this pattern with this NDP government in this year's budget where this minister has actually brought back bracket creep, which is a sneaky way to increase taxes on Manitobans by removing the indexation of income taxes. It removes the protection of inflation—from inflation for Manitoba taxpayers, where inflation, it can automatically put taxpayers into a higher tax bracket with inflation, and if their wages are set to increase. This, in turn, increases the taxes on those Manitoba taxpayers, despite the fact that those Manitobans can't afford anything more because the cost of living is so high.

And even with wage increases, deputy honourable Speaker, many Manitobans aren't going to see any of those savings as a direct result of the NDP's removal of the indexing of income taxes to inflation so that, coupled with the high cost of living, Manitobans don't see those savings.

The NDP, as we've seen over 18 months, clearly does not give much thought to changes to tax policy. It seems that they create tax policy on a whim, without truly understanding and recognizing the financial implications that Manitobans will face as a result of their bad tax challenges—changes.

So we are skeptical, deputy honourable Speaker, of any sort of changes that this particular minister and NDP government bring forward as it relates to income tax, because the history has shown that they are not in support of putting money back into the pockets of Manitobans, and their tax policies to date has shown that they would rather tax and grab from Manitobans

than allow Manitobans to keep those hard-earned dollars.

You know, however, with that being said, deputy honourable Speaker, as I had mentioned that we do have quite a few bills to get to today, I want to say for the record that our team continues to support the continuation of the cultural industry's printing tax credit for reasons that I spoke to earlier in my comments. So thank you again for the opportunity to put a few words on the record for Bill 27.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no other speakers up for debate, is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 27, The Income Tax Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 14—The Insurance Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now carry on to second reading of Bill 14, The Insurance Amendment Act.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), that Bill 14, The Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (15:50)

MLA Sala: Proud to have a chance to stand in this House to speak to this bill, that will help to modernize the insurance amendment act.

This bill will modernize sections of the existing legislation, aligning them with other Manitoba legislation and those in other jurisdictions. The Insurance Agents' and Adjusters' Licensing Appeal Board is one of Manitoba's agencies, boards and commissions. Its mandate is to hear licensing appeals of decisions made by the Insurance Council of Manitoba, which has the delegated powers of the superintendent of insurance.

The Insurance Agents' and Adjusters' Licensing Appeal Board plays a vital role in ensuring fairness and accountability within Manitoba's insurance industry. Now, we recognize the essential contributions that board members make to the integrity and success of our provincial insurance sector.

The board is a crucial mechanism for providing essential check on decisions being made by the Insurance Council of Manitoba, ensuring decisions are aligned with current legislation and are equitable. This process is critical to protect the rights of individuals seeking to work in the insurance industry while also upholding the integrity of the insurance industry.

Honourable Speaker, for years, the party opposite has neglected to protect the dedicated individuals carrying out this crucial work. Under the current Insurance Act, board members are left vulnerable to legal action even when acting in good faith while fulfilling their responsibilities. In addition, the co-ordinator of appeals, a public servant, is similarly unprotected under the existing legislation.

Manitoba's public servants are a vital component of our provincial workforce. These skilled and dedicated professionals play an essential role in delivering day-to-day services that directly serve the public interest, spanning a wide range of sectors and responsibilities.

Our government respects the hard work and dedication of these individuals and is committed to ensuring that they are properly protected while carrying out their duties; therefore, the bill is being amended to add an immunity provision that will protect board members and the co-ordinator of appeals when they are acting in good faith. This provision provides statutory immunity to members of the insurance agents' and insurers' licensing appeal board.

By adding an immunity provision, we are empowering board members and the co-ordinator of appeals to carry out their important work and to make decisions in the best interests of Manitobans, knowing they're protected when acting in good faith.

This practice is already established for similar Manitoba ABC appeal commission and hearing panel members, including through The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act and the adults living with intellectual disabilities act.

Our government is taking decisive action to protect these public servants, ensuring that the appeals process remains free from external pressures and continues to serve the public with integrity. This is responsible, forward-thinking governance, putting Manitobans first and ensuring our systems work for everyone.

Honourable Speaker, seven years of PC dithering on this: we are also modernizing the act and aligning it with the current reality whereby most communication

is done electronically. This change will allow the co-ordinator of appeals to notify appellants by the revolutionary advancement of electronic mail, ensuring appellants are aware of the date, time and location for hearings of the Insurance Agents' and Adjusters' Licensing Appeal Board.

We're also making it easier for appellants to receive information and correspondence in the way that best suits their needs with the inclusion of, quote: If the appellant has agreed in writing. End quote. This new option ensures the use of email for notification is consensual and protects the appellant's preference by allowing them to choose their preferred communication method.

We've also introduced a provision to ensure limits are placed on the amount of funds that can be held inside accounts of universal life insurance contracts. This is a crucial step in ensuring that the insurance industry remains fair, transparent and focused on its core purpose: providing life insurance protection to Manitobans.

By introducing limits on the funds that can be held inside universal life insurance contracts, we are closing a loophole that can allow hedge funds to exploit the system for tax avoidance or investment manipulation.

Our government is committed to protecting consumers and ensuring the long-term stability of the insurance sector. This provision ensures that life insurance contracts are used as intended, to provide security, peace of mind for families, not as a financial tool for the wealthy few. We're putting the needs of everyday Manitobans first, keeping our insurance market fair and accountable for everyone.

Honourable Speaker, our government believes in protecting the interests of hard-working Manitobans, and for seven years, the PC government allowed this loophole to persist, even after our fellow provinces took action. In fact, Manitoba is one of the last provinces to take action in protecting our insurance companies from this form of exploitation.

Honourable Speaker, in closing, the amendments put forward today will streamline existing practices, enhance consumer protection, create jurisdictional alignment and ensure consistency and harmonization. These amendments are essential to safeguarding public servants who diligently fulfill their roles as board members, while also ensuring the stability and security of Manitoba's insurance industry.

Honourable Speaker, I am very pleased to present this bill for the House's consideration.

Thank you.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): You know, as the minister had mentioned in his remarks, this bill appears to be closing some loopholes. So I am curious, what has happened that calls for the introduction of this bill? Of all the priorities that go on within the provincial government and bills that need to be brought forward, I'm curious, has there been activities of this nature that this minister is trying to close the loophole on that have happened in Manitoba that has caused him to bring this bill forward?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Thank you, I really appreciate the important question. And this was something that was driven by our—the good folks at the Manitoba Financial Services Agency, who identified that this was a concern that we're seeing in other jurisdictions and, as I understand it, here as well.

The risk is that we have larger hedge funds that are using these side accounts within insurance products that are distorting their true purpose and why they were there, which is to support the ability for individuals to make investments through those insurance products. So this prevents that from being able to happen, it prevents hedge funds from exploiting that loophole, and through that, will help to protect Manitobans and the insurance products that we rely on.

Mrs. Stone: So I heard the minister mention the Financial Services branch brought this forward, but did he consult with the insurance industry before bringing this bill forward? Did he consult with folks like the—like IBAM, for example, or anyone else in the insurance industry before bringing this bill forward?

MLA Sala: I appreciate the question.

This bill is about, again, protecting the good folks who are sitting on our Insurance Agents' and Adjusters'

Licensing Appeal Board, as well, of course, as our—the individual who works as the co-ordinator of appeals.

These individuals work in these important functions, and in other provinces, they would have the benefit of knowing that they would be protected from spurious legal action. And so by providing this insurance that they would be protected as long as they're working in good faith, or ensuring that public servants and the good folks that step up to work in these important roles, again, are motivated to continue in doing this important work and don't have to be concerned about, again, spurious legal action that might cause them harm.

So this is about—

The Deputy Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: This minister spoke to other provincial jurisdictions that have enacted similar types of legislation.

Will this bill apply retroactively, like Saskatchewan's legislation?

MLA Sala: No, this is a forward-looking bill.

Mrs. Stone: Right, thank you.

I'm curious if the minister can answer, have any members of the public suffered a pecuniary loss because of the lack of any of these amendments that are being proposed in this bill today?

MLA Sala: Well, what I can speak to is the importance of ensuring that we protect civil servants—public servants, rather, who are doing the important work of supporting Manitobans by participating in the work of the Insurance Agents' and Adjusters' Licensing Appeal Board.

Again, we know these are the kind of individuals that step up to serve our province. They have rather specialized skill sets, and these are individuals that, again, that are stepping up to serve to help ensure Manitobans can access good quality insurance services here in Manitoba.

* (16:00)

We're proud to be doing the work of ensuring that these individuals will have the protection they deserve and that they would not be placed at risk—undue risk—as a result of stepping up to work in these roles and in this capacity.

And, you know, we know how important that is, because insurance, of course, does provide Manitobans with important protections.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: So part of this bill provides immunity from liability with those that sit on the appeals board. So I'm curious if the minister can speak to, have members of the licensing appeal board actually been subject to civil litigation over actions undertaken while undergoing their duties to sitting on the appeals board?

MLA Sala: Again, we know for many years the members opposite allowed this to continue, where individuals who were volunteering or working in these capacities were not afforded these protections and this immunity from legal action.

We know that other provinces have made this move for good reason. There's an importance to ensuring that those individuals that step up to serve and make sure that Manitobans can, again, get access to the high-quality insurance products and supports that they need, that those individuals that are doing that work are protected.

And, again, there's a reason why other provinces have moved in this direction. These individuals are working, of course, in a high-stakes environment and deserve to have that confidence that if they are going to step up and volunteer and serve all of us here in this province, that they're going to be protected from undue or unnecessary legal action in that process.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Again, I appreciate the opportunity and the time to rise today to put a few words on the record on Bill 14, The Insurance Amendment Act.

And, first and foremost, I want to point out that it is important to emphasize that the protection of the public is of the utmost importance to our team. We know that the insurance industry is heavily and highly regulated at both the provincial but as well as at the federal level, to ensure that insurance companies and agents are able to meet their financial obligations to their customers and to their policyholders.

Customers and policyholders put their trust in insurance companies and agents to provide important coverage in times of need. We know that insurance protects us and our families from financial risk, and it helps to cover costs if something unexpected happens. This could be in terms of protection of risks, this could

be property, could be business, could be casualty, life insurance, to name a few.

More can always be done at the retail insurance level to prevent policyholders from misunderstandings as to what is actually covered and to hold insurance companies to their contractual obligations.

As a customer, the public does have specific rights and responsibilities, and understanding those rights and responsibilities is a key part. The right to be informed about how insurance works, how much you pay in premiums for the coverage and how your coverage works when you need it, as well as the process to file a claim and an appeal, are all key aspects of informing a policyholder and a customer when they go into a particular coverage with their insurance company or insurance broker.

The public also has a right to privacy over their information that they are entrusting with an agent and broker.

Customers have a right to receive the benefits guaranteed under their policy. These protections are important in the event that something bad happens, which we hope it all doesn't. But every so often something unexpected does happen, or—both from a individual and a customer standpoint, but also from an insurance company's standpoint, as is the case with bankruptcy or insolvency.

We've seen over the past number of years that the financial services industry has undergone significant transition over the years. We have seen significant technological advancements, such as e-commerce, make its way into the industry. This has made insurance companies more competitive, and consumers have more choice than they have ever had before.

As is the case with other industries—and the insurance sector is no different, deputy honourable Speaker—consumers are demanding quick access to information with the click of a mouse or easy access on their smartphone and more consumer choice as a customer. And consumer choice is a key component for policyholders, and in a competitive insurance market is critical for the growth of the Canadian economy, but it also gives consumers more choice to both manage their risk as well as forecast for their future.

Insurance agencies and companies have an important place and an important role to play to help consumers find that right coverage that they're look-

ing for, while they can also assume a higher degree of risk. The industry has spoken about the challenges that consumers have been faced with over the years that are impacting how policyholders and customers are managing their own risk and protections. We've seen extreme weather events impacting properties and land, from flooding to forest fires; an aging boomer generation looking for expanded travel insurance or expanded health-care coverage; and recently, the market volatility and economic uncertainty facing all Manitobans, to name a few.

Artificial intelligence has also entered the landscape in recent years, which has changed the way that we look at risk modelling and forecasting, and as AI continues to develop and expand, so will its capabilities and usage within the insurance industry. So more so than ever, deputy honourable Speaker, is the emphasis on protection of the public as these types of technologies continue to grow.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada states that competition in the marketplace is good for consumers. It benefits them by providing checks and balances that help keep prices competitive and the quality and choice of products and services high. So it's important that Manitoba have insurance regulation that is consistent with other jurisdictions, and this is the loophole that appears that this minister is trying to close as other jurisdictions have brought forward similar legislation.

And more needs to be done by the Province to explore insurance coverage for climate-related issues that have been priced out of reach for average Manitobans, if they're available at all, such as overland flooding and at-natural disaster protections as I've spoken about earlier in my remarks.

But, again, deputy honourable Speaker, I want to reiterate that protection of the public is the most important and overriding goal of The Insurance Act. Specific to the changes in the bill being proposed today in Bill 14, this change seems to affect very, very few policies which are held by institutional investors' hedge funds and sophisticated investors. However, these are not everyday life insurance policies for the everyday policyholder or customer.

Another change that this minister is bringing forward is to allow email notification of appeal hearings. This is—seems to be just a housekeeping matter that brings the act up to date. Protection from liability of appeal board members when acting in good faith

seems to be an obvious change that matches what other provinces are doing in many different areas.

I do want to point out, deputy honourable Speaker, that as the government brings forward changes to The Insurance Act, it's important that no new taxes are charged on top of existing policies, as this continues to be the top concern for Canada's business organizations. The Insurance Bureau of Canada conducted a report recently and it found, depending on province or territory, that insurance premium taxes and retail sales taxes can become a tax on a tax and deters businesses from securing adequate coverage.

So again, deputy honourable Speaker, as it relates to Bill 14, I want to again reiterate that, first and foremost, it is important to emphasize that protection of the public is of the utmost importance. The insurance industry, as I mentioned earlier in my comments, is a highly regulated—at both the federal and provincial levels, to ensure that insurance companies and agents are able to meet their financial obligations to their clients.

The Speaker in the Chair

So I know that we have a—quite a few bills to get through today, Honourable Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity to have risen to provide some words on the record on Bill 14, The Insurance Amendment Act.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

* (16:10)

The Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: So the question before the House is second reading of Bill 14, The Insurance Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

**Bill 16—The Municipal Councils and
School Boards Elections Amendment and
Public Schools Amendment Act**

The Speaker: Now, as previously announced, we'll move on to second reading of Bill 16, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Moyes), that Bill 16, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les élections municipales et scolaires et la Loi sur les écoles publiques, now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Schmidt: Voting matters, representation matters, and that includes at every level of government, whether it's the Prime Minister's office or at the local school board.

School boards and the trustees that serve on them do critical work. They make important decisions regarding transportation, financial management, space utilization and much, much more. We know that all Manitobans care about education, particularly parents who have a right and a responsibility to be knowledgeable about the education of their children, and consequently, they care about who serves on their local school board.

That's why it is so concerning that currently, Manitobans living on reserve do not have the right to vote or stand as candidates in school division elections, despite being essential members of their communities. Our government thinks that's wrong; that's why Bill 16 is so important as it will enfranchise thousands of Manitobans living on reserve.

I am proud to say that these First Nation Manitobans will now have the opportunity to vote in the 2026 general trustee elections. This bill will amend The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Act and The Public Schools Act to give reserve residents the ability to vote and register as candidates in school board elections in their local school division or school district.

Reserve residents will be subject to the same eligibility requirements as non-reserve residents. They will vote in the school board elections for which their reserve is bounded. When a reserve is bounded by two or more divisions, the band council will make a request for which school division they would like to vote in. In the absence of such a request, the decision will be made at the ministerial level.

Given its unique board election process, there will be a different mechanism for residents on reserves bounded by the Frontier School Division to engage in their school board election. In these instances, reserve

residents will vote in local school committee elections either in nearby communities or in their own communities for the purpose of voting up members to the area committee.

Likewise, if a reserve resident—I'm sorry, if a reserve includes reserve lands in an urban municipality, residents of that reserve land will vote in a school division or school district that includes the urban municipality. Reserves that are currently prescribed as wards of a school division under the reserve ward establishment regulation will not be impacted by the changes and will continue to be able to participate in local trustee elections as they do currently. This includes Waywayseecappo First Nation, Canupawakpa—pardon me—Dakota First Nation and Rolling River First Nation.

Honourable Speaker, this bill affirms the rights of every Manitoban to have a voice and be heard in school board elections which not only strengthens our democracy but also takes us further along the path of truth and reconciliation.

I want to uplift the many Manitobans we've heard from on this issue and thank them for their advocacy. Our government has listened to your concerns and we are taking action to remedy them. This is long overdue, Honourable Speaker. We are one Manitoba, one people. I will conclude my marks on this bill with that.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Questions

The Speaker: So a question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by the opposition member—by any opposition member. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): And I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward Bill 16, the municipal councils and school boards election amendment act.

So my question to the minister is: Who did she or the department consult with on this?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): We've heard from

Manitobans all across our beautiful province on this matter in recent weeks and months. We've also engaged deeply with the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations in drafting this bill and we have appreciated their guidance and their collaboration.

Again, this is something, Honourable Speaker, that we believe is long overdue; something that the previous government failed to do. And we believe that all Manitobans would agree that every Manitoban in this province has the right to participate in democracy and that our democracy will be stronger for it.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Ewasko: So the minister, in her first answer, went right to divisive politics. But that's okay. We'll carry on and move forward.

So earlier in her opening statement—almost four minutes, Honourable Speaker—she mentioned about residents of a reserve or also a potential band member. Is there a difference in regards to this legislation if you are a band member or living on a reserve in order to vote in a municipal/school board election?

MLA Schmidt: All band members, all individuals living on reserve and in fact, all Manitobans, are finally going to be enfranchised and are going to be given their right, which is to participate in our democratic process and in our school board elections.

Mr. Ewasko: And, again, my line of questioning is not meant to be controversial by any means, so if we could just answer the question, it would be great.

I'm just asking a question—I know that the Minister for Families—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order, order.

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, the reason why I asked the previous question is that in the bill, in the explanatory note, it says the residents will vote in the school division or school district specified in the regulations. It did not say band member; it said residents of a reserve. And I'm just asking for clarification, is band member and resident of the reserve, does that equal the same? [interjection]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) will come to order.

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, I just wanted to take a moment to let the member opposite, that I will not take instruction from him. I will not take advice on him about how to answer questions. So if he doesn't

like the way I'm answering the questions, I would urge him to get used to it.

What this bill does is enfranchise every single Manitoban. Manitobans vote based on where they reside and this bill further enshrines that right.

My question for the member opposite is whether or not he believes that all Manitobans deserve the right to vote in elections, or does he not?

Mr. Ewasko: Again, Honourable Speaker, the Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister, in a short amount of time, probably be about a year and half, will have all the opportunities in the world to ask this question, if she's able to retain her seat.

So my question was, Honourable Speaker—and it was just for clarity's sake; absolutely we, on this side of the House, believe in the democratic process.

My question was that—and she didn't answer it—if a band member is residing in an urban setting or off reserve, can they still vote in that—coming up that school division election? That's what I'm asking, a yes or no. Just asking for clarity. I've had some questions come to me, Honourable Speaker, from Manitobans.

* (16:20)

MLA Schmidt: Voting here in Manitoba is based on where you reside. Manitobans will vote based on where they reside.

Mr. Ewasko: So I thank the minister for that answer, but it's—it contradicts what she said a little bit earlier. So with that, I'll be checking for Hansard and just checking on that and just to see what exactly she's doing.

So in regards to subsection 21.1 of the bill, can she provide an example of a reserve that is mentioned in that article and subsection?

MLA Schmidt: What I know, Honourable Speaker, is that all residents that live on reserve, once this bill is passed, will become enfranchised.

Under the leadership of the previous PC government, it's true and it's a fact that not all Manitobans were afforded their right, which is to participate in our democracy, to vote in school board elections and, in fact, to run in school board elections.

We believe that's wrong. We believe that Indigenous Manitobans contribute to the culture and vibrancy of our democracy. We don't believe in silencing their voices—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, nobody on this side of the House is challenging or arguing with what the minister is saying, just simply asking questions on behalf of Manitobans as we move forward—all Manitobans, just for some clarity.

So just to inform the minister, on 21.1(3), subsection 3, it's the—if the reserve has been prescribed as a ward of a school division under section 24.2.

All I'm asking is: Can she name an example of a First Nation reserve that is considered a ward presently?

MLA Schmidt: Those reserves, those wards and those school divisions know exactly who they are. I regret that the member opposite doesn't know that information.

What would be great, Honourable Speaker, is that if the member opposite, on behalf of Manitobans, had any questions at all about this particular bill.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, I know that the minister is going to want to clip this, so I'm going to definitely watch, of course, how I've been asking questions, because we know that the level of excitement tends to elevate.

But that question that I had asked was directly from the bill that the minister is bringing forward, Bill 16. So just does she have an example for the House, for Manitobans—the thousands of Manitobans watching today—which reserves fall under their own ward? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Schmidt: The intent of this bill is not to cover on—reserves that are already covered under the regulation that the member opposite talks about. The intent of this bill is to enfranchise other Manitobans that currently are not enfranchised.

So, again, I would encourage the member opposite to get back to the substance of this bill, which is to give the freedom and the right to First Nations people living on reserve to participate in democracy, something that they have been asking for, something that they have been begging for and they have the right to.

That is what our government is doing. We encourage the members opposite to get on board and to build one Manitoba for one set of people, all Manitobans, rather than creating the division and the fear—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Again, I'm not the one standing in my place challenging what the Speaker can or cannot

say or do, so I take exception to what the Minister of Education is bringing forward.

So again, because the minister cannot provide an example, it is going to be interesting to see what comes forward. And, I guess, who else has the minister collaborated with, whether it's her or the department or all the above. Who else has she consulted with on Bill 16?

MLA Schmidt: We've consulted with all sorts of Manitobans, including Indigenous Manitobans, including First Nations Manitobans and Manitobans north, south, east and west to us.

I can read onto the record for the Chamber, Honourable Speaker, some words coming from the Southern Chiefs, and that is, and I quote: We are also pleased to know all First Nation citizens will have the right to vote in school board elections, as not all of our citizens living on reserve have that right as the rules now stand.

So I would ask the member opposite if he agrees or disagrees with the Southern Chiefs that this—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Again, the Education Minister will have an opportunity to ask questions on bill debate in the near future. So I guess in regards to Bill 16, how will changes to the municipal boundaries and voter eligibility impact this bill, Bill 16, as we move forward?

MLA Schmidt: We know with bringing these voters onto the rolls that, absolutely, there will be a necessity for school divisions and school boards to do some readjusting of their ward boundaries. We are fully expecting and excited to collaborate with them on doing that work.

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, so bringing forward Bill 16, obviously the minister chatted about this a little bit or had thought about this potential speed bump; I'll say it's a speed bump. So why did she not consider putting some of those pieces within Bill 16 in regards to considering the influx of individuals that are going to be eligible to vote in the upcoming school board elections?

MLA Schmidt: Well, I can tell you that that is work that school boards and school divisions are already doing. We don't need to legislate that instruction to them; we trust them to do that work based on their experience and their history in doing that important work.

But one thing we're not going to do, Honourable Speaker, is drag our heels. This is—this has been on the books for far too long. In fact, I think Manitobans would be shocked and surprised, and Manitobans have been shocked and surprised, to learn that today, in 2025, people—First Nations people of Manitoba that live on reserve do not have the right to vote in an election. That is wrong. We are here to fix the mistakes of the previous government.

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, it's unfortunate that the only one standing in their place today and being divisive is the Education Minister themselves. We on this side of the House are absolutely in favour of holding our democratic rights in this great province of ours to all Manitobans. So we look forward to—*[interjection]*

I know that the Minister for Housing wants to get up and put some words on the record, so I won't take very long in my speech. But, I guess, Honourable deputy Speaker, how is this going to affect the eligibility impact, and what are the numbers are that the minister is thinking will be adding with this incredible great move, Bill 16, to our democratic process on school board elections?

MLA Schmidt: All of them. We are going to make sure all Manitobans that reside in Manitoba, that wish to participate in our democracy are going to have the right to do so, as is their right, as ought to have been their right.

I have to scratch my head about the questions coming from member opposite. It strikes me—some of them strike me as very concerning. It doesn't sound like the member opposite—it doesn't sound like he believes in that all Manitobans deserve the right to know—I apologize—the right to vote. He's concerned about who we consulted with, what are the numbers? Well, we know, Honourable Speaker, this is the right thing to do. We are on the right side of history, and that says a lot about where the member opposite is.

* (16:30)

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The time for questions has also expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thank the minister for bringing forward Bill 16, and unless—unlike the diatribe that the minister decided to put on the record in her last answer, of

course, knowing that she was running out of time, it's unfortunate that, again, this Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister can't help herself from putting divisive comments on the record when this is part of the democratic process, if I need to remind the member.

I'm not educating the member; I'm just reminding the member that in Manitoba this is one of those topics, Honourable Speaker. *[interjection]* And again, the Families Minister once again. I appreciate the Families Minister, you know, participating in the debate, or wanting to participate in the debate, and just loves the fact, but—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) will come to order, and the honourable Opposition House Leader will stick to debating the bill. *[interjection]*

Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Families, I've cautioned others about having things to say after the Speaker is done, so I would now caution you to be more cautious about speaking after the Speaker said something.

Mr. Ewasko: It is at times upsetting when in our democratic process here in the Manitoba Legislature, when we are sent here by Manitobans to represent our areas, when certain members or other colleagues within this Chamber wants to, on one hand, talk about the democratic process, but on the other hand, wants to squash the ability for people to actually be able to stand up and put words on the record, much like that flip-flop of the pickerel on a dock, as I referenced earlier. But we're now not talking about pickerels any more, Honourable Speaker; we're talking about jackfish.

And I appreciate the fact that we're talking about Bill 16, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act, because it does—it enables all Manitobans to have a voice in school board elections and—I'm going to have to look back at Hansard to see the discrepancy in what the Education Minister's put on the record. But I will see, Honourable Speaker, because, unfortunately, instead of just sticking to the bill, some of the 'verbige' that continues to get put on the record is one of divisiveness, anger and hate at times.

So when we take a look at the bill, and we take a look at the fact that we have reserves, communities, where students are participating and attending public school within their boundaries, or just outside their boundaries, a neighbouring school division or whatever else, I think this is—you know, we're going to—again,

we agree that the democratic right of all Manitobans is paramount, and we want to make sure that opportunities are there for all Manitobans.

Being part of the education system for quite a few years, and from what we heard the other day on debate, the Education Minister is quite tied in with the education world as well, with close relatives being part of the education system as well. And so she has grown up listening and hearing many of the successes and challenges that are in our education system, I'm sure.

So with that, I know that some of our public schools, and I know that the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) will agree with me, because we spent quite some time prior to—well, prior to him getting into politics, but I guess with myself being the MLA that represented that area up towards Keewatinook and now encompasses Keewatinook because of the boundary changes which I referenced, and that's sort of how, you know, these discussions carry on.

And that's why questions, and that's why the democratic process in our great Chamber is so important to be able to understand that a sponsor, or a minister, or a member brings forward a bill or resolution and the opposition or another member in this great Chamber of ours, has the ability to bring forward some questions.

So I know that the Education Minister sometimes flip-flops on whether she's in favour of that or not in favour of that, but time will tell and when members, you know, spend more time here then it will become evident that that is a fact of how this Chamber works.

But as I was saying, so we've had communities from—and I've had the pleasure of teaching with many educators on Brokenhead First Nation, Sagkeeng and, of course, Little Black River, and Hollow Water First Nation.

And then, of course, in some circumstances, Honourable Speaker, we've had students that had resided on any one of those reserves and then had chosen to go to public school system off reserve. Whether that was Pine Falls—or, Powerview now, because of course, Pine Falls closed under the mismanagement of the Greg Selinger era, you know, when, unfortunately, they closed the mill and lost over 1,000 direct and indirect jobs.

And so that's why it comes back to Bill 16. I think it's very important to then have that democratic right to not only be a representative on a school board, but also to be able to vote for a representative, because a

lot of the students that are coming off reserve and choosing public education in the northern part of my constituency, had quite a few different options.

And my good friend and colleague, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte), of course, has the regional comprehensive school and—in Selkirk. And I know that many of the students, off reserve and on reserve, had travelled, you know, well over an hour on the school bus to attend school, to the comp at times.

And that's the options. That's the great thing about Manitoba education, Honourable Speaker: accessible. Well, not quite under that 60-minute bus ride, but you know, the nice thing is that it is accessible.

And I know that, under our government, we were trying to build some schools until a lot of the schools and the Education funding was drastically cut. But under this Bill 16, Honourable Speaker, I take a look at some of the things that the minister had said, and in a previous bill, Bill 18, which I just—we just finished debating, which was a wonderful debate—the minister said that she didn't want to step on or get in the way of school boards.

But yet—and again, I'm going to have to check Hansard, so I'll check—but the minister made a comment about having to then—have to step in as a minister on some of these decisions that a board—or, a school board or a district might be making or even a band.

So, we'll get to some of that, Honourable Speaker, because we will have an opportunity to debate this and hear what people have to say when they're coming to committee on Bill 16, because of course, we're voting in favour of this to move it to committee, and the principles of the bill seems to be quite intact.

But I did want to just—before I, you know, turn over my time here, I did want to mention something here. I did want to read—I think it's very important, because I know that the minister—a lot of the under four minutes that she brought forward on Bill 16, which is considerably less than the budget debate that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) brought.

And you would have thought that the Premier would have maybe, in his budget, would have maybe spoke about some of the good things that they were—that they had put into the Throne Speech. But you know what? At six minutes and, you know, so whatever.

* (16:40)

So the Education Minister, again today on Bill 16, which is an important piece of legislation, which builds on, again, from, you know, Bill 18 on

Mamàhtawisiwin and that, so I just want to read a little bit, then I'll turn it over to other members of the Chamber who would like to speak to Bill 16 because they seem to want to speak.

So, on Bill 16, on page one of the bill, it talks about how the municipal councils and school boards elections amendment act and public schools amendment act, it says, "Assented to; WHEREAS a strong public school system is a fundamental element of a democratic society."

Absolutely. Everybody can agree. I—as a matter of fact, I even see some NDP members agree. That's good. "AND WHEREAS democratic local school divisions and districts play an important role in providing public education that is responsive to local needs and conditions."

Agreed. Everybody in the Chamber here—I can't speak to other things, but it seems like everybody agrees. That's good.

And whereas—straight from the bill—parents have a right and responsibility to be knowledgeable about and participate in the education of their children.

Agreed. Everybody agrees. That's good. Oh, see heads nodding. Yes; everybody's with me.

And whereas the residents of reserve lands have generally been excluded from voting in school board elections even though students who live on reserve have been essential members of the school community.

Absolutely. Absolutely. I—you know what, Honourable Speaker? I know that other people want to speak, but I would definitely like to, you know, highlight in a future debate, some of the incredible work and community efforts that all Manitobans in the great constituency of Lac du Bonnet has brought forward, both on and off the reserves.

And the last and whereas, and this will be—and then I'll be turning it over, Honourable Speaker.

"AND WHEREAS it is a vital act of reconciliation for residents who live on reserve to have the democratic right to participate in the election of school boards so as to ensure a strong public school system that truly reflects and is responsive to the diverse needs and interests"—[interjection]

Bless you. "—of all its students"—and forgive me, Honourable Speaker—that's not what it actually says in there; it's just that there was a person in the Chamber that sneezed, and so to the public, the thousands of Manitobans that are watching today, I want to make

sure that that wasn't something that was in the whereas; it was just—I was just passing along bless you to the person who sneezed. But I'll start that again.

"AND WHEREAS it is a vital act of reconciliation for residents"—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Ewasko: I know that the member for Point Douglas (Ms. Smith)—sorry—the Minister of Families—not Families—Housing—and now it sounds like the Families Minister wants to get up and put a few words, so I'm going to finish soon.

And it is unfortunate, Honourable Speaker, that the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) constantly puts hateful language on the record. But I can't help—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

The honourable member has the floor.

Mr. Ewasko: Oh, okay. Sorry, Honourable Speaker. You said order, and I wanted to make sure that I was being attentive to your directions and sit down, if that was what you required.

Anyways, the last whereas is a vital act to reconciliation for residents who live on-reserve to have the democratic right to participate in the election of school boards so as to ensure a strong public school system that truly reflects and is responsive to the diverse needs and interests of all its students, no matter where they reside.

And then it goes into therefore, His Majesty, and then the advice and whatever, and you know the rest of that story.

So, Honourable Speaker, we on this side of the House absolutely agree with the principles of the bill. I think that the Education Minister has some questions that still need to be answered. I know she's got some questions of her own that, again in, you know, a year and a half or so from now, she'll have all the opportunity in the world to ask questions, if we're both elected back to this great Chamber and representing people in Manitoba.

So, with that, I want to thank you for your sage advice and the opportunity to put a few words on the record this afternoon on Bill 16.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Any other members wishing to debate the bill?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is bill—the second reading of Bill 16, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 20—The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act

The Speaker: And then, with that, we will move on to—does the honourable minister—the next item of business is Bill 20—the second reading of Bill 20, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith), that Bill 20, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la garde d'enfants et la Loi sur l'administration scolaire, now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Schmidt: Since being elected, our government has prioritized the educational experience and success of students across Manitoba. Our government understands the importance of truth telling in our education system, and we are committed to advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Our government recognizes the negative impacts that colonization and residential schools have had on Indigenous languages and cultures, and it is imperative that students learn about this history.

Bill 20 will amend The Community Child Care Standards Act and The Education Administration Act to require the establishment of a First Nations, Inuit and Métis policy framework for both the K to 12 and the early learning and child-care sectors. Bill 20 will strengthen the department's existing education policy framework, Mamāhtawisiwin, and will ensure that it continues to be renewed by the minister responsible.

Our government recognizes the first—apologies. Our government recognizes the importance of First

Nations, Inuit and Métis policy frameworks, which is why we will be extending these initiatives into the Early Learning and Child Care sector with Bill 20.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis policy frameworks in education and child care will empower all Manitoba children to learn the history of our province and our country, while learning about treaties and the significant contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people on their own territories, and move us forward in a good way on the path of truth and reconciliation.

Bill 20 will also introduce and ensure Indigenous perspectives and teachings are accessible in training and learning opportunities in schools and licensed child-care centres across the province. The department will be working with—pardon me. The department will be working in collaboration with Indigenous peoples and organizations across Manitoba to achieve this work. This bill will require that these educational resources are available for all Manitobans and that they are routinely reviewed to ensure a positive learning experience for students and educators across the province.

Honourable Speaker, our government is proud to work in collaboration with First Nations, Métis and Inuit leadership in our province to ensure the prosperity of Indigenous languages and cultures for years to come, while ensuring the next generation of Manitoba children are aware of the history of our province and our country.

We are incredibly proud of Bill 20, and we look forward to seeing it pass with unanimous support of this House.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

Questions

The Speaker: So a question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I guess I'll take the first question to the minister. I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward Bill 20.

* (16:50)

As I've mentioned in the last few bill debates, Honourable Speaker, here's the lob ball for the minister: Who did the minister or the department consult with?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Our department has had extensive and considerable engagements with Indigenous elders, Indigenous education leaders, leaders in early childhood education, school support teams, superintendents, school division leaders, principals, vice principals, school trustees.

We know that there's been much good dialogue already. We know there is a lot of important dialogue and engagement to come in the future. We look forward to working with our partners to rolling out this framework, not only in the K-to-12 sector, but importantly into the early childhood education sector, so that this learning can start happening at its—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the minister for giving a more extensive list than over the last few bill debates. But you know, I—the list seems fairly familiar, Honourable Speaker, considering we brought forward Mamàhtawisiwin, which is the framework which she is talking about in the K-to-12 system. It's great to see that we're rolling this into the early childhood education.

And so on that note, Honourable deputy Speaker, can she—would she like to elaborate on that extensive list she gave, and does she want to be a little more specific as far as, has she actually spoken to the Red River Métis; has she actually spoke to the southern chiefs, AMC or N-K-O?

MLA Schmidt: Thank you for the question.

I mean, the frank answer is yes to all of the above. I can share with the member and with this Chamber that it was just in the last matter of weeks that I had the pleasure of meeting with the minister responsible from the Manitoba Métis Federation, and we discussed exactly how our two governments can work together to ensure that this sort of education is delivered in a fulsome and meaningful way.

So, again, many dialogues have occurred already. Many more discussions coming forward in the future, and we look forward to working with—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: So, for clarity, and the minister can expand on this: Did she meet with them, or did the department?

Because I know that the department definitely met with them with the previous, previous Education minister on building towards this policy framework; and of course I would also be remiss if I didn't ask the minister if she met with the Inuit council of Winnipeg as well.

MLA Schmidt: Thank you for the opportunity to clarify. And, yes, myself as minister, I meet with stakeholder groups, other representative organizations and other governments on a regular basis. It is my humble privilege and honour to do so.

So yes, we met with the minister responsible for the Manitoba Métis Federation as well as many of her colleagues, and other ministers joined that meeting. And that included representatives of the Louis Riel Institute.

So, again, many excellent dialogues have occurred already. More dialogues will occur in the future, and we think that this framework is very important, and—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Within that policy framework, Honourable Speaker, is the minister going to make it mandatory treaty education training for all early childhood educators, including child-care assistants?

MLA Schmidt: On this side of the House, we absolutely believe in and are working to support and expand professional development for early child-early childhood educators here in our province.

We know the value of the work that is done by early childhood educators. We know that they are professionals, and we know that they require and deserve professional development. So we would absolutely expect, and we intend to support, early childhood educators in receiving professional development to reinforce their ability to educate our youngest learners on the value of treaty education and of the important contributions of Indigenous Manitobans to our province.

Mr. Ewasko: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer.

Can the minister tell the House whether she feels there—right now, if there's enough teachers and early childhood educators with Indigenous knowledge and background to teach these various topics to our Manitoba students?

MLA Schmidt: Yes, we know that it is vitally important for our educators: whether they are in our K-to-12 system or whether they are in our early childhood education system, it's important that our educators feel trained and educated themselves and reinforced in this type of knowledge to be able to pass on that knowledge to our learners.

So we are thrilled that treaty education for all is—has been delivered throughout the K-to-12 education sector. We know that there are educators in our province that are greatly benefiting from that professional development opportunity. And we know, most importantly, that their students are benefiting from that.

So we look forward to the support of—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Will the policy framework be rolled out all at once, or is it going to be ad hoc?

MLA Schmidt: We are—the department is working diligently with the sector to ensure that this is rolled out in a comprehensive and meaningful way at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Ewasko: So the answer to that question, Honourable Speaker, it seems to be, from this Education 'minner'—sometime between today and the future, it's going to be rolled out.

So I'd like to ask the Education Minister, is the policy framework for the K-to-12 sector going to be the same as the early childhood learning sector? Or should I say, is the early childhood learning sector policy framework going to be the same as Mamāhtawisiwin, or is she going to create an all-encompassing brand new policy framework, and when does she see it being rolled out?

MLA Schmidt: Well, one thing I will say, Honourable Speaker, is that I am thrilled to hear that this bill will receive the support of the House and will be rolled out throughout the early childhood education sector. I am really grateful to hear that support.

And as an educator himself, the member opposite will know that education needs to be delivered in an age-appropriate way. So we will be building and improving on the framework and making sure that it is appropriate and digestible by our earliest learners here in Manitoba.

Mr. Ewasko: Well, that's great to hear, Honourable Speaker, considering a majority of the work had been done by our side of the Chamber, and we rolled out

the majority of it. And even the work that is yet to come with more consultation with the—all the early childhood education partners, again, had already started. So the minister, unfortunately, it looks like had delayed this process in the last year and a half. But, absolutely, on this side of the House we would support something that we started in the first place, of course. And I don't have a question at this point.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any further questions, or does the minister wish to answer—the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt).

MLA Schmidt: I appreciate the member opposite in supporting our great work. I would ask, however, why the member opposite, while allowing this bill to go forward, has decided to take the wrong step of delaying, preventing Bill 30, The Elections Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act, a bill put forward by our government to ensure that hateful, divisive billboards are never ever again put forward by any government here in Manitoba.

* (17:00)

So happy to hear that we are going to be allowing Bill 20 to move forward. I would urge the member opposite and all the members on the opposite side of the Chamber to think twice about why in the world—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: If there are no more questions, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): It gives me a great pleasure to stand up and be able to put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 20, Honourable Speaker.

What's interesting is that—that I didn't quite hear the rest of what the Education Minister wanted to bring forward. And, again, because they had a, you know, quite extensive unlimited time, Honourable Speaker, on being able to bring forward anything that they wanted to do on Bill 20. It's unfortunate that, as usual, the Education Minister decides to try to bring—to enflame and try to bring hate, divisive comments onto the record. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: And again, she wants to potentially get back in the debate, but she had all the time in the world to stand up and put whatever she wanted on the record

in regards to Bill 20. And again, with under four minutes—and I'm being generous, actually. I think I'm being very generous to say that she spoke for four minutes. Matter of fact, it looks like just about three minutes, Honourable Speaker, which is less than half of what her Premier (Mr. Kinew) brought forward in regards to his budget debate.

So, you know, we're carrying on, and we're talking, too. And I appreciate the fact that the minister had given accolades to the former government—PC government—and the former, former Education minister on the good work that we did on Mamāhtawisiwin and getting the ball rolling.

And don't get me wrong, Honourable Speaker, this—Mamāhtawisiwin didn't just poof—like the Premier likes to say at times—poof, appear out of thin air. Mamāhtawisiwin is a framework that took years of collaboration and working with our education partners all across this great province of ours.

So when we take a look at rolling out—fully rolling out the policy framework on Indigenous education and policy framework for early childhood learning, the good thing is that this Education Minister, even though she doesn't want to acknowledge it, probably 80 per cent of the work is—had—it's already been done, and all she has to do is sort of get out of the way, and it'll continue.

Because, really, unfortunately, if the Education Minister and her NDP Kinew government would've been out of the way in the first place, when they first took office, and because they get so stuck in their ideology, Honourable Speaker, they just can't help themselves. They just can't help themselves to then pause or cut or get rid of something that is good for all Manitobans. So really, with bringing forward Bill 20, really this could've all been done, you know, shortly after the last election.

But again, Honourable Speaker, we're seeing on a day-to-day basis, this Kinew government just doesn't bring in any plans. They've got no plans. You know, we're—the nice thing, again, much like what happened with my good friend and colleague, the MLA for Tyndall Park, brought forward legislation this morning which this Education Minister, again, tried to steal it and rebrand it as if it was her own idea, which we know is not true, obviously.

And then that way, as well, when we talk about the Indigenous education policy framework for early childhood education, again, the minister's trying to rebrand this and put a little bit of orange paint on it

and calls it an NDP document, Honourable Speaker, which is absolutely not true. But that's just—there's nothing new again with you know who, the Kinew government. And that's their mantra as we go forward.

So, again, Honourable Speaker, we take a look at—according to the 2021 census, Manitoba is home to almost 240,000 Indigenous people in its population, which is the fourth highest in all of Canada. And it's encouraging to me to hear that the Education Minister now is going to go and consult with the organizations and the education partners and the groups that we had actually—that I had listed on the list. She continues to say that they consulted with many Manitobans. Well, that's good, but to narrow that down a little bit is a—would be really nice.

And so it took a little bit to get that information from the minister, but we did eventually get it, and I do believe that—on the record, Honourable Speaker, from earlier—the minister agreed on a previous bill to get me some answers to a question that she didn't know.

And I do want to applaud the Education Minister for that point right there, Honourable Speaker, is the fact that it's okay to not necessarily know an answer. We've all been there, done that. And so—but it's the will and the courage to be able to go on the record and actually say that you don't quite know the answer, but you're going to get back to either the member or a person in Manitoba.

That is a quality that I see on a day-to-day basis that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) does not have. He does not have that ability to admit that he either doesn't know something or that he's out of his element on something. And then what ends up happening, much like what we're seeing from some members on the NDP side, is then they just—they attack. They attack with divisive comments, anger, hate, you know. That's the bullying behaviour that I'm seeing—we're seeing—coming from their benches, and more so, their front bench.

But, unfortunately, there are a few members that are relatively new to the Chamber that feel that that's the way they should represent their constituents. And I think that constituents in Manitoba are seeing some of the true colours of some of the members on the government side.

We know that many of the policies that have come forward from this Kinew government, and it's highlighted, actually, in Bill 20, when we start talking about the Indigenous education policy framework we're going to be rolling out sometime between today

and the future, Honourable Speaker, and it won't take as long as if she actually had to start this from scratch. Like I said, probably 80 per cent of the work's already done, so she'll be able to stand at a news conference with a news release and take credit for it, which—that's what happens.

That's part of that democratic process that we have the honour to participate in in Manitoba where, you know what? Sometimes there's overlapping really good pieces of either legislation or policy framework that moves forward, and then the incoming government gets to take some credit for either ribbon cutting or bringing forward a policy.

I'm just hoping that in the future, when that policy framework rolls out, maybe the Education Minister—the current Education Minister—because I'm assuming there's going to be a Cabinet shuffle sometime in the near future, as we saw evidence today of the Premier having his own egomaniac attack today and answering for his ministers today, even though I'm pretty sure that the ministers could have answered some of those questions.

But maybe not. I think that's what's happening. So I'm glad that the Premier didn't, you know, get into the debate this afternoon because that would have just prolonged today's bills that we're talking about today.

* (17:10)

So we know that the NDP Kinew government are not creating enough post-secondary training spots for early childhood educators, let alone those with experiences with Indigenous knowledge and cultures, Honourable Speaker. We know that. We know that they've had no plan. It's encouraging that they're taking some of the—a lot of the work that we have done when we were in government and moving things forward.

But we take a look at, you know, Budget 2025, and I've said on more than one occasion on how the Premier, I don't know, did he speak for six minutes? No, no, so a couple members on the NDP side—I'm not going to name their constituency—they're shaking their head no. It might have been six minutes, but I'm going to give him the benefit of the doubt. But had nothing to say in regards to early childhood education, Honourable Speaker.

Matter of fact, what do I see? I see the Manitoba Child Care Association, on the topic of Budget 2025, stated that there was a, and I quote, a noticeable lack of detail on early learning and child care, while the

minister stated to them that there is, and I quote—so double quote—more good news to come, end quote.

Well, shouldn't the good news, Honourable Speaker, be reflected in the budget, or is it one of those situations where somewhere between today and the future, their early childhood educators, the association, is going to get some good news? I don't know. It is always a mystery with this Kinew government saying one thing on one day, saying another on another. They'll say anything. They'll say anything to get elected but, unfortunately, what Manitobans are seeing time and time and time again is that they very seldom follow through. *[interjection]*

And I know that there's a member from—well, I'm not going to name their constituency. *[interjection]* Okay, it's been said, and probably the mic's picked it up, so I'll just repeat it.

The MLA for Seine River has lots to say, and I encourage the member for Seine River (MLA Cross) to stand up and put some words on the record, if she's against—I don't know, maybe she's against Bill 20. It almost seems like she is. It just doesn't make sense to me why the member for Seine River would be against Bill 20, Honourable Speaker, which would bring an Indigenous education framework to early childhood education, which we've started. Probably 80 per cent of it's done; they just got to roll it out.

But the NDP, this Education Minister, delayed it over the last year and a half. But let's get it going and we'll be seeing it go to committee, and we'll hear if there's other Manitobans that want to come and participate in their democratic right here in Manitoba, and bring forward some ideas.

So the original Manitoba, Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement was signed and facilitated, you guessed it, that's right, by the former PC government. And with that, what did that also do? And there's more work to be done, and I'm hoping that this government is—this Kinew government's doing.

But what we've already seen is that this Education Minister has lost \$84 million that the feds are not giving us because of the inaction, or maybe too much action, of this Education Minister. So that's a little sad. But, really, it's again one of those softballs that, hey, you just need to carry this across the finish line. The work has been done. Don't drop the ball.

What else did we see? The \$10-a-day child care became a reality under our PC government, saving Manitobans thousands of dollars, Honourable Speaker. And that's why this is important to make sure that in

Bill 20 an Indigenous education policy framework gets rolled out not only to the K-to-12 system, which it's already out there, but also to the early childhood education system.

And—but again, it's unfortunate, and I'm hoping that because of today's debate and other things in the past, Honourable Speaker, I'm hoping that this Education Minister takes some of the words and actions of not only us on our side of the House, but on her own side, but also the stakeholders and those partners that we work with each and every day that continue to work with us for us Manitobans, so that Manitobans can go to work.

Matter of fact, Honourable Speaker, Manitobans work because child care works. And that was definitely something that I had conversations with Jodie Kehl at the time, and she's still in that position, and they've got an incredible organization, and I know that they will stand up and advocate not only for child-care spaces but the quality and—quality of work, wages and that work-life balance for their association and their members as well.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, I look forward to seeing Bill 20 go to committee. Of course, how can we not support Bill 20, because we've done 80 per cent of the work. So we're passing this forward to committee. I appreciate, once again, the Speaker's advice in—as we move forward in the Chamber, and we're going to pass this bill to committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record. We on this side of the House support Bill 20.

The Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to debate?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 20, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Now we'll move on to Bill 20, the community child care—*[interjection]* We are indeed.

Bill 22—The Environment Amendment and Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act

The Speaker: We'll move on to Bill 22, The Environment Amendment and Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act.

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 22, The Environment Amendment and Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement et la Loi sur la réduction du volume et de la production des déchets, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table this message.

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister for Environment and Climate Change, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 22, The Environment Amendment and Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

MLA Moyes: It's my great pleasure to stand today for the second reading of Bill 22, which modernizes Manitoba's environmental laws to better protect our air, land and water for generations to come.

Bill 22 is fundamentally about ensuring we have the highest environmental standards, polluters are held accountable, communities and the public are informed when incidents occur or are likely to occur and that we modernize our processes to ensure they remain effective.

For decades, The Environment Act and The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act have served as backbones of environmental protection in our province. These laws have helped us preserve the natural beauty of Manitoba, safeguard public health and maintain our high quality of life. But times have changed and so must our approach.

Honourable Speaker, Bill 22 introduces a suite of updates that will enhance reporting and transparency so that Manitobans are informed when environmental incidents occur or are likely to occur that may impact their communities; strengthen enforcement capabilities so that those who violate environmental laws face real consequence; hold polluters accountable and deter would-be polluters; modernize the manner in which

environmental process—or, proposals and hearings are communicated to the public to increase engagement; and streamline landfill levy payments to reduce administrative burdens for landfill owners and improve government efficiency.

* (17:20)

Honourable Speaker, when it comes to environmental incidents, Manitobans deserve to know what is happening. The current system allows for far too much ambiguity, too many delays and not enough public accountability. This bill will change that.

With these amendments, when a release or imminent risk of a release occurs, proponents will be required to proactively notify not just the government, but also affected communities. In addition, these amendments add new and expanded requirements for government to notify potentially affected local authorities and the public.

The safety of Manitobans and transparency are paramount to this government. Once my department is informed of a release or risk of imminent release, we will be required to make that information available to the public on the department's existing public registry and notify the relevant local authorities in affected areas. This will include notifying Indigenous communities so that communities understand what potential impacts may occur to the residents living in their community and make informed decisions.

This bill will also strengthen enforcement capabilities under The Environment Act to ensure environment officers can hold polluters accountable by reducing the threshold of adverse effects from pollution that are required to prosecute offenders. This aligns Manitoba with best practises in environmental protection across Canada.

Honourable Speaker, public engagement is a cornerstone of responsible environmental management. This bill will modernize how notices regarding developments undergoing environmental assessment and abatement project proposals reviewed by the Clean Environment Commission are communicated to the public so that they can participate in these important processes.

While my department will continue to notify people through local newspapers, these amendments allow us greater flexibility to adopt the use of other effective communication methods, such as social media. This will ensure that our government is able to effectively engage the public using multiple platforms so that they can participate in environmental decision making.

Lastly, the bill will amend The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act to reduce the administrative burden associated with the Waste Reduction and Recycling Support Levy. Right now, over 100 landfill operators pay disposal levies to government on nearly 150 landfills across Manitoba. Reporting and remitting the levies more than once a year is an unnecessary administrative burden on municipalities and other landfill operators. This bill streamlines the process by changing the levy collection from two semi-annual payments to one annual payment.

Honourable Speaker, this bill will not only modernize our approach, but it aligns with the broader environmental commitments we made in the Throne Speech that emphasize protecting Manitoba's environment and public health. The passing of this bill is critically important to helping us meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world, hold polluters accountable and uphold the high standards of environmental protection. I look forward to the support of all members in passing this important legislation.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I'd just like to ask this minister why the former minister of Environment and Climate Change failed to immediately become aware of the catastrophic sewage leak and spill into the Red River at the Fort Garry Bridge in late 2023 and in early 2024?

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): What I will say is that we know that over two terms in government, the failed PC government did not do enough in terms of protecting the environment and doing that good work to ensure that we had clean air, land and water. And so I would remind members opposite that it's their failed record that we're trying to clean up.

Mr. Nesbitt: We'll try another one here: Can this minister explain why the former minister of Environment and Climate Change failed to ensure other key parties were notified of this serious spill, such as municipalities and Indigenous communities including Brokenhead Ojibway Nation?

MLA Moyes: One of the things that we're trying to do with this bill, unlike the previous government, is

we're actually trying to ensure that we're communicating with those communities, some of which are ones that the member opposite just referenced, like Brokenhead First Nation.

So we've heard loud and clear. We're a listening government; we're responding; we're taking action.

Mr. Nesbitt: Can the minister please explain to the House what the purpose of consolidating the current semi-annual payment of the Waste Reduction and Recycling Support Levy into one annual payment, and was that actually requested by municipalities?

MLA Moyes: What we're trying to do is reduce red tape. We want to make government as efficient as possible, and so one of the things that we did is that we actually surveyed all of the different landfill operators, and in listening to them and in hearing from them, this is what came back, and we're responding to that survey.

Mr. Nesbitt: I'm wondering if the minister can tell the House which municipal and Indigenous community officials his department consulted with when this bill was being drafted?

MLA Moyes: Well, one of the things that I will say is that this bill is—has a variety of different components to it. So there was a variety of different consultations that affected different parts. We heard loud and clear from Manitobans that we need to improve on what the past failed PC government was doing in terms of communication, in terms of updating that.

We also were hearing from legal experts that in order to ensure that we could prosecute these polluters, we needed to change some of the legislation in addition to hearing from First Nations and other communities.

Mr. Nesbitt: I—interesting, I hear the minister talking about prosecution.

I'm wondering if the minister can explain to the House exactly how this legislation would bring about stronger and more effective prosecution of offenders.

MLA Moyes: The previous act actually uses the term significant adverse effect, and what we're doing is we're removing significant because it is difficult to quantify that; that's what we heard from legal experts. It's one of the reasons why prosecution is so difficult. And this brings us aligned with other jurisdictions across Canada.

Debate

The Speaker: If there are no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): It's great to see the minister bring forward this legislation. I think that it certainly does close a few loopholes and perhaps is something that was—well, it was definitely needed after that spill in the fall of 2024.

I know on October 30, I asked—or I mentioned to the House here—asked a question, and the minister didn't give much of an answer—the former minister, I might add. The Chief Bluesky—he advised the minister during a telephone call that there was a sewage spill, and it was all coming downstream to his First Nation.

Apparently, the minister was unaware of it at the time, and I'm sure this legislation is intended to strengthen the reporting rules by the City of Winnipeg, or any entity, as a matter of fact, for when a spill occurs, so that the minister's office might be notified. And I think that, you know, not notifying downstream people when there's a spill is wrong, and I'm pleased to see this legislation will close that loophole.

Again, this is—it's good to see the NDP finally introducing some environmental legislation. I know I spoke to a number of their membership, and they wondered why there wasn't more environmental legislation coming from the party that's now in government. So it's actually good to see that the minister is taking his job seriously and has introduced Bill 22 here.

So just want to talk again about the worst sewage spill in Winnipeg in a generation. It occurred under this government's watch, when 230 million litres of untreated waste water flowed from malfunctioning pipes into the Red River at the Fort Garry Bridge between November 2023 and February 2024.

Now, that's one thing. I mean, a malfunctioning pipe—it spills. But apparently, the minister's office wasn't notified about this. So the minister didn't know; the minister didn't tell the First Nations downstream. It was a total communication botch-up, and let's hope this legislation fixes that.

The quantity of sewage that went into the Red River would fill 90 Olympic-sized swimming pools. That kind of puts it into perspective of how much sewage flew—went into the Red River and then into Lake Winnipeg, which we know has a high phosphorus load to start with.

* (17:30)

And coincidentally, this was the second largest sewer spill since September 2002, when 427 million litres of untreated sewage went into the Red River. And which government was in power then? The NDP. Two spills under their watch for the environmental party.

So, again, I think the notification is very important to affected municipalities and Indigenous communities, and Manitobans need to know of any releases of pollutants, waste water, anything into our water sources here. As the members all know, water sources are used for drinking water in some cases. That water is fished in, all sorts of things like that.

So again, I commend the minister for bringing this legislation forward. I think it's certainly something, and I think on our side of the House, we want to take a bit of credit. We brought it to the attention of the House at the time, what was happening, and coincidentally legislation developed pretty quickly after that. So I'm happy that the government has seen fit to move this bill forward, and on this side of the House we don't intend to stand in its way.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Seeing no other speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 22, The Environment Amendment and Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 33—The Public Health Amendment Act

The Speaker: As previously mentioned, we will now move on to second reading of Bill 33, The Public Health Amendment Act.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation that Bill 33, The Public Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé publique, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: Under The Public Health Act, a person who fails to comply with a communicable disease order issued by a medical officer of health can

be detained if it is determined that the person poses a risk to the health of others and must obtain medical treatment for the disease to ensure public health is protected.

The proposed amendments ensure that persons who require treatment for an infectious disease receive treatments in a health-care facility and not a correctional facility. In Manitoba, a court order to detain a person in custody may be made by the justice of the peace. This is not in alignment with other jurisdictions, where a judge of the Provincial Court makes such orders and will ensure that individual rights are properly considered and protected.

These amendments will ensure that the order to receive medical treatment will be made by a judge of the Provincial Court instead of a justice of the peace. The amendments will also allow the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council to prescribe by regulation a facility or type of facility where a person may be admitted for treatment.

Honourable Speaker, this is a really important piece of legislation. This was a historical practice for many years, including under the previous government, that did harm to particular folks who were not treated for health-care concerns in health-care facilities. We're bringing forward this legislation to address that concern moving forward.

When it was brought to our attention as government, we took immediate steps to ensure that policies moved us in that direction; but this legislation will ensure that by law those practices that were historically inappropriate in terms of a health-care approach remain in the past and that we move forward, taking a health-care approach for health-care issues.

Thank you.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I wasn't going to get political with this bill, because I thought we were all on the same page, but the minister felt the need to get political in their opening comments, so I will just ask why past cases, such as Geraldine Mason's, which all occurred under NDP governments, resulted in incarceration rather than medical treatment in an appropriate facility.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): That's a really important question, and I think it's important to talk about that particular situation.

Geraldine Mason should have received care in a health-care facility, which is why our government is bringing this legislation and these really important amendments forward.

As I stated, it was a historical practice, long—a long-standing practice for many years that our government recognizes disproportionately impacted Indigenous peoples in Manitoba. For folks who maybe know the history of TB sanitoriums, the history of incarcerating folks who receive health care, we should all want to move in a direction where that is no longer the practice. And, again, that is something that no longer disproportionately affects any demographic of people.

And so our government, when this was brought to our attention, we made the—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: How will the government ensure that individuals detained under The Public Health Act receive adequate medical care and a legal representation?

MLA Asagwara: One of the most important pieces of this legislation is ensuring that it is a judge of the Provincial Court who makes the determination as to whether or not a person will be held in a health-care facility to receive that care. Making sure that correctional facilities are no longer prescribed in legislation will, quite frankly, make it very difficult, if not impossible, for a judiciary to make that decision. We're going to be prescribing the appropriate health-care facility by way of regulations.

This legislation is a really important first step in making sure that that's articulated the way it needs to be so that it's health-care driven approach.

Mrs. Cook: Can the minister explain the rationale behind shifting detention-order authority from a justice of the peace to a Provincial Court judge, and how they will ensure this change doesn't result in unnecessary delays?

MLA Asagwara: The change to the Provincial Court judge ensures that the fundamental rights of the person are being prioritized and are being—that the decision making is being scrutinized at the highest level in the provincial courts.

The process does allow for folks to get access to that process, whether it's via phone or a teleconference of some kind. So making sure that there are accessible ways that folks can go through that process is key and is part of this process fundamentally; also, not getting in the way of folks getting that immediate health care, should they need it.

Mrs. Cook: Can the minister elaborate on how the approach set out in this legislation compares to best practices in other Canadian jurisdictions?

MLA Asagwara: Certainly making the decision and the change to go from the justice of the peace approach to the Provincial Court judge is a fundamental piece that we see other jurisdictions have implemented prior in terms of, again, making sure that someone's fundamental rights are being at the heart of that decision and scrutinized appropriately.

So that's a really big part of that. The process definitely prioritizes this being a health-care approach, which is really crucial. It is a health-care issue; it's a health-care concern and should be treated as such. So the process really strengthens and errs on the side of caution in terms of adhering to and protecting fundamental rights.

Mrs. Cook: Can the minister tell us what types of facilities will be designated in the regulations under this legislation?

MLA Asagwara: It'll be specifically health-care facilities, so we know definitively that we should not be incarcerating people to get their health-care needs met. So we're removing the—you know, the list of correctional facilities that previously folks had the option of accessing, and we're going to be prescribing, by way of regulation, health-care facilities.

And we're doing that in conjunction with Indigenous governments and groups who have made very clear that this needs to be done in partnership, and we wholeheartedly agree it should be done in collaboration.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): And I'm pleased to rise and put a few words on the record today with respect to Bill 33, The Public Health Amendment Act.

* (17:40)

I think all of us in this House were likely shocked and dismayed in the fall of 2024 when we learned that an individual with tuberculosis had been jailed in

Manitoba. I think we all agree that that's absolutely not an appropriate response. Tuberculosis, no doubt, presents a very real public health threat; however, jail is not an appropriate place to be putting anyone suffering with a communicable disease who has done nothing wrong.

Similar cases of tuberculosis patients being jailed in Manitoba date back to 2008 and 2011. And I—this most recent one was particularly troubling. Despite having no prior criminal charges, she was arrested on October 27 and remained incarcerated until her lawyer secured her release on November 28. Without legal intervention she would have remained imprisoned until January 27, which is horrifying. It's actually the stuff that nightmares are made of, the idea that anyone could be thrown into prison, having done nothing wrong.

And this bill aims to fix that, and for that reason we on this side of the House are not going to stand in its way, and I have no further comments to put on the record with respect to this bill.

The Speaker: Seeing no further speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 33, The Public Health Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 41—The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) Amendment Act

The Speaker: We will now move on to Bill 41, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) Amendment Act.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I move, seconded by the Minister of—I apologize; I misspoke, Honourable Speaker.

I move, seconded by the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak, that Bill 41, The Reporting of Supports for Child—oh. Apologies, apologies. I apologize again, Honourable Speaker. I'm going to read you that, if that's okay.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 41, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) Amendment Act, be now read for a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

The Speaker: Now I must apologize because—*[interjection]*—Education.

It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt), that Bill 41, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) Amendment Act, be now read for a second time and be referred to committee of this House.

The honourable minister of—*[interjection]* A moment while the clerks research something for us. We'll get it right yet.

MLA Asagwara: I move, seconded by the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak, that Bill 41, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, seconded by the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin), that Bill 41, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

MLA Asagwara: The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act was introduced as a private member's bill. The act was intended to reflect, monitor and report on service volumes and supports for pediatric sexual assault survivors who require specialized medical care.

The act requires reporting on the inventory of sexual assault evidence kits. This reporting mechanism, however, does not reflect the number of services actually provided. These kits are not customarily stocked by health-care facilities, and most often the exam is conducted using existing medical supplies. That is due to the lack of supplies, but it's also, Honourable Speaker, important to note that it's due to the way that this care is provided by the experts who provide it. They deem and determine what is the most appro-

priate approach, and in often cases that means not actually using those particular kits.

This amendment removes the requirement to report on the number of kits and replaces it with reporting on the actual number of children receiving sexual assault care, which is a far greater representation of the actual services provided and children affected by sexual assault and who need this care.

Additionally, the act currently does not provide a specific definition of children. The proposed amendments will define children as individuals under 15 years of age for the purposes of the act. This is in alignment with clinical guidelines for this type of care.

The title of the act is changed to The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act (Trained Health Professionals and Patient Assessments). These proposed amendments will ensure there is appropriate and accurate reporting that aligns with clinical programs and the act's intent.

I would like to take a moment, Honourable Speaker, to recognize the member from The Pas-Kameesak for her work and her dedication in creating this important bill, and I want to thank her for her tireless efforts to protect children, not only in the North, but certainly across the entirety of Manitoba.

I also want to take a moment to thank all of the front-line health-care providers, the sexual assault nurse examiners, the peer support workers, the cultural care providers, the physicians, all of the folks in Manitoba who advocated for years for us to take steps to enhance this type of care, and who continue to advocate for children to get the care that they need. These folks provide life-saving care to children and their families in communities every day, and we cannot thank them enough for the work that they do, and for working with our government to make sure that we're bringing legislation forward that meets the needs of children, families, communities and providers.

Thank you.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Can the minister explain why the reporting threshold is set at 15 years of age, and what data supports that decision?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): That decision of 15 years of

age is the clinical decision, so we came to understand and learn from meeting with the experts in the province who provide this care, that clinically, the way they define children in terms of the examinations was not aligned with the previous legislation, which identified children as 18 years old and younger.

So this change aligns the clinical practices with the legislation; or rather, aligns the legislation with clinical practices to make sure there's consistency and that the data being reported accurately reflects what's actually going on in our health-care services.

Mrs. Cook: Will data regarding sexual assaults for youth between the ages of 15 and 18 be tracked anywhere following this legislation being enacted?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, that's a really important question. Our department is working with the Department of Families to develop more of a comprehensive approach in terms of how that data is tracked, how it's reported and how we're using that data to inform how we provide care in this province.

It is really important for us to all reflect on the fact that incidents of sexual violence are significantly under-reported. Part of the way we do this work is to make sure that as many people as possible have access to care. That's why this legislation is so important. It emphasizes care in the North, which has been lacking. So our government is trying to close those gaps, make sure that we not only provide more care, but accurately represent who's being affected across Manitoba.

* (17:50)

Mrs. Cook: The original iteration of this bill saw value in tracking the inventory and use of sexual assault evidence kits.

Will the government still be tracking the availability of these kits through any of its systems once this legislation is passed?

MLA Asagwara: We will. We understood it to be very important. The providers made it very clear to us that the evidence kits, while useful and important for survivors of a particular age, when it comes to pediatric care they're often not used because they're not appropriate to use.

We took that very seriously and recognized that we want to make sure that we're bringing forward legislation that accurately captures, you know, what exams are being done and where we need to do better to ensure that more youth are getting connected to the care that they need.

So we're going to consolidate as much information as we can, track as much information as we can, but we need to do that accurately, which is why we've made that change to the legislation.

Mrs. Cook: Can the minister elaborate on which child advocacy groups or health-care providers they've consulted with regarding these changes?

MLA Asagwara: We've met with many survivors. We've met and we've consulted with sexual assault nurse examiners who are nurses. We've met and consulted with the lead for women's health and pediatric health in the province. There's two separate leads, Dr. Poliquin and Dr. Birk. We've also met with physicians who run the Child Protection Centre.

We've also consulted with folks outside of Manitoba to get their expertise as well, as there's more enhanced care that's been previously done in other jurisdictions like Ontario. And we're going to continue this conversation and continue the consultation work to make sure that this is an evolving area of practice that protects survivors and their families.

Mrs. Cook: Will the tracking of the number of children who are treated under this legislation include where geographically in the province they were treated and also which organization they visited to get the treatment that they needed?

MLA Asagwara: The information regarding the number of children who are provided this care will be tracked. It's part of the reporting process. There are specific sites, locations, where folks have the adequately appropriate training to be able to provide this very specific comprehensive and sensitive pediatric care.

Our government has taken steps, I'm happy to share with the House, to make sure that there are more nurses who are trained, SANE P, we call it, pediatric care, across Manitoba, who are getting that designation. SANE A is for adults, but we're making sure that people across the province have access to that training.

We have a number of folks who are now trained in the North where previously they were not, and rural Manitoba as well, with many more folks wanting to take that training so they can provide care to Manitobans and their families.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'm pleased to rise and put just a few words on the record regarding

Bill 41. I, too, just want to commend the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) for her dedication to this issue and her advocacy for this issue throughout her time in this Chamber.

And it's a little bit unusual for a government to be amending its own private members' legislation. So that does give rise to a few questions, some of which I asked during the question period and I don't know that I necessarily got all of the answers that I was hoping for. But I think it's important that we move this bill forward to committee so that we can hopefully hear more, perhaps from experts and advocates who are close to this issue and who know more about it than any of us do here in the House.

And, of course, the most important issue that this bill and any policy around it seek to address is the ability of sexual assault survivors to access the care that they need as quickly as possible and as close to home as possible. And I know that the original bill that this legislation seeks to amend was an attempt to help facilitate that.

I think my only real concern about the legislation is the idea that youth between the ages of 15 and 18 won't be included. I'm not sure that I fully understand the rationale for that decision.

So perhaps that's a conversation the minister and I need to have just to get a little bit more clarity around that because I think statistically there are a significant number of sexual assault survivors in that age group, and I think it's important that we're tracking and reporting on that information as well, so that they are not forgotten.

And with that, I think it's important that we move this bill forward to committee.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Seeing no further speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 41, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 7—The Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act

The Speaker: We will now resume debate on second reading of Bill 7, the human tissue amendment act, and it stands in question period—has 14 minutes remaining.

Questions

The Speaker: So as per usual, the questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Can the minister tell the House who they consulted with in the development of this bill?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): The recommendations come from the Manitoba Law Reform Commission, who did a lot of work on this particular issue. There are two big entities that were consulted: the Tissue Bank Manitoba and Transplant Manitoba, which are really the two largest proponents that you would need to consult with in order to bring amendments like this forward in this legislation.

Those folks do tremendous work. I want to thank them for all of their work in this space. This is a really, really vital area of health care and services—really life-saving work that they do. So I can't thank them enough for not only their contributions to making sure we advance legislation that's overdue, but also the work they do every day for Manitobans.

Mrs. Cook: So one of the things that I learned when this bill was introduced is that individuals can actually donate birth tissue; they can donate placenta, umbilical cords and amniotic fluid. And I did a little bit of research about what they're used for, and it's actually incredible. What a time to be alive.

So I just wonder if the minister is aware of how far in advance individuals have to register in order to donate birth tissue.

MLA Asagwara: Yes, that's a really good question. It's a really important question. I mean, that's a decision that folks have to make for themselves. They can—I think a lot of folks, you know, have that conversation either with—if they're having that process—that journey in terms of pregnancy themselves, or with a partner or family or friends or whoever, their physician, their nurse practitioner, their midwife. That's a conversation folks have and make that decision at whatever stage of their journey they think is best.

I know lots of folks are thinking about that well in advance. There are folks who've been affected by having access to those kinds of tissues and probably make a determination well in advance of being in a place to do so, because they see the benefits of it.

But, you know, becoming someone who donates tissue is really easy. You can go online and then make that decision. I encourage folks to do it, because when you do it—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: Can the minister tell us which human gift tissue agencies will be included under this legislation?

MLA Asagwara: The two primary agencies are the Tissue Bank Manitoba and the Transplant Manitoba. They're the folks that really do the bulk of this work.

There's also a couple of organ donation programs I want to highlight: the Gift of Life, a deceased donor program, and the living kidney donor program. Those are transplant programs—care programs for potential donors in preparation of organ donation, either here in Manitoba or across the country.

Again, organizations doing really important work: educating, creating awareness, having those really important conversations so that folks feel really comfortable with their decision making around that.

Debate

The Speaker: If there are no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

* (18:00)

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Honourable Speaker, very pleased to put a few words on the record with respect to this bill, which updates the list of human tissue gift agencies and updates the act to ensure the act applies to birth tissue that can be donated. And we all know how important organ and tissue donation is.

We just recognized Green Shirt Day last week, a day that honours the legacy of Logan Boulet, a young hockey player who selflessly gave the gift of life through organ donation following the tragic Humboldt Broncos bus crash in 2018. And we were acknowledging what is now known as the Logan Boulet effect, which was a surge in Canadians registering as organ donors in his memory. It's estimated that almost 150,000 people registered to become organ donors in the days and weeks that followed, which, to date,

remains the largest number of Canadians registering to become organ donors in our country's history.

So organ donation has a fairly high profile, but tissue donation sort of flies under the radar. While organ donation is undoubtedly life saving, tissue donation is life enhancing, for sure, for many individuals. One donor can save up to eight lives with organ donation and improve the lives of 75 more through tissue donation. And, of course, tissue donation in many cases has the added benefit of you can be a live donor in a lot of cases for tissue donation.

Some of the examples of tissues that can be donated and have tissue transplant help and heal: corneas, donated corneas help to restore vision; heart valves, donated heart valves can replace an infant's defective valves; donated skin for severely burned patients; bone grafts can save a limb that might otherwise be amputated; and birth tissue, such as placentas and umbilical cords, can aid in healing wounds. And as we've already discussed, the updates to the legislation proposed today will add placentas, amniotic fluid and umbilical cords to the list of tissues included in the act.

So just as with organ donation, people who are interested in tissue donation can sign up to donate at signupforlife.ca. I think it's important that all of us in this Assembly spread the word about that with our constituents and everyone that we chat with because it's—it really is an issue of awareness. A very high percentage of Canadians support organ and tissue donation in theory; a much smaller percentage have actually registered their intent.

And in Manitoba, tissue donations are managed by Tissue Bank Manitoba, which is co-ordinated through Shared Health. But that wasn't always the case. And it's my understanding that that is one of the reasons the act needs to be updated. Tissue Bank Manitoba merged with the Misericordia Eye Bank back in 2021, and for decades in Manitoba, the Lions' Eye Bank used to co-ordinate donations of eye tissue; that's no longer the case in Manitoba.

And Tissue Bank Manitoba, just to give them a shout-out, is actually an award-winning entity, recognized by MTF Biologics, one of the largest tissue banks in the world. They won the Emerald Award of Excellence in 2020 for the second time in four years. The organization also received four best-practice awards for its quality of work involving the recovery of life-saving and enhancing tissues.

So I would just like to thank everyone at Tissue Bank Manitoba for all of their work and the impact that they're having on the lives of Manitobans, and, of course, I'd like to thank all organ and tissue donors in Manitoba and thank the families of those who've donated organs and tissue for their—for the gift of life.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Seeing no other speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 7, The Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

The hour being past 5 o'clock, I declare the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

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