

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
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
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
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
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	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	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	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	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
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 4, 2023

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

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

Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**The Speaker:** Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Canada

**Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East):** Honourable Speaker, today I'd like to recognize some phenomenal members of my community, the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Canada.

I have had the pleasure of visiting with them several times the last few weeks, most recently at the St. Anne Ukrainian Catholic Parish for a good old-fashioned perogy supper. I am thankful to all the volunteers for putting on the event and welcoming me. I look forward to our ongoing conversations about how we can work together to better serve our neighbourhood.

St. Anne Parish was also the original home to the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Canada's English as a second language school to help Ukrainian

newcomers. What started out in a church basement with three classes this spring has exploded. The program quickly outgrew the basement space and now runs six classes at my old junior high, Chief Peguis school. These incredible volunteers are teaching 150 Ukrainian newcomers and another 50 are on the wait-list for the program.

The need for newcomer programming like English as a second language is so high—the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Canada initiative grew without any promotion and is entirely supported with community-based funding.

On Saturdays, attendance often dips, as many students visit food banks and cannot attend class. As we welcome more newcomers to Manitoba, like the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League students, the community needs our support now more than ever.

I'd like to commend the organizers of this great program who have joined us today in the gallery. I encourage everyone to stand and show our appreciation for the essential work they do for Ukrainian newcomers. It makes me optimistic for the future of our community with such strong and thoughtful women leading grassroots initiatives like this one.

Thank you.

#### Inclusion Selkirk

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** Honourable Speaker, it's with extreme honour that I rise today to relay my enduring support and respect for Inclusion Selkirk and the amazing people that make this organization the success that it is.

Inclusion Selkirk exists to walk alongside individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families on life's journey. Their ultimate vision is an inclusive community. Their values are inclusion, trust, commitment and living your best life.

Started in 1956, they are now one of the largest non-profit agencies in the Interlake-Eastman region. They now support 125 individuals and employ approximately 150 people. They provide shared homes, independent living suites, respite suites, crisis suites and commercial suites.

If you're looking for a truly unique gift for that special someone, visit Wishme in Selkirk. You will not be disappointed. The organization is currently looking forward to starting its next project, developing a fully accessible four-storey, mixed-use building, and with the generous donation from the Gaynor family, that start date is getting closer to reality.

If you ever have the opportunity to attend one of their socials, jump at the chance. It'll warm your heart to see what true enjoyment looks like. You will see patrons waiting to get in before the doors open and dancing from the moment the music starts till the power goes off.

I would like to acknowledge their president, Richard Hodges, and the following heroes that are here today: Maria Freeman, Merilee Mollard, Charles Birch, Jessica Croy and the countless others who make such a difference in our community.

Please join me to acknowledge the important work that they do.

### Daniel "Danny" Schur

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** Today I'd like to acknowledge the passing of Daniel "Danny" Schur.

Danny passed away in April at the young age of 56. Danny was a passionate storyteller who enjoyed combining both history and music in his work. His legacy is inspiring. His success shows how young folks from small town of Manitoba can pursue their dreams.

Danny grew up on a family farm in the Ethelbert area, just northwest of Dauphin. Danny was quite involved with music at a young age. He took piano lessons and singing in his community choir church. He later attended the school of music at the University of Manitoba, and Danny was a composer, a producer and a manager based in Winnipeg. He was best known for his third musical rehearsal called the—Strike! that told the story of Ukrainian immigrants who was killed in 1919 during the Winnipeg General Strike.

\*(13:40)

After a 10-year effort, the musical Strike! was later adopted to a film called the—Stand! The movie was filmed in Winnipeg and premiered in the late 2019 at the Toronto film festival. Stand! became the No. 1 Canadian movie in the box office that year.

I'd like to extend my gratitude for Danny's family—to Danny's dedication to the Manitoba

history and the stories he told. I want to express my heartfelt condolences to Danny's family, friends and colleagues. Danny carried a love for his Ukrainian heritage and he left a remarkable legacy and he will be missed. Thank you.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge some family members who are in attendance today: his wife, Juliane Schaible; his son, Stefan; brother, Willard Schur; sister-in-law, Joyce; and nephew, Kevin Schur, in the gallery today.

So I'd ask for everyone please rise and show our appreciation to the family.

### Mike Muzylowski

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** A man who left the family farm near Oakburn, Manitoba in the early 1950s was honoured by both the City of Flin Flon and Callinex Mines earlier this fall.

Mike Muzylowski, who is now in his 80s, was recognized with a statue bearing his likeness in Pioneer Square in the northern Manitoba community, in recognition of his more than a half-a-century contribution to the mining industry.

The gifted geologist and mine finder, innovative financier, respected senior mining executive was instrumental in the discovery and development of 16 mineral deposits that became producing mines—13 in Manitoba, two in Nevada and one in the Northwest Territories.

In northern Manitoba, Muzylowski is perhaps best known as the founder of the Trout Lake mine, one of the Flin Flon region's longest running, most profitable mines.

Muzylowski, who signed up for a geology course at the University of Manitoba without knowing what geology was, obtained a bachelor of science degree in 1955 and joined Hudson Bay Exploration and Development Company as a field geologist before advancing into more senior roles. Several of his drill targets became producers for HudBay, notably the Anderson Lake mine in Snow Lake and the Centennial mine near Flin Flon.

In 1984, he accepted the position of president and CEO of Granges Exploration Ltd. and grew the company from \$4 million to \$65 million in sales until it was acquired by Australian mining giant, MIM, in 1989.

The 2011 inductee into the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame may have started his journey by accident, but

this small-town man's stellar achievements, both under and above ground truly showcase that he had a significant and lasting impact on Canada's mining industry.

Honourable Speaker, as a resident of Flin Flon, I know you will want to check out the plaque detailing Mr. Muzylowski's remarkable life story and career accomplishments that will be added to the statue at a later date.

Thank you.

### Hudson Lylyk

**Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Honourable Speaker, today I want to bring attention to a remarkable young person from the Transcona area, Hudson Lylyk.

Five-year-old Hudson decided to fundraise for a needed cause. At École Margaret-Underhill, he was inspired by national and Transcona hero, Terry Fox, when they talked about him in his kindergarten class.

Hudson started a fundraiser supporting Koats for Kids, generating more than \$1,800 worth of donations for children in need. Initially, he surprised his parents by wanting to buy—or wanting to put his \$5 weekly allowance towards helping uninsured Americans pay for their medical expenses.

While his heart was in the right place, his parents focused his passion on something a little more manageable, so they decided to raise funds to donate 10 snowsuits to Koats for Kids.

United Way's annual Koats for Kids initiative started in 1989 and annually provides around 6,000 winter coats and clothing for children in need. Hudson isn't one to do things in half measures and so ensured each child received the full winter getup of coats, boots, ski pants, toques and mittens.

As we all know, Manitoba's winters can be somewhat harsh and not everyone has access to warmer clothing. With the help of his family, Hudson was able to reach and surpass his goal. His mother, Bria, was instrumental in the effort, as she is a professional photographer, and offered a pay-what-you-can photography session for contributors supporting the fundraiser.

Hudson and his family inspire us all to be generous with our energy, generous with our resources and generous with our time. Hudson's kindness reminds us all that no idea or passion is too small to make an impact.

I want to take a moment to thank Hudson and his family, who join us in the gallery today, for their compassion, their empathy, their effort.

And thank you again.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Before we proceed to oral questions, I'd like to introduce some guests in the gallery today.

We have seated in the public gallery, from Garden City Collegiate, 50 grade 9 students under the direction of Lia Baffour-Awuah. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan).

Welcome.

I would also like to draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Molly Toews, from Kildonan-River East, who is in the Legislative Building for the first time and is a guest of the honourable member for Kildonan-River East.

On behalf of all members, we welcome you.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Fuel Tax Amendment Act Impact on Grocery Prices

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Honourable Speaker, last week the NDP were critical of our suggestions to amend the gas tax holiday to ensure that farmers and others were included.

They tried to shut down the House. They were upset that we sat late in committee. The Premier even came here and mocked the suggestions in question period.

Then quietly last week, his Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) actually did the right thing and accepted all of the recommendations that we brought forward with amendments. And I want to commend our PC team for ensuring that farmers and others are included in the bill.

But now that we have clarity on that, Honourable Speaker, can the Premier please explain how he intends to crack down on family-run grocery stores and corner stores as he said he would if the prices don't meet his expectations on January 1?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I wanted to join in the congratulations of our excellent Finance Minister, who is delivering real results for people starting on January 1.

I want to encourage the member for Steinbach to do his homework and review the comments that were made, which is that it's the large grocery chains that we expect to step up and deliver savings. We are big supporters of local small businesses here in the province.

I do want to, however, ask: Where is this legal opinion that his leader has been talking about for months about the carbon tax here in Canada? We've been in government, we've been looking all over for it. We look in this compartment, it's not there; it's the Dunsky report that recommends a carbon tax.

We look in this cupboard. Oh, it's not there; it's the original VIRGO report that recommended a supervised consumption site. But where is this PC legal opinion? We can't seem to find it anywhere.

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

**Mr. Goertzen:** It's interesting that the Premier would use his first response to defend the carbon tax. He never misses an opportunity to defend Trudeau and the carbon tax.

But he does miss an opportunity to defend businesspeople right here in the province of Manitoba. Grocery stores, whether they are small and large, are dealing with issues of labour shortage. They're dealing with issues of retail crime, things that the government won't deal with.

But the Premier said—and maybe he was shooting from the lip—said that he was going to crack down on grocery stores and threaten them if they didn't reduce the prices. But what he didn't say is what his expectations are of prices to drop for products that are largely manufactured or produced—grown—outside of the province of Manitoba.

Can he tell us, what are the expectations for prices on January 1 and how is he going to enforce it?

\* (13:50)

**Mr. Kinew:** So far we have seen from the PCs' criticism of our move to cut taxes, and now they're criticizing us for trying to save people money at the grocery store. The only piece of policy that the PCs are consistent on is trying to make life in Manitoba less affordable.

They did it in government, and now they keep banging the table in this direction during their newfound roles in opposition.

But I'll return, there is an important public policy question. The PCs went to the people of Manitoba and said that they had a legal opinion about the carbon tax. We simply want to know where it is so that we can have an informed participation in this important debate on affordability.

**The Speaker:** Honourable member for Steinbach, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Goertzen:** We understand the long-term love affair that the Premier's had with the carbon tax. He's had it for many, many years and he said he was going to go to Ottawa, negotiate a carbon tax in Manitoba.

But what he should understand is that when he says something in the Premier's office, that actually has consequences. And he threatened businesses. He said he was going to go after businesses on January 1st if food items that are largely produced outside of Manitobans—don't see the price go down.

We're just asking him to explain: what is his expectation? How is it going to be monitored? How is it going to be enforced? Or was he just making it up as he went along, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, we are going to monitor grocery prices in the new year. The large grocery chains have said that transportation costs are why they're charging more to consumers, even as they post record profits.

So, unlike the PCs, we're going to keep an eye on the situation and then take action to save you money.

We weren't able to find a PC legal opinion on the carbon tax so we went ahead and asked for one. And actually, the findings were quite surprising. It turns out that the PC position is unlawful. And I quote: It would not be lawful for a provincial government to direct fuel distributors not to remit the carbon charge contrary to provisions of the federal act. End quote.

I'll table this for the benefit of the members opposite. I want to know if they plan to rescind their private member's resolution for tomorrow morning in light of the facts.

#### **Surgical and Diagnostic Services Wait Times Data Removed from Website**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** The first thing this NDP government did in health care was cut the surgical and diagnostic task force, because getting Manitobans the quickest care available didn't line up with their ideology and the wishes of their friends in the Manitoba Health Coalition.

In the days that followed, the NDP government deleted wait times data from the government website. After being publicly called out by the media, the NDP put it back up.

There was a real lack of clarity on this issue last week, so I just want to ask the Minister of Health: Why did their government remove the wait times data from the website?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I want to take the opportunity to thank our Minister of Health for the important and swift action that they have taken since taking office.

We have already added more beds to the Grace Hospital. We've already put in a plan to move that expansion beyond that. We've added more surgical slates here in the province.

One thing that we won't do, one thing that we recognize is causing great frustration for the nurses and physicians who work on the front lines, is to continue building up the upper echelons of the health-care bureaucracy as the PCs did throughout their time in office.

We are taking quick steps to reduce the bureaucracy and restore decision making to where it belongs, at the front lines.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** Honourable Speaker, last week the minister's spokesperson told the media the decision to delete the wait times data was intentional. I'll table the quote from the spokesperson: The dashboard as it existed was not very user-friendly or helpful.

Then on Friday the Premier said it was just a whoopsie. It can't be both.

My question to the minister is: Which is it?

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Our government has taken quick action to ensure that there will be more surgeries conducted here in Manitoba to serve the people of this great province.

Contract that—contrast that with the folks on the other side who want to contract out and create more opportunity for Americans to make money, even as Manitobans have to travel further and further, not just to address surgeries, but also to access emergency care.

Their time in office was characterized by cuts and closures. Already, our time in office—because of our Minister of Health and the rest of this strong team—has been characterized by swift action to give you what matters most: health care in the province of Manitoba.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member from Roblin, on a final supplementary question.

**Mrs. Cook:** Honourable Speaker, nothing the NDP have announced since taking office will do anything to build surgical capacity in Manitoba. Nothing they've announced will lower wait times.

Will they just admit that the reason they tried to delete the data is because wait times are actually going to go up? They've prioritized their ideology over the needs of Manitoba patients. They cut the task force without first ensuring we had the capacity here in Manitoba.

Will they admit that the reason they cut—they deleted the data is because wait times are going to go up?

**Mr. Kinew:** There are many important steps that we are taking to reduce the wait times in emergency rooms, as well as to ensure that people can get their surgeries more quickly.

Now, one of the things that no one in Manitoba has ever understood about the PC plan for health care is, how does driving further get you seen quicker? That's why wait times continued to increase month over month, year over year, throughout their time in office.

Also, when you cut the health-care staff that you rely on to deliver services, as the PCs did, that helps to create and exacerbate a health-care human resource crisis.

Our team is taking swift action to repair the damage caused by two terms of PC cuts. Our Health Minister has made many important announcements to improve the flow for patients in the hospital, to add slates for surgical centres. All of that is being invested right here in the province of Manitoba where you access health care.

#### **Residential and Rental Construction Removal of PST on New Units**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** Honourable Speaker, Manitoba is in the midst of a housing shortage, with many seniors, students and young families struggling to find affordable housing.

This NDP government made a commitment to Manitobans to address this need, yet so far, we've heard nothing.

The federal government has already introduced legislation in Parliament to remove the GST with Bill C-56.

Can the minister confirm that her government will remove the PST from new residential construction, as promised?

**Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness):** I want to thank the member for that question.

Well, I want to tell the member, when I was elected to this position, I inherited a list of social housing that was set to be sold off by this previous government. And we stopped those units from being sold off because we believe that Manitobans should be able to be housed in this province, something that this government did not believe in.

I would drive out of this Legislature every day and see people in the bus shacks every day. And I'd be in this House chastising this government, saying, what are you doing about this? And while they were selling off social housing, giving social housing away, because they didn't believe that people—

**The Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a supplementary question.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, according to a CMHC report from earlier this year, across Canada, the rental vacancy rate reached its lowest level in—since 2001 at just 1.9 per cent.

With rising interest rates and grocery prices, Manitobans are desperate for affordable housing options.

So, I ask with—the minister again, can we—can she share with the House: When will her government fulfill their promise and remove the PST from new rental construction?

**The Speaker:** The honourable minister of—sorry, now I've lost it. The honourable Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

**Ms. Smith:** I can tell you what our government is doing. We are taking a whole-of-government approach.

We are actually working with municipalities, with the federal government, with front-line workers and,

actually, with the very people who are actually experiencing homelessness, who are giving us their lived experiencing—experience and telling us exactly what they need, something that this government didn't do.

\* (14:00)

They ignored the issues. They ignored the very people who were experiencing homelessness. They would walk out of this building every day.

We are taking an approach where we are working with folks, getting them housed and asking and figuring out what supports they need. Whether it's mental health, whether it's addictions, whether—you know. We believe in a safe supportive—

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

The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a final supplementary question.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Affordable housing options make up only 4 per cent of the rental property in Winnipeg. A gas tax holiday does not increase the affordable housing stock.

The NDP-Liberal coalition in Ottawa have already introduced Bill C-56 in the House to remove GST from new rental construction. Other provincial jurisdictions have already followed suit and committed to removing their PST.

Can the minister tell us by what day Manitobans can expect the PST to be removed from the new rental construction?

**Ms. Smith:** Well, what I can tell the member is that we will end chronic homelessness in this province in two terms. What I can tell the member is that we will open a supervised consumption site in this province in two terms, something that this government never did.

We will also take a whole-of-government approach, something that this government never did. And we will also listen to Manitobans, something that this government never did.

### Seniors and Long-Term Care Budget Increase Inquiry

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** Honourable Speaker, the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care was created with an initial budget of \$54 million, an increase to over \$93 million—a 72 per cent increase. By amalgamating Seniors and Long-Term Care into the Department of Health, the money once



directed towards seniors programs will disappear into the overall Health budget.

Honourable Speaker, will this government state unequivocally that the budget for Seniors and Long-Term Care will increase in the next provincial budget and will always remain distinct from general Health spending?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Honourable Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to talk about the previous government's record in terms of how they failed to approach seniors in this province in a respectful, dignified and comprehensive manner.

The member opposite stands up and talks about what his government did or didn't do, but what he doesn't want to talk about is the negative impact that his decision making—previous government's decision making had on seniors across our province.

On this side of the House, we're taking an approach that puts seniors and Manitobans first, that works in collaboration with them and strengthens health care across our province. We won't take the failed approach of the previous government.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli, on a supplementary question.

#### **Seniors Hearing Aid Program Program Expansion Inquiry**

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** Honourable Speaker, one of the critical programs that Seniors and Long-Term Care—that was a distinct department, I might add—initiated was the Manitoba Seniors Hearing Aid Program: \$12.6 million put directly towards solving a problem that affects thousands of Manitoban seniors. The response was unprecedented; a seemingly simple measure like this immediately improved the quality of lives of thousands of Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, will this government continue to expand the Manitoba Seniors Hearing Aid Program?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Honourable Speaker, our government is committed to enhancing programs and services for seniors in a multitude of ways that will improve the outcomes for seniors across our province, and that includes ensuring that we're investing in staffing capacity across the province.

Now, something that's important to note is that under the previous government, they fired health-care workers across the system, not just nurses—recreational workers, spiritual-care workers, physicians, health-care experts, rather, that provided direct care and consultative services to seniors who need them—all cut, minimized, under the previous government.

We're not taking that approach.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member from Interlake-Gimli, on a final supplementary question.

#### **Self- and Family-Managed Home Care Government Funding Inquiry**

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** So, I hear that that's going to be cut.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans know what's best for themselves and their families when it comes to their care. Self- and family-managed home care allows individuals and families to make their own decisions on how they want to be cared for. In the '22-23 budget, the self- and family-managed home care received an additional \$12.6 million, followed by another \$1.3-million increase in '23-24 budget.

Honourable Speaker, will this government give our seniors the choice to determine their own care by continuing to increase funding to the self- and family-managed care home program?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Honourable Speaker, I'm old enough to remember when the previous government froze the wages of the home-care workers that seniors depend on to deliver those services. They froze those home-care workers' wages for so long that we lost those skilled health-care providers from our health-care system permanently.

Members on that side of the House have no concept of the damage they have done to our health-care system that our government is committed to cleaning up, fixing and strengthening for the long-term.

We will take no lessons on home care, something that used to be a gold standard set by Manitoba, from members opposite.

#### **Food Insecurity Affordability Measures**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Honourable Speaker, food bank usage is over 30 per cent. The 2023 Harvest Manitoba report said three quarters of food bank

users are unable to afford healthy food. Half are living with a disability or health condition.

What specific affordability measures will the minister implement for vulnerable Manitobans accessing food banks this holiday season?

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** I want to say miigwech to my colleague across the way for an important question.

Certainly, as I think the last time that the member asked the question, I mentioned in the House that there are many jurisdictions that are dealing with food insecurity across Canada right now. Certainly it's a huge issue that food banks are dealing with, that governments at all levels are dealing with and certainly citizens across the country are dealing with.

I want to just take this opportunity to say miigwech to all of those folks that are on the front lines at our food banks, that are doing extraordinary work in very, very tough times and tough situations, that every day show up to work or to volunteer to ensure that citizens have food and that they're able to eat.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member from Midland, on a supplementary question.

#### **Food Price Inflation Supports for Community Organizations**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Honourable Speaker, the annual Westman Christmas campaign has over 100 families who still need a sponsor, and they put out a plea as they're anticipating a record number of requests for hampers and only have over half of their previous sponsors this year.

Has the minister consulted with these organizations to determine what their needs are for this holiday season and this food inflation?

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** Again, miigwech to the member opposite for the question.

The folks in our department are working very, very hard with those, again, that are on the front lines of doing this very, very important work. In fact, I've shared in the House that I've met with our staff that are working with—in respect of meeting with folks that are doing this work.

I just want to say this: I—and I say this with the utmost respect to the member opposite, but I do find it hard to believe that all of a sudden after seven and a half years of their previous government, now all of a

sudden they're starting to care about food insecurity when all of those seven and a half years, we didn't hear tickety-boo from any of the members opposite, including this front bench and the former premier.

So I really would encourage the member to ask her colleagues—

\* (14:10)

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

The honourable member from Midland, on a final supplementary question.

#### **Food Security Fund Funding Intention**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** The PC government created the Food Security Fund: \$4 million to support these community organizations. That seems like a pretty important fund that these community organizations commended.

So, will the minister continue this important fund that was created by the PC government and commit to maintaining this much-needed funding?

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** Miigwech again for the question. I will share this. Like many of the things that they announced in their dying days of their PC cold, callous government, that was one of the initiatives that they did announce.

And I think that it was an important initiative in respect of that we are facing an affordability crisis. So I would—I, again, once again I want to say to the member and to every—folks, particularly the ones that were here in the last seven and a half years: When did you all start caring about vulnerable Manitobans and trying to feed them? Because you didn't in the last seven and a half years.

But our government has—will care, does care about feeding Manitobans and believes in our citizens here in Manitoba and believes in the people that are doing the work on the front lines.

#### **School Construction Projects Update Inquiry**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It sounds to me like the minister is saying no to extending that funding, Honourable Speaker. It's unfortunate.

Honourable Speaker, would the Minister for Infrastructure commit today and please let us know the status of the request for qualifications for the nine schools that ended October 4?

Can the minister please stand in the House and let us know the status of those qualifications?

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services):** I thank the member opposite for the question. The member identified it as a question for the Minister of Infrastructure, but it's actually a question for the Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services.

And so what I will say to that is that our government's doing an incredible job right now. This department has so much work to do to review commitments that have been made, as we've learned of how overcommitted, how much spending this government promised in their last dying days that was not accounted for in government.

So my staff are working around the clock trying to sort out what projects can proceed and which projects will have to be paused because of the incompetence of the previous government.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member from Lac du Bonnet, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I'm looking at the list here and it says that the minister—the MLA for Wolseley is the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services.

So, it's unfortunate that the minister stood today, Honourable Speaker, and has confirmed what the Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister has already put on the record: that they're cutting nine schools.

Is this true, Honourable Speaker, yes or no? To the minister who's wearing two or three different hats.

**MLA Naylor:** I hope that that question made a lot more sense to you than it did to me, but I'll do my best to try to give some answer—a credible answer to an odd statement.

I can say that, as I said in the last question, we are reviewing every project carefully. Schools are incredibly important to this province, incredibly important to school divisions and to students and families. And the fact that we are forced into a situation of having to review every single commitment because of the incompetence of the previous government is a tragedy for families in this province.

But we will keep you posted on the outcomes of that particular commitment.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member from Lac du Bonnet, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Again, it seems that today, what's old is new again, Mr. Honourable Speaker. The NDP failed to build any schools in their 17 years of tender.

Now it's confirmed by the Minister of Consumer Protection—Honourable Speaker, I'll make this clear for the minister—that she is actually cutting nine schools, which includes over 660 child-care spaces.

Has she made those calls to those school divisions and schools, and those good Manitobans in those areas, and telling them that she's cutting all those nine schools, Mr. Honourable Speaker, Sir?

**MLA Naylor:** You know, I think this is a good time to point out that, on this side of the House, there are so many educators and past school trustees, people who made their entire lives before this about education. And nothing has changed about our commitment to educating students in this province.

Our government is committed to reviewing all the options and making decisions that will continue to benefit students and families and protect good jobs, while being fiscally responsible, something that this government was not.

#### **Safety of Nurses Working at HSC Request for Security Plan**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Health-care professionals, particularly nurses, have been leaving our province and leaving the public system for agency positions.

There are many reasons as to why this is happening, but one of these reasons are because nurses and health-care professionals have reported feeling unsafe in their workplaces. Nurses working at HSC have reported being screamed at, physically assaulted and having property damage in the parkade.

Honourable Speaker, how exactly is this government improving the security situation in and around HSC and when exactly will this plan be implemented?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I thank the member for Tyndall Park for this important question.

As part of the work that our team is doing under the leadership of our Minister of Health, we are committed to providing a safe workplace for nurses, for health-care professionals, physicians, for everyone who works in the health-care system, as well as for the patients.

Now, we look forward to rolling out a series of improvements in the workplaces for people across the province, inclusive of the Health Sciences campus. But I also want to point out that one of the other issues we need to address along with this are the long-standing social issues in the inner city of Winnipeg, across Manitoba, that are contributing to some of these situations and safety.

So, we're going to take immediate action within the health-care centres. We're also going to take immediate action in the broader community to get a handle on this toxic drug crisis that is tearing Manitoba apart.

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

#### **Mandated Overtime for Nurses Request for Legislation to Ban**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Another reason affecting staff retention are that nurses in our province are working unsustainable mandated overtime. No one can perform their best work when they are burnt out.

When our Health Minister was formerly in opposition, they had introduced legislation to ban overtime for nurses.

So my question is: When exactly will this government follow through and introduce legislation to ban mandatory overtime?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I thank that—the member for Tyndall Park for that really important question about, you know, the sustainability of the health-care workforce that is working incredibly hard to provide the best care possible at the bedside for Manitobans.

I will say that I've met with health-care workers directly. I've met with health-care leadership. I've met with unions. And everybody's on the same page, that it's so important for us to work collectively to address this issue, and to look at examples like the Grace Hospital, that's done a tremendous job at reducing mandated overtime hours and has done an excellent job bringing folks back into the public system.

So, we need to celebrate our success stories, learn from those folks directly, continue to invest in health-care human resource capacity. And most importantly, work together to get that done.

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

#### **Health-Care Professionals Misconduct Reporting and Whistle-Blower Protection**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** The alarming rate of burnout among health-care workers affects employee resilience and morale.

One of the reasons for burnout is toxic workplace culture. When health-care professionals can't speak up about workplace misconduct or abuse, the safety of patients are compromised. Health-care professionals need to have the confidence to be able to report wrongdoing in the workplace.

When exactly can health-care workers expect this government to create an open-door policy for misconduct reporting and also for protection of whistle-blowers?

\* (14:20)

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I appreciate that question, Honourable Speaker. It allows me the opportunity to talk about announcements our government has already made in terms of improving the culture of workplaces for front-line workers.

You know, one of the first steps that we took after our entire team was sworn in was to send an open letter to health-care workers letting them know that the days of retribution and being silenced and attacked for speaking up and advocating for patients are done, that the previous government's approach—which really, quite frankly, scared health-care workers out of doing what they knew was in the best interest of patients—those days are long done. It's a new day in health care in Manitoba.

Our team is very much looking forward to initiating our first formal stop this Friday to speak directly to front-line health-care workers on our listening tour, which has been incredibly well received, despite what members opposite think, from health-care workers.

#### **Adult Literacy Act New Legislation Announcement**

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** Honourable Speaker, we know that, for some Manitobans, a key barrier to employment is literacy.

But it's a new day in Manitoba, and our government is working to address literacy rates in the

province. We're working to support adults to build a better life here in Manitoba.

So, can the Minister of Advanced Education and Training update the House on The Adult Literacy Act and how this legislation will improve the quality of life for so many people in our province?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I thank my colleague for the important question.

On this side of the House, we understand that not everybody has the same opportunity in K-to-12 education and their life circumstances to achieve the level of numeracy and literacy that they would like to have in order to have a successful life here. We understand that there are barriers to that, and that's why we brought this legislation in.

It's important that we have a framework that recognizes the opportunities that we have in front of us to build an affluent Manitoba. This is just the first step. We'll be consulting with stakeholders, with folks who need the training and folks who are providing it. And this really ensures that we have not only a substantial framework, but measures in place so that we can measure our success.

I understand the members opposite did not want to measure their failures. On this side of the House, we're going to be thrilled—

**The Speaker:** Minister's time has expired.

### **Manitoba Hydro Rate Freeze Update**

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** We've got another potential flip-flop on our hands, and it's only the third week of session.

The Finance Minister says the NDP's irresponsible hydro rate freeze commitment may be delayed.

Can he clarify for the House: Will he be directing Hydro to submit their rate freeze to the Public Utilities Board or not?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** You know, it is the holiday season, and at this time of year, most people expect perhaps good gestures, gifts, good tidings.

But I remember—because I'm old enough to remember a few years ago, during the holiday season, when the members opposite, instead of bringing gifts or good gestures to Manitobans, decided to bring a

hydro rate hike for the very first time in our province's history by legislation. That's their record. That's the record of the members opposite.

Our record is to bring savings and lower costs for Manitobans. We're bringing forward a fuel tax holiday for Manitobans on January 1st.

The only question that Manitobans want to know the answer to is: Will the members opposite support the bill, yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The honourable member from Spruce Woods, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Jackson:** Well, just like the gas tax cut—which we successfully forced them to include all Manitobans in, I might add—now we know that the NDP are flip-flopping again on the only other affordability measure they campaigned on.

Is the minister going to allow the Public Utilities Board the autonomy to set hydro rates in this province, yes or no?

**MLA Sala:** You know, it's interesting, Honourable Speaker, that after seven years in government, we're now hearing all these ideas that the members opposite have about how to lower the cost of living for Manitobans.

I don't think it takes me to remind them that they did not take those actions. They spent seven years in government, and they failed to do the very thing that we're bringing forward here, which is to bring a fuel tax holiday to Manitobans to help them save money just in time for the holidays.

Again, the members opposite voted against clause after clause the other night in committee for this bill.

The question all Manitobans want to know the answer to is: Will they vote for this bill, yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The honourable member from—Spruce Woods, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Jackson:** Well, there's no answer from the minister there. He's talking about the fuel tax, and that's okay. He's a bit confused; he's still new.

It's very simple: Do the NDP plan to take their irresponsible fake freeze to the Public Utilities Board or are the NDP now setting hydro rates at the Cabinet table?

**MLA Sala:** Clearly, the member opposite is the one that's confused about his party's record and their failure to take any type of meaningful action to reduce energy costs for Manitobans.

On this side of the House, we've brought forward a number of really important initiatives; for example, a fuel tax holiday that we're still waiting for confirmation as to whether or not the members opposite will support.

We've also brought forward other important initiatives; for example, geothermal investment from the feds here in Manitoba that will help to reduce the costs of heating.

And we're still committed to our hydro rate freeze, and we look forward to bringing that forward to save Manitobans even more money.

### Provincial Finances Management Concerns

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** This NDP Premier received an early Christmas gift: a balanced budget and a \$270-million surplus.

This NDP Premier then went out after he received this incredibly generous gift, and the first thing he said: his gift was a mess.

Is that why he instructed his Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) to run at least three years of deficit budgets?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I just want to point out that the member opposite glosses over six months when the PCs were in power, and Manitobans are going to be really surprised when they see just how much damage the PCs were able to cause within that six-month period. But the good news is that it's a new day, and our team has a plan to fix the PC mess.

But of all the cuts that the PCs ever made, their decision to cancel Christmas was by far the most shocking. But I'm so proud that our team worked together with the professional public service and community groups to open the people's building back to the public. And I just want to say, it's a merry Christmas, a happy holidays for everyone here in Manitoba.

And we're happy even to have the PC caucus join us on the weekend to celebrate the open house tradition coming back to Manitoba.

**The Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Will you please call for second reading Bill 4, the employment standards code amendment act (Orange Shirt Day), followed by report stage amendments for Bill 3, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday), followed by third reading and concurrence for Bill 3, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday).

**The Speaker:** It has been announced by the Government House Leader that the employment standards code amendment and interpretation amendment, orange shirt act day, will be called for second reading, followed by report stage amendments for Bill 3, Fuel Tax Amendment Act, the fuel tax holiday, followed by third reading and concurrence for Bill 3, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday).

### SECOND READINGS

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

**The Speaker:** We'll now proceed with second reading of Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day).

\* (14:30)

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi et la Loi d'interprétation (Journée du chandail orange), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Kinew:** The purpose of this bill is clear to all Canadians, as we've all been on a journey of reconciliation together these last number of years.

Some of the important contours of this was when—were when Phil Fontaine spoke publicly about his experience in residential schools a number of decades ago, which proved to be a catalyst for many more people to share their painful and traumatic experiences.

We also then saw the residential school survivors lobby, pursue justice through the courts and in

general, march through the public sphere of Canada to try to educate and win over the hearts and minds of fellow Canadians for a mandate to implement reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and the rest of this great country.

The apology delivered by Prime Minister Harper; the launch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the participation in those hearings of residential school survivors from First Nations across the country, of Inuit people, of Métis people, saw a reckoning.

I recall being in a newsroom on the day that Prime Minister Harper delivered the apology, and really seeing the impact on many of my non-Indigenous colleagues who were reckoning with the stories they were hearing and try to reconcile that with this image that we have of the country that we love so much.

And so, I think all of us have been confronted with some tough questions.

And I think another key turning point happened during the pandemic, when we heard about the disclosures of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation in British Columbia, and thus became acquainted in the public sphere with a series of ongoing disclosures of unmarked graves at former residential schools.

Throughout this period, we have been guided, I would say, as a country by the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which included in it a series of Calls to Action designed to advance reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and other Canadians.

And one of these important Calls to Action, Call to Action 80, is that there be a day to commemorate the experiences of residential school survivors, the children who never came home, and the parents who were left behind. And so, this bill acts as one piece in the ongoing tapestry of building up the fabric of the province of Manitoba.

And it is our view that it's really important that this be a statutory holiday at the provincial level. There have been important steps over the years to ensure that this day was designated at the federal level. I would acknowledge my colleague from Steinbach, during his time as premier, for seeing that schools marked this day.

But we also need to ensure that this project is taken to its full realization, which I would argue this bill is another step towards, namely that every child

be able to fully participate in Orange Shirt Day, that every family be able to fully participate in Orange Shirt Day, no matter where it is that they work.

By recognizing Orange Shirt Day as a provincial statutory holiday, we ensure that no matter whether your parents work in construction, they work in manufacturing, they work in any other provincially regulated workplace, that you will have the opportunity to participate in this important event.

And so, insofar as it helps every kid to be able to participate in what is quickly becoming one of the more important days on the annual school calendar, I do think it takes another step towards articulating that vision here in Manitoba of Every Child Matters.

I also believe that it's important for us to always talk about the survivors. And so, I'd point out to yourself, as well as my colleagues, that if we're to drive down Broadway, turn left to cross the bridge and proceed down Academy, within about 15 minutes we would find ourselves at the site of a former residential school.

The Assiniboia Residential School is one that many of us would know people who were forced to go to during their teenage years. It functioned as a residential high school, for lack of a better term. And one of those residential school survivors is one that my colleagues would know well.

In 2017, when we recognized Orange Shirt Day as a provincial day, if you will, Ted Fontaine came here to speak to us at committee and to observe the proceedings here in the Legislature. And from time to time, I like to go back and read the commentary that he made and left for us in Hansard as part of his overall contributions to the project of reconciliation.

And what always stands out to me when I look at the commentary of Niizhotay, his Anishinabe name of Theodore Fontaine, is his desire for our children, grandchildren, from all walks of life, to be able to reach their full potential and to be able to learn from this era of our collective past so that they might marshal a good will and an engagement with one another to build our collective future.

And so I think that, as I reflect on his life experience and the friendship that I enjoyed with him, if I reflect on one of my dad's best friends, Phil Gardner, who attended that same residential school and was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame here in Manitoba for his participation in that junior title winning squad; if I reflect on Charlie Nelson, who, in 1967 was denied participation, even though he ran

the flame up to the Pan Am Games and then lived long enough to come back to the '99 Pan Am Games and complete the final leg of his journey.

If I think about Mabel Horton, who is somebody who helped to raise our kids. They always call her Maple because they've known her since, you know, they were at such an age that they would have been indulged in such a pronunciation. If I think about my wife's Uncle Fern and his time at Assiniboia, I reflect on the fact that even right here, right where we speak to you today, there are so many jumping-off points for how the impacts of the intergenerational legacy of residential schools has shaped the province that we know and love today.

And so we really need to continue moving forward with this important project, and so this bill represents that. And I think that—those are my comments on a professional level, but I would say, on a personal level, I've been lucky to get many titles over the years, but the two most important titles to me are—well, the three most important titles to me, I guess, are father, husband and son.

And on each of those scores I believe that this is an important project. This is one that allows our kids, including my children's generation, to be able to learn from the past so that they can work together to articulate a positive destiny, that is one that honours my wife and her family's experience, coming from both First Nations and Métis communities, and were subject to the residential school era.

And perhaps, most importantly, within the context of honouring the survivors, it allows me, as a son, to think of the old-timer who raised me, to think about his brothers, who didn't live to see the apology or compensation, and to just reflect on how the journey that they began has moved Canada so far forward in such a good way. And now it is a very humbling experience to be able to play some small part to continuing on the important work.

So, with those comments on the record, I will take my seat and look forward to moving this bill through the other stages towards becoming law.

### 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 (Lac du Bonnet):** Thank you to the member for bringing forward Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day).

Just for clarity, can the member please explain how, exactly, if on a weekend, this will work for our school system?

\* (14:40)

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I thank my friend from Lac du Bonnet for the question.

I would direct—I know this has been a topic in the public conversation around this bill, so there may be additional public interest in this, and so I would direct people to 78(2), when the holiday falls on a weekend, and I'll just read from it directly: if a school holiday, other than Saturday, Sunday or Remembrance Day, falls on a weekend, it must be observed on the following Monday.

And so, this would apply to the Orange Shirt Day.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member from Lac du Bonnet. *[interjection]*

Oh, sorry, the honourable member from Tyndall Park.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I was hoping that the Premier could share with us just some ways in which Manitobans may use this day as an opportunity to learn about reconciliation.

**Mr. Kinew:** It's a really important question, and it's our hope that Manitobans will participate in any number of the important Orange Shirt Day events, which are taking place in communities right across the province. They're happening in big cities, they're happening in small towns, they're happening on reserve.

We know that Brandon, for instance, celebrates a week worth of events as part of reconciliation week, and it's been really something to witness people from different parts of the community march together towards the site of the former Brandon Residential School on the North Hill.

So, I do encourage Manitobans to participate in the commemoration and honouring of residential school survivors and others impacted by the residential school era and, of course, to find some time to



spend a moment with family so that you can engage in what was lost and denied for those generations of Manitobans.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I appreciate the Premier (Mr. Kinew) reading from the bill and adding a little bit of clarity. But part of that question is—so, if Orange Shirt Day, September 30th, happens on a Saturday or Sunday, it is observed on the Monday.

Does that mean it's, in its entirety—and I'll do a two-part so that he can answer this in one answer—the schools will be closed, will also child-care centres within schools be closed as well?

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, we'll be working with the school divisions to provide direction on the implementation of the bill, as well as to ensuring that they have the proper resources to engage in their commemoration activities, which, he will note, will most likely not happen on September 30th, but will probably happen the week prior when we're talking about the school-based activities.

So, these are all conversations that we look forward to carrying out once we receive royal assent for this bill.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** I want to acknowledge the Premier and this bill. We spent the first truth and reconciliation day both at St. John's Park and across the street at Memorial Park at a sacred fire.

I have a question regarding community events and whether or not the Premier's contemplating a fund to potentially support communities who want to recognize truth and reconciliation day with certain events in their communities.

**Mr. Kinew:** I do recall the event that my friend from Steinbach is talking about, and I think it was meaningful for us to participate in those things together, as it was for members of the public and from the community.

I think that the commentary that he's suggesting here today is appropriate and something that we would like to consider. The first step is to ensure that there is this demarcation of Orange Shirt Day as a statutory holiday. That's the one that we're contemplating here today.

So, just for clarity, there's no statutory identification of an appropriation here to fund those events, but there is certainly an interest on behalf of our government, and I'm sure all Manitobans, to ensure that

communities across Manitoba have the ability to honour and commemorate on Orange Shirt Day.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the Premier for that response and look forward to further comments.

One suggestion might be—and I know, for Canada Day, for example—and I don't know if it's the federal government or the provincial government, but they will pay so there'll be free attendance at museums on Canada Day if there's something that recognizes Canada Day at the museum.

So, that could potentially be an idea where there could be free attendance at Manitoba museums if the museums are doing something that recognizes and honours truth and reconciliation day. Wonder if the Premier would consider that.

**Mr. Kinew:** I certainly would consider it. I would welcome the opportunity to work with the federal government, because some of the facilities that may be hosting events would be under federal jurisdiction. But certainly, those areas that the Province could have an active role in supporting, we would like to ensure that there's the ability there.

Here, I want to recognize the important work that organizations like Wa-Say have had in launching events like the powwow and the march that goes through downtown Winnipeg on September 30th.

And, of course, I recognize that there are many similar events happening in communities across the province. And so, I'd like to ensure that, where there are community organizations standing up operations or continuing operations, we would definitely like to ensure that they're adequately supported.

**The Speaker:** No further questions?

### Debate

**The Speaker:** The floor is open for debate.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It is an honour to stand today and put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 4. I know the member—the NDP Premier has put some words on the record and—in regards to Mr. Fontaine, Theodore Fontaine.

I've had the pleasure, getting to know him a little bit prior to his passing a few years ago as I was representing Sagkeeng First Nation, Fort Alexander, when I was growing up in the Lac du Bonnet constituency. Had the pleasure of sitting with Mr. Fontaine a few times at various graduation ceremonies on Sagkeeng First Nation as well as some of their—the powwows and celebrations that they had on their community.

I know that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) mentioned the Assiniboia Residential School, and I thought that was a very moving Orange Shirt Day, when they were bringing forward the memorial to that site. I know that our—my colleague, the MLA for Steinbach, had been at the sacred fire with Mrs. Fontaine—Morgan when the renaming of the Wellington Park in the name of Theodore Fontaine, which was located just north of the Assiniboia Residential School.

I really found that the over 700 people—I know that there's—many of the colleagues who have been re-elected here had joined us that Orange Shirt Day for that memorial sitting and unveiling. And I know that there was well over 700 people had attended that day.

And some of the survivors who had attended Assiniboia Residential School had—it was an—it was in—it was an open mic process that morning and into the afternoon. And I sat and listened to many of the stories that were coming out, and absolutely there were many that shared their struggles that they're experiencing today.

But there's also—there was also quite a few that stories in regards to, you know, them, you know, getting together with their hockey teams and football teams, and then the various schools that they competed against throughout, I guess, just outside of the city and throughout. So, there's some interesting stories, but it was definitely a very emotional day, Honourable Speaker.

The bill is—has been brought forward today, and I know that we're debating second reading. And I've got a strong sense that we're going to be asking for leave to—for it to be seen tonight at committee. I look forward to being at committee tonight and hearing some of those presentations and stories, possibly later on today.

So, Honourable Speaker, with those very few words, I look forward to hearing other members get up today and share their stories in regards to Bill 4 and Orange Shirt Day moving forward.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

\* (14:50)

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to rise here and speak to debate. And I'd like to thank the Premier for bringing forward this very important piece of legislation.

I think it's an amazing piece of legislation, as it truly is a step towards reconciliation. It is something that many of us here in these Chambers have been fighting for for the last couple of years. And I believe, just from hearing my colleagues' remarks prior to me speaking, that it does seem it will be supported going through to committee and third reading.

I believe it was when my colleague from Keewatinook introduced this legislation, I had the opportunity to share a bit of a story that really resonates with me. Meadows West School is a primary education facility in the constituency of Tyndall Park, and I remember attending a truth and reconciliation event at the school. And, Honourable Speaker, it was a very, very beautiful event; one of a kind. Something I've never attended in my history.

And I remember going into the school, and it was inside of the gym—the school assembly room—and there were the four directions set up. And students in each of the four corners, here. And the students took turns rotating from one to the next to the next, and as they did, they each voiced a commitment, something that they were going to tangibly do to work towards reconciliation.

And I remember it was very touching; it was very moving. And just the tangibility of it, Honourable Speaker, it made me proud of the school, of the teachers, for facilitating something of this sort. Because I truly believe that's what—like, for me, it stuck with me.

Honourable Speaker, imagine what it's doing for these children, for the students. And I think it's just a prime example of things that we can be doing, not only in the province of Manitoba, but all over Canada, to better recognize our history. And as these are tangible steps, I see this piece of legislation being a tangible step towards reconciliation.

I'm very mindful of time; again, I know we're all going to be—trust we're all going to be supporting this legislation moving forward. But I just feel very, very fortunate and blessed to be able to stand here today and speak to this legislation and be on the right side of history.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** I want to thank the Premier for bringing forward this bill and acknowledge its importance. Before I get into a—just a few comments about the bill. I want to also acknowledge a comment that he made last week about his friend Chris, I believe, and his story, which was very

meaningful. A difficult story to share, I'm sure, but an important one.

And I spoke to him briefly after about it, and I think it's worth all Manitobans taking the opportunity to hear the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) words if they have the opportunity, because they were important in terms of friendship, they were important in terms of loss and they're important in terms of redemption. So I wanted to just put that on the record.

In terms of this particular legislation, certainly on the first truth and reconciliation day, it was a particularly meaningful day. And I know that the now-Premier and I had time to spend together across the street in Memorial Park at a sacred fire and then also we were at St. John's Park as well. We were participating in the ceremony there, and of course it was quite an amazing day, when there were literally thousands of people in orange shirts who were there for that first day.

Very, very—it was moving. There was people from, I would say, all walks of life, all different backgrounds who were there expressing both their emotional support, some had, of course, personal stories. The Premier, I think, participated in the ceremonies, as well, and that was very significant.

I want to acknowledge this particular piece of legislation as being important, as being impactful, I think, for our community and for Manitobans more generally.

And certainly our hope will be that on the day that is recognized for remembrance, that people will take that opportunity to reflect and to remember and to participate in whatever ceremonies there might be to participate in on that particular day in their individual communities; that it not just become another holiday. Not that individuals, you know, won't have other things to do, but it's important that they take some amount of time during that day, whether it's at a formal ceremony or in a more private way, to reflect upon the meaning of the day.

So I want to—again, we're looking forward to seeing this bill move on to, I think, with leave, committee tonight, but to recognize over the last number of years the recognition of this day; although it wasn't a statutory holiday, certainly there was thousands of Manitobans who participated in different ways and recognized the importance of it.

On the first day that we had, I recall in the evening after leaving St. John's Park, coming back to the Legislature—and it happened to be—that day happens to

be my son's birthday as well. So, my son spent the day with me in St. John's Park, and we came back to the Legislature and we climbed to the roof, as some members sometimes might do, and we had us some, you know, good time of discussion, reflection, sort of looking over Memorial Park and some of the things were still happening there, and just discussing a bit about the history of residential schools, mistakes that were made, things that could be learned from those things.

And, you know, it was an important, I think, moving day for him and for me, and a learning day for him and for me, and I suspect that the recognition of it in this way will allow for even greater understanding, and hopefully more reflection. I mean, that would be our hope, is that it really becomes a day where people take the opportunity to reflect upon some of the lessons that need to be learned and so that history doesn't repeat itself.

So, I appreciate the Premier bringing forward this particular piece of legislation. We've had it at different times over the last few years, in the different roles that we've played we've had some discussions about this and I've always appreciated the heart in which he's brought forward these issues in non-political but important ways.

And we look forward to this bill, I think, with leave, going into committee tonight.

**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 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day).

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

### House Business

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** On House business, could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to waive rule 92(7) so that bill 7, the Employment Standards Code amendment—4. Jesus, sorry—and interpretation amendment act, Orange Shirt Day, can be sent to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development tonight, despite there being presenters registered to speak.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to waive rule 92(7) so that Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day), can be sent to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development tonight, despite there being presenters registered to speak? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted.

**MLA Fontaine:** I would like to introduce, in addition to the bill previously referred, that Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day), will also be considered at the December 4th, 2023, meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

\* (15:00)

**The Speaker:** It has been announced, in addition to the bill previously referred, that Bill 4, the employment standards code amendment interpretation amendment act, Orange Shirt Day, will also be considered at the December 4, 2023, meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** We will now move to report stage amendments on Bill 3.

#### REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

##### Bill 3—The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday)

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino), that Bill 3 be amended—*[interjection]* I move, seconded by Minister Marcelino—*[interjection]* Thank you. We ready? We'll do it again this time.

I move, seconded by the Minister for Labour and Immigration,

*THAT Bill 3 be amended by replacing Clause 2 with the following:*

*2 Section 1 is amended by adding the following definition:*

**"tax holiday"** means the period beginning on January 1, 2024, and ending on June 30, 2024, or a later date prescribed by regulation.

**The Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Finance.

**MLA Sala:** And I'll add, période d'exonération *[exemption period]*.

**The Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable—

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**The Speaker:** Dispense.

**MLA Sala:** You know, we've had a lot of opportunities to speak about the importance of this bill in the House, and I am grateful for another opportunity to offer some more words here at this stage of this bill moving through the House.

We know that so many Manitobans have struggled for years with very high energy bills, inflation and increased costs at the pump. And, you know, the experience that Manitobans have had for so many years is that they had a government that wasn't focused on responding to those issues.

And we're very proud to bring forward these changes and to bring this bill forward.

These small amendments that have been brought forward today, I'm looking forward to speaking about how they strengthen and improve the bill, and this particular change is a very minor change here, this amendment, which removes the word roadway to eliminate any confusion about who could and could not access the benefits of this bill.

**The Speaker:** Are there any further speakers? None—oh, sorry.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** It was my first opportunity to speak at committee the other night and realize the impact that we as opposition can have on some of these bills.

One of the amendments that we looked at for over an hour and a half was the word roadway. And again, we saw that there was holes in this bill, and we talked to a number of ag producers and industry groups that echoed those concerns at committee. And they, too, deserved a tax break on marked gasoline and propane as well, too.

Also, we talked for a number of time also on section—sorry, on clause 6(12.2), where it was reported as a motor vehicle on a roadway, a motor vehicle registered as a farm truck under The Drivers and Vehicles Act and firefighting equipment by municipality or local government district.

Again, we heard from many speakers out there of how important it was to take some of this away. As farmers, they don't get the opportunity to drive their equipment on the roadways. Most of the time, their equipment and the money that they spend on fuel is done in the field to take off those crops.

The other part of it as well, too, was firefighting—again, I'm reading from the bill before it was amended: 12.2(c) firefighting equipment by municipality or local government.

We heard from a number of municipalities out there that rely on people like our great Hutterite communities to be able to fight fires and have been able to save lives. The Hutterite colonies, with things like their heart, that have saved lives, have found people that have been missing for years.

All those—although some people might think of these as very small amendments, I can tell you, on Friday afternoon my phone rang steady on my ride home of how important these amendments were that affect the affordability for Manitobans.

And the other thing that was important for it and where these amendments are so clear is it's about all Manitobans now. A lot of Manitobans felt left out, and with this being moved—with these small amendments, as what were said here by the minister, were moved forward, these were really tremendously large amendments that are affecting our agriculture community as well as all Manitobans.

So, again, with that, thank you very much your time.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Honourable Speaker, I am going to be supporting this legislation, but I do believe it is a weak piece of legislation.

And the reason that I say that is it feels rushed. Honourable Speaker, having it debated through the House here, having it brought through committee, listening to what Manitobans had to say about the legislation at committee, whether that be online, even here as MLAs spoke about it in the House, enough time was not put in into the writing of this legislation. Enough people, enough Manitobans, they were not consulted in the development of this legislation.

And because of the costs behind it, I believe a whole lot more of Manitobans should have been consulted in the creation of it.

We saw this. It was evident just with the wording alone in the legislation. The fact that the minister had to bring forward three of his own amendments—whether they were based off the recommendation of opposition MLAs or not, the fact that he had to bring in three of his own amendments shows how rushed the legislation, in fact, was, Honourable Speaker.

I also just think about the point of this legislation—at least what the NDP says the point is, is to help with affordability. And realistically, those in Manitoba who need the most assistance with affordability are likely not the Manitobans driving vehicles, Honourable Speaker.

I think that this bill will help many Manitobans, and that's why, again, I am going to be supporting the legislation, but I don't believe that the NDP should be saying that this bill is about affordability when really those who need the assistance the most are not going to be helped by the legislation.

Honourable Speaker, this was a campaign promise. Again, it's going to help some, but I think—

**The Speaker:** Order.

I'd ask the member from Tyndall Park to please stick to talking about the amendment, not the bill as a whole.

**MLA Lamoureux:** I apologize, Honourable Speaker. Sometimes when you start talking about really important legislation, you delve deep into it.

I'll leave my remarks at that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** No further debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** Question before the House is the adoption of Bill 3—the first amendment to Bill 3, the fuel tax amendment, fuel tax holiday, act, moved by the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala).

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

**MLA Sala:** I move, seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage and Tourism,

*THAT Bill 3 be amended in Clause 5 by replacing the proposed section 8.2 with the following:*

**Temporary reduction following tax holiday**

**8.2** Despite section 8, the rate of tax payable for fuel that is subject to the tax holiday under section 12.2 may be reduced by regulation for any period beginning after June 30, 2024, and ending before January 1, 2025.

\* (15:10)

**The Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Simard),

THAT the proposed amendment to Bill 3 is—*be amended in Clause 5 by replacing the proposed section 8.2 with the following—*

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**The Speaker:** Dispense.

The amendment is in order. The floor is open.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

Oh, one minute before—I just like to remind everybody that while we're having this debate, it's to focus specifically on the amendment, not on the bill itself.

**MLA Sala:** This, again, is another amendment we brought forward to ensure that there is no confusion about who is able to access the benefits of this bill. We did hear from some community members that were concerned about that, even though we were quite clear that this bill would benefit all Manitobans.

The small changes made in this clause will help to ensure that there is no confusion that this fuel tax holiday will be available to all Manitobans.

**MLA Bereza:** First of all, my apologies for not following the rules. I—my mistake on that.

I would like to, when we do talk about 8.2—and, again, not minor amendments when we talk about the amount of economy that is being affected here. By taking out the words motor vehicle on the roadway; again that gives the opportunity for this to be included with boats, with RVs, with off-road vehicles.

Again, it gives—again, it eliminates a lot of the confusion that was first part of this bill. Again, I thank you for the opportunity for being able to participate in the committee. And even though we went on for a long period of time, again, it was about making things good for all Manitobans out there, and affordable out there.

The firefighting equipment, it was again a big piece of that that needed to come out of this legislation. And where us, as a party, fought hard on this and as a PC team, fought hard on this, was to make sure that all Manitobans could feel safe and that we weren't taking out people with firefighting equipment by municipal—or we were taking out firefighting equipment by municipality or local government

district. So, people wouldn't have to be worried about whether they could go to a fire or whether they were going to be taken care of or not during this tax bill—reduction bill.

We wanted to make sure that we could make this very clear to everyone. And I think by removing this and the amendment that was brought forward by our team, has 'jone' just that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of report—the question before the House is the second report stage amendment for Bill 3, the fuel tax amendment, fuel tax holiday.

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

**MLA Sala:** I would like to move, seconded by the Minister for Advanced Education and Training,

*THAT Bill 3 be amended in Clause 6 by replacing the proposed section 12.2 with the following:*

**Temporary exemption—tax holiday**

**12.2** No tax is payable during the tax holiday by a buyer of gasoline, diesel or natural gas that is subject to a rate of tax set under clause 8(d.1), (f.1) or (g).

**The Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**The Speaker:** Dispensed.

The motion is in order. The floor is now open for debate.

**MLA Sala:** Again, this third and final amendment was brought forward to make a change that we knew was important to community members that we spoke with, and specifically will allow us to ensure we fulfill the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) commitment, which was to reduce fuel taxes from 14 to zero on all gasoline in Manitoba.

**MLA Bereza:** This was not a small amendment. And again, was very near and dear to our hearts when we think about affordability needed on this, and clarity needed on this.

This was the point where, now all fuels—diesel fuel, diesel fuel—were part of this. Again, it was needing some clarity there, and we heard that from

groups that spoke that day, whether it be the Snoman group, agriculture groups, whoever it may be.

Again, there was some confusion in this, and we needed to bring forward to make sure that this was spelled out properly, that all different fuels were in there.

We still believe that we're missing one part of that that is very important, and that being propane that is not included in this here. Propane, again, is used heavily by farmers as well as people that are using busses and things like that, and there is a different delivery mechanism that is used for home heating than there is for filling a bus, and we thought that was an important part to have in there.

So, thank you very much for your time.

**The Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is the third amendment to Bill 3, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

We will—now that the amendments have passed, we will now move on to the third reading and concurrence of Bill 3, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday)

#### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— AMENDED BILLS

##### Bill 3—The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday)

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 3, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday); Loi modifiant la Loi—sur la taxe sur les carburants (période d'exonération de la taxe sur les carburants), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, and subsequently amended, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

**The Speaker:** Are there any speakers?

**MLA Sala:** Again, it's a great honour to be able to bring this bill forward that will help to save Manitobans money at a time when they're really in need of those supports.

Again, as we've said, we've gone long enough in this province with a previous government that wasn't willing to bring supports and assistance to Manitobans who are struggling with high energy prices. We are very pleased to have moved swiftly to bring these savings to Manitobans, hopefully on January 1st.

We, on this side of the House, implore the members opposite to get on board, support and help to reduce the cost of living for Manitobans, something we didn't see from them for seven years.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other speakers?

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'm happy to rise and speak to third reading of The Fuel Tax Amendment Act.

\* (15:20)

Honourable Speaker, the government says that this is going to help Manitobans, but the reality is it's only going to help some Manitobans. It's going to help Manitobans who can, in fact, drive vehicles, who can and use their vehicles on a daily basis here in the province.

But again, the reality is many Manitobans do not drive vehicles, and this piece of legislation does not help these individuals whatsoever, Honourable Speaker.

The legislation is weak. It feels rushed. We heard this at committee. We've heard this over social media. We've seen it in the papers. We've talked about it here in the Chamber, Honourable Speaker.

The legislation is being pushed through and diligence was not done in the creation of it. We know this because the minister himself had to bring forward three amendments over the time span of one week. If he had done his homework from the beginning these amendments would have been part of the original legislation.

Legislation is important. Words are important. People needed to be consulted in the province of Manitoba in the making of this legislation, Honourable Speaker, and I'm glad that the amendments are being made. I think that they are a result of opposition members, as well as those who came out to committee. But it should have been done from the get go.

The most important part of this legislation is supposedly about affordability. And, again, this is something the NDP, they campaigned on during the election. They said that they were going to bring

forward this legislation because it was going to put more money in the pockets of Manitobans.

But it doesn't, in fact, help any Manitobans who are likely in need of the most assistance right now, Honourable Speaker. Again, it helps those of us who drive vehicles—who regularly drive vehicles. And that's wonderful, and that's why I will be supporting the legislation.

But I think it is a weak piece of legislation and I expect better from this government.

Thank you.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** It was this government, this PC government, when we talk about affordability, that brought historical affordability in \$5,500 a year to our people in Manitoba here. That is 22 times more than the \$250 that we'll see if a person is driving one vehicle.

PCs were the first to raise concerns that not all fuel were included and that all Manitobans deserve tax fairness.

It was the NDP who mocked us, who mocked Manitobans, and then took these amendments as their own. And there's still time to make this legislation better because the amendments still don't go far enough.

Just today the Canadian Federation of Independent Business called again for propane to be added to this bill. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business monthly business barometer, 88 percent of agri-business says fuel and energy costs are the number one cost constraints to their business.

The NDP are also flip-flopping on their fake hydro freeze, so this is their only true affordability policy, but it's only for six months.

High costs and inflation are largely due to the NDP-Liberal carbon tax, and it will still be an issue in six months to a year's time.

Again, when I stood up, along with my—along with our Finance Minister—*[interjection]*—critic—sorry—thank you for that—it was very important for us to make sure that we were supporting all Manitobans, that we wanted to see the changes in this so it would be clear that all Manitobans were going to take advantage of this.

It was also important that we talked about different fuel delivery systems that could be used out there. It was also important that we were able to make

sure that safety was part of this, with fire departments being able to be used with this.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that our PC team was there to raise these concerns after hearing from the people out there, and that not all fuel types, as I said before, were part of that, and now they are.

But there is still time for us to be including propane in this.

Thank you very much.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** Question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 3, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday).

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

The motion is passed.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Would you please call Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, for second reading, please.

**The Speaker:** Been announced by the Government House Leader that we will now call Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, for second reading.

## SECOND READINGS

*(Continued)*

### Bill 5—The Adult Literacy Act

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and early learning, that Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

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

**The Speaker:** Has been moved by the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, be now read a second time and 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 Cable:** It is such a pleasure to rise in the House to talk about adult literacy. As I mentioned earlier, there is nobody in this House that cares more about adult literacy than the folks on this side.



We understand what an incredible opportunity we have for Manitobans here to really put into place a plan that will help ensure that as many people as possible get good, family-supporting jobs in this province.

This bill supports adult numeracy and literacy programming, and will help adult learners to improve their lives, build their foundational skills and increase participation in their communities and society. So in this bill I'm not just thinking about the adult learners, but I'm thinking about the generation coming behind them that will now see that there are opportunities for growth at any age.

I—thinking about parents and grandparents who haven't had the opportunity to read their children stories at night, who haven't had the opportunity to really engage in the world in a meaningful way and who will now have the opportunity to build a—more colourful, fruitful lives for their families.

This bill establishes and sets the operating and funding parameters for adult literacy programs, and provides the flexibility for eligible organizations to deliver adult numeracy and literacy programming. One of the first things I heard upon taking this position as the Minister of Advanced Education and Training is that under the previous government, a number of initiatives were cancelled, including a requirement to lay out a framework and report on successes or perhaps some challenges in post-secondary and adult literacy programming.

So what we've said right away is that we want to be open, we want to be transparent and we want to be able to show the communities that we're a government that listens and takes action. So in introducing this legislation, we're signalling to the broader community that we're ready and we hear you. I look around here, and on our side of the House, I have a colleague who is an educator in the Wayfinders program, which enables folks to work through some challenges in their lives and find a path that will suit them in their pursuits of education.

My dear friend sitting behind me, who I see on the camera—two of them, actually, have worked with students who have additional learning needs and who maybe have a struggle to get what they need from regular K-to-12 programming. In an ideal world, we keep those kids in school and we allow them to reach their full potential.

\* (15:30)

However, we know that there are challenges that folks face in pursuing education, and sometimes they're not able to receive the skills that they need in regular K-to-12 programming, which is why we need to make sure that there are safety nets for them, that there are programs that they can go to, following that window of time, to make sure that they can access the skills that they need.

I'm thinking about people that I met on the campaign trail. A family from Syria, for example, who came here five years ago, and the parents are still unable to seek meaningful employment because their English proficiency is not quite where it needs to be. We need to make sure that those folks have every opportunity possible to build the life that we promised them in Canada and to help them receive the skills that they need.

Part of this legislation is also going to ensure that there are standards and that, when we are supporting programs and different providers, that we create a framework that will ensure that they're adhering to the standards that we need folks to finish with, that when we—that we have markers in place to be able to note the successes, to be able to challenge some of the places where we aren't as successful as we need to be. Measuring progress is so important and not so that I can stand up here and tout only great things—and I know there will be great things happening—but also so that we can be accountable and, you know, whether it's quarterly or biannually or annually, that we're able to look and say, yes, this is a successful program; students are getting what they need. We are seeing great progress in our communities; we have more people than ever working in good, family-supporting jobs because they received the training that they needed.

I have a statistic here. In 2022-2023, 41 per cent—hear this—41 per cent of adult learners self-identified as Indigenous. So what this tells me is that this act here is supporting the reconciliation work that is ongoing with this side of the House, ongoing with this government, that we're acknowledging that there are a disproportionate number of people for whom K-to-12 education has failed them. They weren't able to find the success that they needed to find in the regular K-to-12 programming. We're going to make sure that when they come out of it, that they still have a path forward.

Those—as I mentioned, the challenges can be multifaceted. Sometimes it is remote communities; they weren't able to access the education that they

needed. Sometimes—I think of my own family. My mom had me when she was 16 years old. She was able to complete high school, but it was incredibly challenging. And I know that for young moms, in particular, the prospect of going to regular K-to-12 programming, to be in a regular high school with all of the challenges that come about with it, while building those connections with their young ones, finding ways to put groceries on the table, all of those challenges mean that so many students are not able to complete their high school diploma. And what this will ensure is that when we're out—when that moment is past, where we're no longer in a high school setting, that students have a second chance.

And if there's anything that I think that we can hang our hats on, on this side of the House, is that we are absolutely the government of second chances. Our Premier (Mr. Kinew) is living proof of that. I can look at every one of the people on this side of the House and know that we have stories, just as other members on the other side have, as well, moments in time where maybe we took a path that we ought not have taken or we didn't have the opportunity to make the decision that we should have. And this will ensure that those people have the opportunity to continue on building a great life.

**An Honourable Member:** It's too bad they cut it.

**MLA Cable:** It's too bad.

As I mentioned earlier, adult literacy programming also supports English as additional language learners who currently make up one quarter of program participants. So supporting newcomers in improving their English literacy and numeracy will support them in settling into their communities and finding good jobs. We have a lot of folks.

Just this weekend, I was at a wonderful event for—with the Asian Women of Winnipeg, tremendous folks over there, women who have one, two, three post-secondary degrees. Some—one woman had four master's degrees and a Ph.D. and was still unable to find appropriate work for her because of the English language skills. We need to make sure that we have all of the supports possible to make sure that the life that we have promised folks when they move to Canada, that they are able to achieve it.

And I know that under the previous administration a number of cuts were made to these programs and reporting out was done away with. And what we're saying is that we value this programming. We value the people who provide it, and we value the

families who are relying on it to make sure that they have good family-supporting jobs.

In 2022-23 there were 26 funded adult literacy programs in 43 locations across the province, supporting 1,250 Manitobans on their path to better opportunities. This number was down from 1,991 between 2016 and 2017. So there was a drastic decrease in enrolment and completion of adult education in that time period. There was decreased access, and as we've heard continually, the ability for folks to accessing—access the programs they've—they need became more difficult.

Program supports were—funding was cut. Positions were left vacant for co-ordinating roles, and overall it became much more difficult for families in need to find the supports that they needed.

We know, thinking about all of the things that have happened during COVID-19 and post-COVID-19, we see social unrest, we see challenges in our neighbourhoods with different pieces.

And so much of what we see in terms of spread of misinformation, lack of understanding, and really this new world of unfavourable conversations; so much of it is rooted in a lack of education and understanding.

So, one of the things that we can do, not only to ensure that individuals have access to good jobs, can support their families, but to ensure that we do all we can to keep our civil society healthy, is to increase access to education.

You know, I don't know if you, for other folks in here, if you fall down the rabbit holes of social media that I do, but the amount of information that is spread as fact is alarming; without being sourced, without having any sort of concrete evidence attached to it. And part of the spread of that information and the prevalence of spreading that information is rooted in a real lack of understanding and comprehension and critical thinking.

So I know that one of the things that I have as a goal in this role, in this department, is to ensure that we really put a strong value on critical thinking, not only for protection of civil society at large, but for individuals.

So, individuals: I think of somebody like my grandmother, who may be more vulnerable to online scams and misinformation simply because she does not have a base understanding of how information is spread on social media.

And, you know, we know that not every player in news is a good player. We know that there are folks who really have advantage by spreading misinformation and trying to take advantage of people. So part of what this legislation does is ensure that the education of people is raised to a point where they really understand what they're reading, why they're reading it, where it's coming from and who is ultimately accountable if the information is false.

So I want to talk a little bit about my kids for a second. So, I think about my own childhood and how I learned to read. And I was, as I mentioned before, I had a whole community of people raising me. I had—I lived in a home with my mom and my auntie and my grandma, and my step-grandpa at a later time; an uncle and another aunt. And, you know, like many kids, I learned how to read by looking at the cereal box in the morning and reading the milk carton.

\* (15:40)

And as I got older, I took the city bus in Brandon with my grandma. My nana and I would go downtown. She volunteered at the women's resource centre—and we would take the city bus.

And I remember sounding out words on the bus and, you know, I had a wonderful coach with me. And I was, at the time, three. So I was reading proficiently by three and a half, but that's because I had a coach beside me who was helping me sound it out, who was providing context, who was turning my eyes away from things that I shouldn't be reading, to be honest, because at that time with the bus ads in the Brandon city transit, some of the things that they were advertising, not necessarily for kids.

But my—I remember learning how to read by travelling around with my nana, and then later at preschool. I was lucky to go to Beginnings Preschool in Brandon. We had a phenomenal program there, and part of our programming every day was literacy and phonetics. At that time, it was phonetics, so you—because I'm not that young, you—we would sound it out. So it was looking at the different letters and the vowel sounds that were made and the consonant sounds that were made, and really learning those base structures in English language.

So, if you consider that at three and a half, I had that base understanding, that by the time that I was five, we could drive down any major street in Brandon and I knew that, you know, not just because of the big M, but I could read the word; I know that's a

McDonald's; I know that the big burger is the Burger King.

So many things that we take for granted by having basic literacy skills, I want you to think about for a second what that would be like, as somebody who didn't have strong language skills, how challenging it would be to navigate this world. I need to take out \$20 to buy a pizza; how do I use the bank machine? What do I do here? How do—I need a drivers licence; how do I find my way to the department of motor vehicles? How do I fill out the forms?

There are—for folks who have high literacy and who have the privilege of being in an environment through elementary, junior high and high school to receive the education that they need, we take it for granted.

But, you know, I'm thinking about, when I look at the—what adult literacy will do for folks, I think of the recipient this year of the adult literacy award, and her goal, her sole goal was to be able to read to her grandkids at night. So think about that, that, you know, a simple goal of reading a story and being able to sit down and provide care and love and connection with your grandchild, or your child. For many folks, it's their own children.

I am very lucky to live in a diverse community of Windsor Park. We have so many newcomers, including the Syrian family that I spoke of. The high school children act as interpreters on everything, so they will take their parents to Manitoba Hydro to pay the bill. They will take their parents to the department of motor vehicles for their licensing.

The—this—when I talk to people, it's often, you know, mom or dad will answer the door and smile nicely, and then will call the younger person over to help them with the language interpretation. And even if I provide them with something written, there is, you know, the younger person does the translating. And I know, from speaking with those families, that there's nothing more that those parents would like than to be able to provide the information that they need to provide to their kids and to be able to guide them in a meaningful way.

So much of what we do as parents is interpreting and letting our kids know what is appropriate or not appropriate. And I want to be able to, as much as possible, give every parent that opportunity.

I'm thinking now, you're all along for the wild ride of how this brain of mine works. Now I'm thinking about how much time I spend looking for a good deal

in my life, and how much that has been an advantage for me, that I can read a—you know, when the flyers come on Thursday—the Canstar—I can read the flyer, and I know where I can get the best possible price on bread, milk, eggs, cheese, school snacks, all of those things.

And that—if you don't have financial literacy, if you don't have basic numeracy skills, that advantage that comes from being able to compare prices, to be able to compare different products and to really make your dollars stretch, you don't have that opportunity, and you're trusting other people to discern for you.

So not only is literacy—basic literacy skills—so important, but those numeracy skills as well, being able to compare high and low, what's a good deal, what isn't; can we make ends meet this month? And thinking about how much consideration needs to be given to the information that's being shared if you don't have those basic skills.

One of the great joys as a parent that I have witnessed is watching my mother-in-law read Harry Potter to my daughter. So they do this over Zoom—or FaceTime. They started it at the beginning of the pandemic. My mother-in-law is in Saskatoon, and for a very long time—now my daughter's much more busy in sports; this doesn't happen as often—but every night they would log on together and grandma would read Harry Potter to my daughter.

And I can tell you that the language skills that my beautiful girl has are robust. Her selection of words, her way of describing the world and colouring the world is incredible, and I know it is very much related to the time spent with grandma on FaceTime reading Harry Potter. It's such—I can't overemphasize how much literacy and numeracy matters to an individual and to their ability to navigate this world. Not only in the basic level, where you're keeping yourself and your children safe, but really leading a really colourful, robust life where you have the full ability to really maximize what this life is about.

And especially in a place like Canada. We bring people here with the promise of building a great life. We promise them that they will be able to raise their families in a safe and productive way. We promise them good jobs. We, you know, we open the doors in the way that only Canadians can, and I fully believe that part of our obligation to those people is to ensure that they are able to participate fully in our society.

I will close by saying that it is a true honour to introduce this bill. My great-grandfather, like many

men of his generation, was fully illiterate. And I would—when I was privileged enough to visit him in his home in St. Eustache over a weekend, I would read the Saturday Free Press to my p p re. And, you know, I never quite understood. Now that I'm older and, as I've just said, I understand how much literacy and numeracy colours a life and gives you that depth of understanding in the world.

I didn't appreciate when I was younger quite what that meant to him, but looking back, it—I'm so sad that he didn't have those skills in his lifetime. My great-grandmother did all of his books for him; he worked for the railway, but she did everything related to record-keeping. I believe the statutes of limitations have passed, and they've both passed, so I don't think I'm going to get in trouble for saying this—but she did the work for him. Any of the paperwork that was required for him to have that job on the railway, that was on her plate and her desk, because he didn't have the skills.

And I can tell you that I never thought less than—and I want to be clear—that because he couldn't read and write, I never thought less than. But I am sad that he didn't have the opportunity to experience the world in the same way that she did.

I will close by saying that, you know, we're going to do some consultations with community groups on this bill, because they have a lot to say, especially Mr. Jim Silver, who I thank for really bringing attention to this issue. Him and his colleagues have a lot of great ideas about the kinds of supports that families need in going through adult education.

\* (15:50)

But I'll close by saying that when we get to third reading and through committee, that I hope that the members opposite fully support this bill in order to provide great programming for adults in the province.

### 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 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.

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** Thank you very much, Minister, for your comments. Having a relatable event makes it very easy for everybody to understand.

I, too, have a relatable event. I worked in a machine shop with a new Canadian who came across, and that individual had difficulty even shopping for groceries. He would go in the store, and just trying to feed himself, he ended up buying cat food instead of tuna.

He worked a number of different jobs, and in those jobs, it didn't allow him any time for school.

What do we have as an alternate delivery system for education that will give everybody what they need?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I thank the honourable member for the comments and can appreciate that that is—there are many people that are experiencing the world in this way right now.

And I can speak—personally what I would like to see is greater access, not—and more openness to accessing programming. I know that many of the workplaces now offer English language as soon as folks arrive here, but I completely—I'm on board with expanding that.

And hopefully through the consultative process there are solutions brought forward by folks in the community who are already doing this work. I look to the experts in—

**The Speaker:** Minister's time has expired.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this legislation as well as congratulate her on bringing forward her first piece of legislation here in the House. I know it can be a very surreal feeling in the best way.

My question for the member is: What should adult learning centres expect from this legislation?

**MLA Cable:** Thank you so much, I appreciate the question.

Adult learning centres should expect that there is a fulsome framework and strategy. For folks who are already delivering this programming in a robust way, they will see additional support from us.

For areas where we need more programming—and I'm thinking specifically about neighbourhoods where demographics are changing, where we're seeing more

newcomers, where there has maybe been learning loss over COVID where folks have not been able to complete their studies in the way that they expected, that we will continue to work with those communities to make sure that we bring those supports closer to home.

**Mr. Perchotte:** Honourable Speaker, a question to the minister: Is there an opportunity to expand this so we can do online training for the people working two or three jobs—can get the education that they need, they can communicate in the community to make sure that not only the safety of what they do but their needs are being taken care of?

**MLA Cable:** Thank you again, for the thoughtful question. Safety is paramount.

I've—you know, a number of my good friends are involved with different labour unions. So UFCW 832, for example, I know that they do a lot of translation work in terms of not only their collective agreement, but safety standards to ensure that the members on the floor that are working in those places understand the safety protocols.

One of the motivations for this legislation is to reduce barriers, and we know that people are working two and three jobs so that the prospect of leaving those places of employment to pursue adult education in a meaningful way is a really difficult task.

So we have begun conversations about what are the alternative delivery mechanisms that we can work towards.

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** I would just like to say that literacy is such an important part of a person's life. Often success in one's life hinges on literacy. I've had a brother, or a close family member, who was on the spectrum and struggled with learning how to read.

And so my question to you would be: specifically, how will this bill help those learning—with learning disabilities—the ones that are often left behind, the ones that fall behind in the—within the cracks—and to help them become successful in life and be able to learn how to read?

**MLA Cable:** Thank you, again, for another very thoughtful question.

One of the things that myself and my colleague in education have talked about at length already is that continuum of education, that it starts in early learning through the K-to-12 system and then, you know, on to

adult education, either through post-secondary or through adult learning.

And what I will say is that as we're looking through this legislation and, frankly, across government, we always have in mind the accessibility factors and the need to consider folks who don't—who maybe have additional needs.

And I thank you for—

**The Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** The bill mentions organizations providing adult literacy programs.

So can the minister inform the House what organizations she has consulted with prior to bringing this bill forward?

**MLA Cable:** Thank you for the question. We have—since I've taken on this role, I have met with—spoken with—all of the leaders of the post-secondary institutions here, so the colleges and universities and the PBIs.

In particular, on this adult education piece, we've spoken to a number of providers and advocates. So Jim Silver and his folks, they have done comprehensive work in this sector and have made some really significant recommendations.

As I said before, the—bringing this forward now will ensure that we have a launch point to begin fulsome consultations with a number of the providers that are already doing this work.

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** So, I'd like to thank and congratulate the minister for bringing forward this bill, and just in—just sort of going—building upon the question from my colleague from Midland, so the institutions and the organizations that she has had the opportunity to consult with, what are they saying in regards to these prescribed requirements and standards that she has noted in the bill under section 4.1?

**MLA Cable:** So what we've heard—I thank the honourable member for the question—what we have heard is that when the previous act was rescinded under red tape reduction, the guise of red tape reduction, that the reporting mechanisms were removed.

So, organizations that were doing excellent work had really no way of showing that they were doing excellent work, and organizations that were

struggling, we didn't have the data to support making those changes.

What we're hearing from the sector is that they want greater framework, greater accountability and they want to be able to show folks that the work that they're doing matters—

**The Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

Are there no further questions?

\* (16:00)

### Debate

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to put a few words on the record for second reading debate on Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act.

And I would like to say congratulations to the MLA for Southdale, the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable), on not only her election, but also her appointment to the role.

I had the great pleasure of being minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration back a few years ago, and it is absolutely an incredible, incredible department to be not only necessarily in charge with, but also working with all our great advanced education partners across this great province of ours.

So, in regards, Honourable Speaker, to the bill and moving forward, we're hearing loud and clear today that the minister has—is sort of just getting going on the consultation process of a bill, bringing this forward, you know, as we've heard loud and clear in her opening remarks to the second reading. Which I must say, probably, you know, a lengthy set of opening remarks for second reading, and I commend her for that, as well, as we take a look at this wonderful place called the Chamber and watch her opening, basically, remarks on that second reading.

So, she did mention a few things in regards to making sure that adults have the ability to—not only for literacy, but within that—the ability to read and comprehend what they're being given in regards to information. And it's being able to not only comprehend, but then interpret what is actually being said. Whether things are, you know, false or elaborated or, you know, misinformation or even disinformation, Honourable Speaker.

And, as I stated the other day when I was speaking in favour of our amendment to the Throne Speech and voting against the Throne Speech put forward by the MLA for Fort Rouge, the Premier (Mr. Kinew). But also, in that speech, I wanted to make sure that our newly elected colleagues, doesn't matter which side of the House, are putting that proper information on the record. Because this information that we are saying today is very important.

So, when we're talking about Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, we're making sure that, when we get up to speak in this House, that the information that we're putting on the record is factual. Because we want to make sure that our students, whether it's early years or early childhood education or the K-to-12 system or the post-secondary education system, we know, Honourable Speaker, that all Manitobans, after that—after the K-to-12 system, as the minister had pointed out, you know, possibly ran—you know, some of those individuals that run into a little bit of difficulties going through their K-to-12 system, not completing, but then has the ability to go on into adult education. We want to make sure that they've got that opportunity to get that post-secondary education in this great province of ours, and be able to go forward on being able to have those conversations and being able to decipher the information that they're getting.

I did point out quite clearly the other day—and, again, this isn't, you know, necessarily something that I really, really wanted to highlight—but, as the MLA for Lac du Bonnet, when somebody is getting up on the record, in Hansard, and putting information on the record, especially if it's the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Altomare), you want to make sure that it's factual information.

And so, my job—*[interjection]*—my job—so, I know that the Deputy Premier, the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine), is heckling me from her seat. I know that she really wants to hear what I have to say, so I appreciate her listening.

So, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning put on the record that the government, the NDP government, is investing over \$500 million into the Pinawa Dam. Well, I put forward pictures of the Pinawa Dam. I tell you, Honourable Speaker, it would take considerably more money to increase the Pinawa Dam.

And in regard to the bill, to Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, if people are reading what the Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister has put on the record, they would say, hey, this is great. The Pinawa

Dam all of a sudden is going to get eight new generators to rehabilitate the Pinawa Dam.

So, literacy, Honourable Speaker, is very—

**The Speaker:** Order. *[interjection]* Order. I would remind the member when he is speaking about a bill to try and focus on the bill and not vector too far off. So, please keep that in mind.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Again, as far as veering off too far and staying on track with the bill, as I have mentioned a few times, definitely The Adult Literacy Act, the Bill 5, which the minister from Southdale has putting forward, is very important that we are teaching those literacy skills so that people in the public can then actually decipher between misinformation. Because that's actually what the minister said, that she wants to make sure that adults get good literacy education so that they can interpret misinformation.

And as far as veering off the path, Honourable Speaker, I appreciate that guidance as well because the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning was so off the path, he thought that the community of Pinawa was right next to Springfield-Ritchot.

But, that being said, I appreciate the opportunity today to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act. I not only look forward to seeing in the future what people have to say at committee, but also to hear from the minister about how their consultations go on Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'm happy to rise here for second reading of Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act.

Just offhand, Honourable Speaker, I wish that there had been a bill briefing to this piece of legislation. I personally find the bill briefings very, very helpful, and I'd like to encourage the government as they introduce legislation to provide those bill briefings to us, just so we can better understand the legislation and ask a lot of our questions ahead of time, as well.

Offhand, again, Honourable Speaker, more resources for adult literacy is a very positive thing. A lot of people are going to benefit from legislation such as this. And it's just very important, though, that we make sure that it's a—culturally appropriate practices are being considered as it is introduced and rolled out throughout the many facilities across Manitoba.

Education creates opportunities; we know this. And there are different avenues for education, whether that be through reading and writing, post-secondary education, high school education, primary education. We receive it and we should strive to continue to educate ourselves throughout our entire lives.

We know that it will be beneficial for job searching, for example. We heard one of my colleagues from Selkirk talk about this in one of his questions, Honourable Speaker.

We know that it's critical for communication. I spoke about this in just the last piece of legislation. Words are important. We need to use our words wisely, Honourable Speaker.

I really appreciated the member's story that she shared, just about how she learned to read on the bus and reading the signs. And it had me reflecting upon my own experience, Honourable Speaker. And I was actually 19 years old and I struggled with a speech impediment. This is something I haven't spoken about a lot in this House, but I'm very proud of how I overcame my speech impediment.

Up until age 19, I could not pronounce the letter R; I really struggled with it. And even now to this day, I have to pay very close attention to make sure that I am properly articulating myself, enunciating my letters and my words, Honourable Speaker.

I used to say 'shoits' instead of shorts, as an example, Honourable Speaker. And I was seeing a speech pathologist on this and it took a lot of work, being 19 years old and there are different feelings that come with this. There are feelings of shame, oftentimes. There are feelings of, it's expensive when you're a 19-year-old and you don't have coverage for speech pathology.

And I remember having to read papers, and there were—a lot of these practices, Honourable Speaker, were meant for children as well, and that's why it's so important that we continue to invest in adult literacy.

\*(16:10)

But the papers I had to read were often, read cat, read dog, read the signs in front of you. And to bring it all back, it made me remember what the member was sharing about being on the bus and reading all the billboards. And oftentimes, Honourable Speaker, I still catch myself doing this. I will be, as I'm driving, I will be reading the signs around me intentionally, in

my car, articulating—like, heavily articulating my letters, just so I can better pronounce them.

Because it takes practice. It is literally the positioning of your tongue in your mouth that you have to learn in order to pronounce words, Honourable Speaker. And it just had me reflecting very fondly upon this time, and again, at age 19 it was embarrassing for me to have to experience and to go through. But I'm exceptionally grateful that I did, and it makes me appreciate adult literacy in the many different avenues that it offers.

I really want to thank the organizations here in Manitoba for the work that they do. I know, like, Seven Oaks learning centre, for example, does some phenomenal work and goes above and beyond, ensuring that there's cultural-appropriate practices being practised on site, making sure it's inclusive for everyone, Honourable Speaker.

I'm excited to learn more about the bill through continued debate and at committee, and again, I just want to thank the minister for bringing forward today's legislation and congratulate her on her position as Minister of Education.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** To be able to have the opportunity to get up and talk about Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, is very important. I look forward to working in this House and alongside the rest of my caucus to make sure that we bring advanced education and training forward and make sure it's done in an intelligent fashion to reflect the people of our community.

Adult literacy is very important. As I mentioned earlier, from the gentleman who had immigrated here back in my machine-shop days, he didn't have an opportunity to go for traditional classes. We worked from 4 'til midnight every day. During the day he had another job, so his only time was after midnight until 8 in the morning where he could do that.

So I spent many coffee breaks and many lunch hours working with him on learning English, and the advancement for his willingness to learn happened very quickly. Eventually, we parted ways, as I went on my careers, but I was able to run into that individual many years later, and he was in charge of a maintenance program of another machine shop, where he had to read very technical data on the equipment.



So the adult literacy is extremely important. We need to make sure that that literacy is brought forward to be available for everybody that needs an education.

On Friday, I had the opportunity to be in the Selkirk parade, and as I went down with my truck and my float and family members, I seen a lot of families out there. And we passed a lot of new Canadians along the way, and the joy that they had on their faces was incredible. And often when I would say to them, you know, merry Christmas or hope you're having a great day or welcome to the parade, they couldn't know what I—they couldn't understand what I was saying. So they had to go look at their children, who were often the interpreters for them. And then they would wave back, knowing of what I said.

So Bill 5 and The Adult Literacy Act is—brings something very important forward for us to make sure that we have the ability for everybody to be able to communicate in their communities and to make sure that people understand the safety in their jobs. Most companies offer a core work-certification program, and a lot of employees who've come there do not understand English or don't understand the full scope of it.

So we want to make sure that we—when we start taking a look at the details of the bill, we don't just look at the general scope of the bill; that we get into the fine details and find out how those details matter for the people that need those education levels, to make sure their literacy is taken into account, to make sure that we establish not only for—beyond for the adults, but make sure we get that literacy into the programs for children, from kindergarten to grade 12.

We need to make sure that we have the fortitude to make sure we looking forward to the future, make sure that future is mapped out, not just what we need for today, but we need for 10 years down the road, or 20 years down the road. And we can sit back and take a look at the program and saying, how does this impact our future generations? How quickly can we get new immigrants into Canada or people with learning disabilities able to understand the communicative language that we have locally, make sure that we move forward.

But this bill seems like a good start on a grand scope, but we have—we need to get into the details, we need to get into the weeds of the bill to make sure that we can differentiate what is needed for which communities and for which people.

We have a lot of people who work two or three different jobs, and we need to make sure that those people, when they come forward, they have an ability to be educated in literacy, the need to make sure that the delivery system can accommodate those who don't have the ability to go into a classroom setting.

We need to make sure that when we take a look at the funding models, how and specifically does that relate to make sure we get those materials out to the people.

A lot of those people needing this literacy program of—lower on the economic scale; they don't have a lot of free money to spend in education, so we need to make sure that this is accessible for them, that they can get this. It's very important that when they arrive at work, they're in a safe environment, that they know how to—they 'advocate' for themselves, that they have the right to refuse work that is dangerous.

And, moving forward, I just want to say, you know, we want to make sure that we take a look at all aspects of this bill and make sure that it—the definition of it includes everybody.

Thank you.

**MLA Billie Cross (Seine River):** Honourable Speaker, I am proud to rise in support of the The Adult Literacy Act, and I want to tell some stories because it ties in so well. I have a lot I want to talk about.

As you all know, I am a teacher, and that is not going to change even though I sit in this House. I'm a lifelong learner. I think we all understand that as human beings, learning doesn't end when you leave school. We are all lifelong learners. And so, that means that it's never too late to get the information, develop the skills and the fundamentals you need to be successful in life.

But I want to start a little further back. I'm looking at the bill itself, and something really stuck out to me, and it's: whereas higher literacy skills lead to reduced poverty and improve personal, economic and social outcomes for individuals, family and the community.

Well, I want to talk about my grandmother. My grandmother was born in 1916 in Abbéville, Manitoba. She attended school for only two years, at which point, her parents didn't send her back to the institution she was forced to go to. At that point she grew up on a trapline, living with her mom and dad and her sister.

I remember being a small child, and I had a really close, connected relationship to my grandmother. As

a baby, my mom was 17 when she had me, so we lived with my grandmother for a period of time. She is probably the one person that is always with me every time I stand up and speak and is sort of the conscious that I have—conscience that I have, that I carry with me in this life to do the right thing.

And so, let's talk about what it means to be a person who can't read or write. What does life look like for a person who doesn't have those skills?

At five years old, I remember sleeping over at her house, and saying, Grandma, could you read me a story before I go to bed? And having her reply, I'm sorry, my girl, I don't know how to read. And not comprehending that. What do you mean? You're a grown-up. How come you can't read? And her having to try and explain to a small child why she didn't have those skills, and not being able to connect it to colonialism and trauma and the experience of being a Métis person in Manitoba.

\* (16:20)

As I grew older, I became the person who read for her, who could write for her. My grandmother could not even sign her own name. She signed her name with an X. Imagine going to a bank, and the way people look at you when you can't even write your own name. The embarrassment and shame she felt stayed with her her entire life.

I would go grocery shopping with my grandmother, and I would read the labels for her. I would read all of the items that she was interested in finding. For a while it was okay, because sometimes there were photos on items, and she would start to recognize packages. But as packaging changed, as we know, with marketing, they change what they want to do and how they sell things so that they can get more people to buy in.

And so imagine being a person who can't read and write going to the grocery store, trying to just buy the things you need so that you can survive. Imagine getting a bill in the mail that you can't read, that you can't decipher. Of course my grandmother could count and, you know, she had basic math skills. But that wasn't enough to kind of help her get by. She had to rely on the support of others.

Now what kind of job can you get if you're a person who cannot read or write? Even back then, you know. She's born in 1916, so, at about 20 years old, that's 1936. You still had to have literacy skills to actually get gainful employment in this country.

She raised her children and she took on jobs cleaning houses. Menial labour jobs that didn't involve her having to have an education. Just going to get on a bus was difficult, because, you know, until she—buses actually provided route numbers, she could not read where the buses were going. And imagine asking someone, and they look at you like you're ridiculous because you can't read the writing on a bus. That affected her.

Her entire life was affected by her not being able to read and write. And so I remember at one point trying to teach my grandmother these skills. And she really tried, but then she said, you know what, my girl, I'm just too old to learn this. And I think the importance of this act is that now we can say to people, you're never too old to be a learner.

I think we know that better nowadays. I think we're removing the stigma that's attached to not having literacy skills. About a year ago I was privileged to attend a professional development opportunity put on by the Manitoba Teachers' Society, where we actually looked at racism and literacy. And it was something that I hadn't even unpacked or thought about myself.

We know that people speak different dialects, or they speak different types of English, or, you know, language is different depending on the region you come from. Now, for many people, the type of English they might speak, or write, or understand, doesn't really meet up to the standards that the rest of us think that they should have to meet.

And so there's racism attached to literacy, and I think that the importance of this is that maybe we're going to finally unpack that, that we are going to look at things with the anti-oppressive and anti-racist lens so that people feel more comfortable to step forward and get the skills they need to be successful citizens.

Now, my own experience as a reader—I love to read. But it wasn't always that way. My mom only went to school 'til the end of grade 9. However, she had to be a strong reader because not only was her mother not able to read and write, her father had emigrated from Sweden and could only read and write in Swedish, the Swedish language.

So life was difficult. She had to be the interpreter in her family for many things. And so my mom had really strong reading and writing skills, thankfully, because she continued to be a lifelong learner on her own, to develop all the skills she needed to be successful in our society.

She instilled the love of reading into myself and my sister, reading with us as small children, telling us stories, making sure that we read as much as we could on our own, but also writing stories. I remember being five years old, and my favourite game to play was school. I would pretend I was the teacher and I would make up lessons that my little sister would have to complete.

So, even at that earliest age, I knew how important reading and writing was. And so I think that's probably why I ended up becoming a teacher.

For myself, reading really kicked off about the 5th grade. I could read, and I liked it, but I'm very—those who know me know that I'm a very competitive person. I am intrinsically motivated. I do not need any outside factors to push me to do, you know, the things I want to accomplish.

And so, there was a choice in grade 5 that wasn't made for me. It was made by the teacher. There were two ELA programs, and it was tied to your reading skills and it was tied to the level you were at. But it was something that forced kids to be on different sides, and it made some kids feel like they were othered or marginalized in a way.

So there was either the straight ELA program that all students would get where you're working on your grammar and you're working on punctuation, you're working on your basic reading skills.

Or, if you were lucky enough to be chosen and were a strong enough reader, you go to be in the individualized reading program in the school I attended, which meant that you got to choose your own books in ELA class and you got to read it and then answer questions and have an interview with the teacher.

How cool is that, right? Of course, everybody wants to be in that individualized program because they made it known that this is a program where you get to be more independent. So, I worked extremely hard to make sure that I got moved over to the individualized reading program.

And the very first book that I took out and read was *Little House on the Prairie*. Those of you who are probably a little older, you probably remember that series or the show. That was one of my favourite books, and I read it in a night.

And I continued to read. And that year, I read 350 books, and I remember that because I got a little certificate. I got recognition. You got special treats

and you got to pick books in different categories if you hit different levels. And so, for me that was, like, extremely important.

Then I took it a little but further. I really got into spelling, and we used to have spelling bees in school. How many of you remember that? We've all probably been in part of a spelling bee, right? How fun is that. And so, I remember always being the last one standing. Because of my reading and the amount of reading I did, I was an excellent speller. And in grade 6, I was evaluated for my spelling levels, and, in fact, I was spelling at a grade 11 level in grade 6 because of my love for reading.

We can't say enough about literacy, right? It's so important to everything we do. Literacy gives us confidence. It helps us overcome personal experiences, economic challenges, social challenges. If we have the ability to read and write very capably and fit in with everyone else, then there's no barriers to our success.

Not being able to read is definitely a barrier. It marginalizes folks. It makes life extremely hard. It kills their confidence. If a person can't read, they are going to do everything in their power to hide that. They are going to start developing skills so that you don't know that they don't have those skills.

And so, I think about that—myself, as a child. My favourite place to go on Saturday afternoons—I lived on Atlantic Avenue in the North End—I would walk down to Salter and I would walk up Salter to Machray and go to the St. John's Library every Saturday.

I would walk in there and it was very much like these dark-coloured desks, these big tables, these big, beautiful chairs, much like the Speaker has up there, where you go to sit and you could just spend the day reading with friends and doing homework. And the library had activities going on, and it was just an amazing place to be.

I have such fond memories of that building and how it kept me learning and how it kept me from doing other things that maybe I shouldn't have been doing. It kept me on track; it helped me make lifelong friends and lifelong memories that me, at 51 years old standing here, I'm talking about today, my visits to the St. Johns Library.

Now, you know, school is something that, to be successful in, for students to have success, you have to be able to read and write. I remember students who I went to school with, students I taught, friends I had, that this was much more difficult for them. There was

a stigma placed upon them because they struggled with these skills.

And I think that what this act will do is those people that couldn't find success in our standardized systems can maybe find success if we start thinking outside the box in how we educate people. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

And so, I think about my own children. I have three children. My oldest daughter is 33 years old, and she is a teacher. I'm extremely proud of that. She's going to be a mom soon, and I'm going to be a grandmother very soon.

\* (16:30)

And so I think about her in—specifically when I think about literacy. At seven years old, my daughter came to live with my husband and I. She—I am not her biological parent. And so, imagine being seven years old, you're thrust across the country from the Maritimes to the prairies. You're suddenly living with your father, whom you've never lived full time with, and a stepmother and a little sister.

The one connection I could make with her immediately was through reading. Was through spending time and reading. Her little sister Preslie who came along shortly before Morgan moved in with us, well, what do new mothers do with their children? We read them stories. Could you imagine being a mother who can't read or write?

And think of—I think of newcomer parents right now that are in this country, and they've come from places where they've experienced trauma because of war and they're trying to find some happiness and some connection in this new place. And they send their kids off to school, and the school has a home reading program and the books are sent home, and—you know, we've all been there as parents. Your job is to read those books with your students and, you know, sign that sheet to say that the kids have read the book. Well, what about those newcomer parents that can't read these books because they're in English? How are we helping them?

I was in a meeting this morning where it was expressed to me that the No. 1 thing facing newcomers—and especially those who are coming from Ukraine right now—is the inability to find spaces where they can learn the English language. We want folks to come here. We want them to stay in Manitoba. But don't we want them to also be successful when they do? And the only way they're going to be able to do that is if they can learn the language where they

can develop those skills, and then, hopefully, in turn use the skills they brought with them to make Manitoba a better place.

Now, going back to my daughters and the connection we had. Imagine being a little girl and suddenly you have to leave your mom and go across the country, and there's a new woman in your life. How do you make a connection with a child? You do it through story. You do it through spending time with them. We weren't a wealthy family, but we had books in our home. And so we would sit and read, and that first year that she lived with us, we read 200 books together. And this was a kid who was struggling to read. By the end of that year, she was independent. She was reading to her little sister and, later on, her little brother.

But, you know, reading became a family tradition. In grade 4, Harry Potter, the series came out, and so we were able to share that together. And what ended up happening is she brought that book into our home, because she took it out at school, and said, hey, mom, you should really read this book; it's pretty cool. And so we read it, and then we couldn't wait for the next book to come out.

And what ended up happening is that every time a new book was released as part of the Harry Potter series, our family would line up at the bookstore, every single time, and we would spend hours at midnight waiting for the release of that book. There were a lot of late nights and a lot of fun. And then we would get home, and—I remember the first time we went for the second book when it was released. We bought one book. We got home, me having to be the adult in the situation, let her read the book first, and I had to wait my turn.

But that's how ravenous we were for reading, that the next time we went for the third book and the fourth and the fifth and the sixth and the seventh, we had to buy multiple copies of the books, so that we wouldn't fight over who got to read them first. Because those of you who are familiar with that series, you're probably also familiar that, as the books in the series went on, the books became much larger, and they took a little longer to read.

And so, when you think about literacy, it is tied to family. It is tied to confidence. It is tied to people being able to feel like they belong. And I know that I've talked about belonging a lot in this place. And I continue to talk about it, because I think it's the tie that keeps us all together. Belonging is what makes society move forward.

And for folks that can't read or write, they don't have that sense of belonging. We owe it to them to make sure that we do everything in our power so that they feel like they are part of what we are doing here.

For myself, reading, like I said, was my first love. And so reading really helped me be successful in so many things. I'm not only a teacher; I'm a small business—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I'd just like to remind the member that, when we're debating bills, to keep your comments somewhat relevant to the bill that's being debated. And I appreciate everything that you've talked about is loosely related to the bill, but let's try and focus a little tighter on the bill before us.

**MLA Cross:** Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the reminder.

What I was going to say is that those reading skills I developed became very important as an adult. I went to school at 38 years old. I was an adult learner in an ACCESS program. The No. 1 thing that I had to do to enter that program was take a literacy test.

I had to demonstrate my ability to comprehend documents, to comprehend different pieces of writing, but also to articulate myself by writing responses to that.

Thankfully, I was successful. However, there were some folks that I was in school with that—they struggled a little bit more. And so what ended up happening, thankfully, because of this ACCESS program, they were able to work on their adult literacy skills with the program and then enter a semester later, a term later, into the program with the rest of us.

And so adult literacy is so much more than just teaching someone how to read for the first time. It's about developing the skills further that we need to be successful in life, being successful in a program, being successful in school.

I think that we often overlook the importance of adult literacy because we just dismiss it as, well, they've made their choices. People have chosen not to become literate for whatever reason, or not make good choices in school, and so we write them off. And we can't write folks off, because we want adults—as it says here—adults in Manitoba require those skills so they can take full advantage of current and future education and employment opportunities.

And so, as someone who owns a small business, we have all kinds of folks that apply to work for us, and they send in resumes that, you know, require

them to write a little bit of information on, and we see that there are folks that are struggling with this. I've interviewed people for our business to see, you know, potentially about coming to work for us, and we've had conversations about their literacy.

And, in particular, newcomers who really need programs like this so that they can be successful in seeking gainful employment. We all want people to be successful, and I think this is one of the most important ways we can ensure that that happens, is making sure that people have access to adult literacy programs.

There are not enough programs right now. We hear that people are on wait-lists to get into these programs so that they can get employment. I worked as a teacher at Windsor Park Collegiate, and I worked in a program with students that were all from Syria. The No. 1 thing that I heard from the students and parents at parent-teacher conferences was that there were not enough opportunities for the parents to learn the language, and because of that, they were struggling financially; they were struggling to move on with their lives here in Canada and in Manitoba in particular.

I've sat across the room from parents coming to parent-teacher conferences who could not speak English, who could not read report cards. I've had people come in, parents come in and say, could you read the report cards to me, could you read all the comments. And they felt ashamed. And I said, hey, there is no shame here. We are here to support you. We will try and help you find programs; we will do whatever we need so that you feel successful as a parent and that your child feels successful.

And I think that we know most people want to have these skills, but there's not always the opportunity to get them in a way that keeps your sense of pride, lets you do this in a way that you don't feel embarrassed, that you don't feel like you're an outcast.

I couldn't imagine being an adult going into a high school, even, like, a 20-year-old going back into a high school to try and learn these skills. They would be mocked by the students that are in that school; we know that's how teens are. That would just be cause for them to not even want to develop their literacy skills.

Our strategies are sound. Our reasoning is sound. We should all be in support of people becoming more educated, not less educated. I think that's a big problem in our society right now: we're so afraid of

people being educated. Well, the one way people become educated is by being able to read and write, regardless of what language they can do it in. Let's hope that they can do it in the language that is predominant where they live.

But literacy is the only gateway to success. I think we all know that; I think everybody in this room understands that, you know. I think everybody in this House needs to be in favour of this and wanting to see folks do better, wanting to see them have the skills that they need for success, you know.

I also really appreciated something the minister talked about and wanting to see folks do better, wanting to see them have the skills that they need for success, you know.

\* (16:40)

I also really appreciated something the minister talked about: measurement of success. Not to make our government look successful, but what are we doing right and what can we do better on? It's not about making, you know, highlighting mistakes or successes; it's about making this program as sound as possible.

I think as teachers—you know, many of us are teachers in this space—we know that when we provide lessons to students, whether it be in literacy or numeracy or whatever area, that we have to constantly do assessment; we have to assess our practices.

And so when the minister said that today, that we need to be measurable and assess our practices, that is just good, sound teaching. That is good, sound education practice. That is the No. 1 thing we need to do because we are not quite sure how folks or students would react to what we're doing. And so we need to be able to make changes as required so that everybody meets, you know, the success that they need.

And these programs have to be ongoing and sustainable. They have to be places where people can hold their head high and be proud to be in these programs. We have to make sure that people are able to read and write. How can they do anything in life? I've already talked about that. All the simple, little things that we do to—day to day—like, day to day, require us to have literacy skills. Imagine being a person who has none. I don't think you can even drive properly without having literacy skills, reading signs or, you know, even following directions. Look at the amount of reading we do in this place. We have all got papers in front of us. We've all done tons of these things.

People who can't read and write, it does not mean that they are not smart. And I think that's something that we also forget. Literacy isn't tied to intelligence. It's a skill; it's a fundamental skill. But it does not dictate how intelligent a human being is. It's just a barrier that was put in their place so that they can really show how that—what they can do, their skills and how they shine.

And so, by introducing this bill and this act, we are actually showing Manitobans that we care and we want everyone to be successful. We want everyone to be a part of what we're doing to make this a great place to live and a great place to be. Like I said, we need more education, not less. And this bill allows us to do just that.

Thank you.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** I'm pleased to put a couple of words on the record in respect of this very, very important bill, Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act.

First and foremost, I want to—this is actually my first opportunity to get up in the House other than for government business and ministerial statements, so I do just want to say a congratulations and acknowledge all of the new folks that we have in the Chamber, both on the opposite side and certainly on this side, with all of our new members.

I think that it's always interesting to see all of the folks that have been elected and have been sent by Manitobans to represent their constituents in a good way. And as I always say, those of us that are elected to this Chamber, it is a sacred responsibility to represent Manitobans, and so I sincerely offer a congratulations to everybody that's new here.

I want to just acknowledge my colleague, the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable), for her first bill in this Chamber, but also for the long road, the long, hard road that the minister has walked and the path that she's taken and the journey that has led her to this moment.

I remember as a member of the opposition, my first bill, the opportunity that I had to introduce my first bill, and then certainly the opportunity that I had when my bill received royal assent and how proud I felt of that, how proud I felt knowing the journey that I've led and that I've experienced and that to be a First Nations woman with laws on the books.

And so I want to acknowledge my sister-colleague for her journey that she undertook to get

here and really the special moment of having your first bill introduced.

And adult literacy is so important. I would submit to the House and to yourself, Honourable Speaker, that everybody in the Chamber understands the importance, and I would submit, is committed to the idea that we need to ensure that we are supporting adult literacy, and the importance of adult literacy in the lives of Manitoba citizens, and in the lives of newcomers that come to our beautiful province to make a life for themselves and for their families.

It is such a cornerstone of education, but also it's a cornerstone of being a part of Manitoba and the work that we all want to do together in our own individual paths.

So, I think that everybody in the Chamber can celebrate a good bill that really just further entrenches the importance of adult literacy, and I would submit to the Chamber that both sides of the House are probably in agreement with this.

I would be remiss in my first opportunity getting up in the House, and certainly speaking to a bill about adult literacy, if I didn't take a couple of moments to acknowledge some of my colleagues. I think it's important for Manitobans to know and—who they elected in this Chamber on this side of the House in respect of the government.

And because on this side of the House we believe in education. We believe in educating our children. We believe in small classroom sizes. We believe in the role of all of the infrastructure for education, and the important role that every single piece provides for the overall infrastructure for education; i.e., one of the reasons why we really lobbied and engaged the community, and the community came together to fight bill 64, and I think that that's indicative of how much, on this side of the House, we really do centre education.

And so, to that end, Honourable Speaker, I wanted to just point out for Manitobans how many educators we have on this side of the House. I knew that we had several educators, but I didn't actually realize just how many. We have quite a few educators.

And so, I want to point out, and I want to lift up and I want to acknowledge the member for Seine River (MLA Cross) for being one of our Manitoba educators. I want to lift up and acknowledge the member for Riel (MLA Moyes) as one of our educators, our Manitoba educators. I want to acknowledge, of course, as most of the Chamber knows, the

Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, a phenomenal educator and so dedicated, and we are so blessed to have him as our Minister of Education.

Our colleague, the Minister for Housing, Addictions, Homelessness and Mental Health, a former educator, who—that she has said many, many times in the House how committed she is. And I would point out that the minister did phenomenal work at Wayfinders, and did phenomenal work at lifting up newcomer children, but particularly Indigenous children. So, I want to lift up my sister colleague on there.

I want to acknowledge the Minister for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, also another Manitoba educator. I want to acknowledge the member for River Heights (MLA Moroz), another educator in Manitoba's education system. I want to acknowledge the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle), also another educator.

And then I want to acknowledge the member for Lagimodière (Mr. Blashko), the assistant Deputy Speaker, also another educator. I want to acknowledge the member for Wolseley (MLA Naylor), the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) and the member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen), who are school trustees in our education system.

\* (16:50)

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I would just remind the minister to please keep her remarks somewhat focused on the bill before us. As much it's nice to acknowledge our colleagues, please try and focus.

**MLA Fontaine:** And so, for those folks that are keeping count, I believe that's 12 members of our NDP team are educators. Educators who believe in adult literacy; educators that believe in the rights of children to be protected and to live authentically within their schools and safely within our schools.

And so, I want to acknowledge and just say how proud we are, on this side of the House, to work with such phenomenal Manitobans that have dedicated their lives to education.

And, again, taking the lead from our minister that brought forward Bill 5—and then I think that it is very important that we celebrate all of the good work that our colleagues on this side of the House have done, including—I will point out also that members on this side of the House were instrumental in defeating bill 64, which members opposite will remember didn't work out quite well for them and certainly didn't work

out for—*[interjection]* Yes, for several of their members who are no longer here because, Honourable Speaker, they didn't prioritize adult literacy.

Had they prioritized adult literacy, maybe they would've known that you can't really try to mess with the education infrastructure that we have here in Manitoba, because Manitobans, citizens, believe in our education system, which includes prioritizing adult literacy programming.

The minister, in her comments, in her remarks, in her debate in respect of Bill 5, spoke about the importance of Bill 5 and adult literacy, particularly in respect of reconciliation and Indigenous peoples and Indigenous self-governance and determination. And I think that it's really important to recognize that we need to—and I've said this many, many times in this House—you cannot just, you know, feign support for reconciliation without putting actions to it.

And our government lives and breathes and actions reconciliation, and Bill 5 is one of those opportunities of actioning reconciliation by ensuring that we are centring and we are celebrating and we are entrenching adult literacy in respect of our, you know, what's made available for Manitobans that need it.

I think everybody in the House would agree—I hope would agree—that we understand the role that adult literacy plays in actioning and moving forward reconciliation. I think there's been such a disconnect between colonial western education systems and what is—what Indigenous people are engaged in that education system, because quite often Indigenous peoples are alienated and—from the education system. And so, we do have quite a few citizens that do take adult literacy programming.

And I remember, several years back, visiting one of the adult literacy programs in the North End and meeting with some of the folks—again, all Indigenous citizens who were participating in this program—and it was really quite an honour to be able to sit down with the folks that are working in the program, but then also, you know, being able to sit down with individuals that were taking it.

And I will never, never forget how proud—and I remember speaking to an Indigenous man, I think he must have been, geez, I don't know, he was probably in his late 30s. And he was so proud of himself about taking literacy programming, even so, you know, much later in life. And he was so proud to share the books that he was learning. And a lot of the books that

they had there that he was so proud that he was now able to read to his children were Indigenous books.

And so I thought it was really good that, you know, we can support adult literacy and the connection that when folks are given that opportunity and they're given that programming and we're centring that programming in people's lives, the transformative effect that it has within their own immediate family. Again, he was so proud that he was able to read to his children.

And so I think that's something that we can be proud of, that we can be proud of the fact that we're a province—and again, I would imagine that both sides of the House believe in adult literacy, and so I—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**MLA Fontaine:** Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'm glad to see so much energy from members opposite on adult literacy and the importance.

So, know—I know the members opposite are a little bit bored now because they're on the opposite side of the House, but I really am centring the need for adult literacy and that we really should be ensuring that we are doing everything that we can in respect of centring and entrenching adult literacy.

I want to speak a little bit more about that program, and a woman that I met at that program. Again, she also shared with me some of the, again, transformative effects in her life of being able to read, something that many of us may take for granted in respect of reading.

And, again, similarly to the gentleman that I met with, she was saying that she was able to do homework with her children, and how proud she was that she was able now—because she had been, you know, embarrassed that she wasn't able to do homework with her children. And now, because of this program which, again, I will put out there and I'll point out was an NDP program and—in the North End—prior to this former government taking office. But that, you know, again, she was very, very thankful that we had a program that allowed her to be able to now do homework with her children.

So, Honourable Speaker, I think that, again, I think it's important that we centre adult literacy and that we remember how important it is in respect of people transforming their lives, the ability to get a job, the ability to sit down with their children and do homework, the ability to read to their children.



And you know, and again, to that end, I think one of the things that we've really noticed in the last many years is—and I've seen it a couple of times now in some of these programs—the amount of Indigenous books now that are contributing to folks being able to, like, read to their kids.

And I think that that's a testament to how—I mean, there's still lots of work to do—but we're certainly walking and journeying down this path of reconciliation, particularly when you see so many Indigenous authors and Indigenous books now that are available.

And so I'm really glad to see that some of these adult literacy programs are now using Indigenous books and again, in languages as well, Honourable Speaker. We're seeing so many Indigenous books that are—have Indigenous languages in their books.

And so it's really important for Indigenous peoples in actioning reconciliation that they are able to read some of the books that are before us right now.

And, again, I think that this is something that we can all agree on in the House that adult literacy is something that we should be supporting, celebrating—*[interjection]*—yes, celebrating—

**An Honourable Member:** Yes, that's right.

**MLA Fontaine:** The Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) agrees with me that we should be really looking at adult literacy here in the province.

And, again, so, in my final couple of seconds that I have before me, I once again want to congratulate the minister for her first bill that she's able to introduce today, and again recognize—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

The hour being 5 o'clock, when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member—or, excuse me—the honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) will have 13 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 4, 2023

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