

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
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LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
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LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
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LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
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MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
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SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
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SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
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WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Fort Whyte	
<i>Vacant</i>	Thompson	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 17, 2022

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

**Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the chair.

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

Please be seated.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** I would call Bill 218 for second reading debate this morning.

#### SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

##### Bill 218—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Bill 218 has been called for debate this morning—the honourable member for—second reading.

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor), that Bill 218, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act;

Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation, be now read for a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Sala:** I'm honoured to have a chance to reintroduce The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act here in this House, a bill that responds to a runaway issue we have with above-guideline rent increases here in Manitoba, which are fuelling a broader affordability crisis that Manitobans are facing in this province.

We've seen, in recent weeks, inflation data coming out that speaks to some of the increased challenges that Canadians and Manitobans are facing in meeting their basic cost of living.

We've seen that, of course, gasoline costs have gone up significantly—34 per cent on average. We think about what that means for the average family. We look at Canadian data: average fuel usage for a Canadian family is about \$1,700 a year. Add 33 per cent, we're talking about an additional \$500 a year in costs for the average family.

We know that food costs have gone up approximately 5 per cent. Add that cost, that's about \$500 in additional cost for the average Canadian family.

Of course, in this province, we've seen hydro rates being jacked up, we know that university tuition is going up and, of course, we know that the costs of housing are going up significantly, but one thing that isn't going up are wages in this province.

We know that wages remain largely stagnant. Of course, our minimum wage has only been increased by 5 cents by this government, and of course we're also not seeing increases in income support programs for Manitobans. EIA and other programs are not indexed to inflation, and so Manitobans are seeing all of their costs go up significantly, but their wages, their incomes, are not going up.

And that's feeding into a growing crisis in this province. We know that lots of Manitobans are really struggling right now, and they need our help.

Now, you know, this government might wish to have a means to stop some of these huge increases in costs for Manitobans, they might wish that they had

an E-brake to put a stop to some of these costs, and I'm here today to suggest that we're offering them that E-brake to put a stop to this runaway issue with AGIs in this province that's fueling an affordability crisis in Manitoba. This is an opportunity to take control of that issue.

You know, I first learned about the issue of runaway above-guideline rent increases from community members that came into my office shortly after I was elected, and I learned of some pretty difficult stories. Community members that were facing rent increases of 20 per cent, 25 per cent. And you know, when I first learned about these increases I thought that there had to be something wrong. And one of the things that was concerning to me was that these stories about these rent increases were also coming with stories where community members had seen no real improvements in their buildings, and yet they were seeing these significant increases in their rent being proposed.

You know, I heard stories of community members who, in face of those types of rent increases, were faced with the possibility of being 'renovicted' from their homes, being no longer being able to afford to live there. Or, in some cases, being forced to make very difficult trade-offs between paying the rent or buying food, or paying the rent or buying medicine.

And you know, it became clear from those conversations that this issue was fairly widespread in my own community, where there are quite a few apartment complexes, and that led to me digging into the issue at a broader scale. We submitted a FIPPA to find out about what was happening in this province overall. And what we found, if you look at the 2019-2020 fiscal, was that there were a total of 310 applications for above-guideline rent increases and a total of 310 of those applications were approved; 20,400 housing units in this province ended up seeing significant rent increases with about 2,700 of those being 15 per cent or more.

\* (10:10)

Let's think about the impacts of that in a province as small as Manitoba. Our rental universe is not that large and we had 20,000 units—over 20,000 units in one year that experienced above-guideline increases.

You know, this issue continues to happen to this day, and I think everyone in this House has a connection to a relative or a friend or a loved one that is living in an apartment that is at risk of facing one of these

massive above-guideline rent increases and are currently unprotected.

We need to put a stop to this issue and so, in response to this issue, we started digging in to look at what kind of solutions may be before us here. We consulted with local housing experts. We consulted with tenants. We did a scan across Canada. And we identified ultimately four key issues with our current residential tenancies legislation that we really need to solve.

The first is that our current RTB legislation allows for a laundry list of expenses to be submitted. If you're a property owner right now, you can submit expenses for the cost of acquiring tenants, for your banking costs, for tools you purchase—the types of costs that would normally be incorporated simply into the cost of doing business. Landlords are currently able to download those onto renters.

The list of allowable capital expenses is also very extensive, and ultimately, we've created a situation where property owners are incentivized to submit expenses for everything, and they're incentivized to apply year after year for these AGIs because they know that they're, as I've already stated, one hundred per cent likely to have that AGI request be approved.

Manitobans shouldn't be forced to foot the bill for the basic costs of property owners managing their businesses. And so this bill amends the legislation to significantly limit the expenditures that can be included when considering an AGI application. And it only allows AGI applications in the case of extraordinary increases in utility costs, in taxation or extraordinary capital expenditures.

And this is the approach they've taken elsewhere in Canada. Provinces like Ontario have done this, and they've—that's helped them to get this issue under control. It's reasonable and it would drastically reduce the number of AGIs in Manitoba.

Second, the current legislation allows AGI to be applied before it's approved by the RTB director. That's a huge concern because I know in my own community, we have buildings that have had AGI applications go in, and renters are forced to pay before it's even approved. So they're carrying that risk and then ultimately are paying well in advance of that AGI even going through the proper processes. That's a concern that needs to stop.

Another major issue that I've learned about is the unethical use of rent discounts. We see individuals—or

I've spoken with individuals—who have learned about a coming AGI increase in their building. They've had the property owners say: Don't worry, we're going to keep your rent at your current level, we're going to give you a rent discount.

And then shortly after they lock into that new lease, that property owner then retracts that rent discount and leaves that renter in a very difficult position where they're locked into that new lease, and they have no opportunity to get out of it.

That's a major concern and we have an amendment here that would put an end to that practice.

And the last major concern is that where large AGIs are ultimately needed, right now RTB has no capacity to spread that increase over a period of time. This bill would amend the legislation to ensure that where those large AGIs are needed, RTB would have the power to spread that over multiple years to ensure that renters don't experience rent shock.

And if you look at some of the rent increases we've seen on a large number of buildings, some buildings have experienced increases of 50 per cent or more. That's completely unreasonable that Manitobans are being forced to carry that. They should be able to spread that over many years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this legislation proposes a reasonable solution that balances the interests of renters with property owners. We're offering a very practical solution to this government to take control of our out-of-control—of our absolutely out-of-control—AGI issue here, to take control of housing costs in this province.

Affordability is becoming a massive, massive issue here. We know that this problem continues to grow and we're offering a solution. This is a very pragmatic solution that this government could embrace and could ultimately use to provide relief to Manitobans right now, should they choose to embrace it. I really challenge the government to honestly look at the merits of this bill, to have a conversation about it, and to seriously consider taking action to help relieve Manitobans and to help support the lessening of rental costs in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

### Questions

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a

member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Are there questions?

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** I thank the member opposite for bringing the bill forward.

I do have to ask, however, why the member opposite and his colleagues voted against a two-year rent freeze brought forward by our government?

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** You know, it would be nice if members of this government would take this bill seriously, that they would really take the affordability crisis that Manitobans are taking seriously, and that they would ask questions about the merits of the bill, not try to distract us with political partisanship.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I was wondering—actually, I just wanted to ask the member whether he could explain about—or whether he's considered or has heard from people about the role of 'renovictions' in this pandemic and how the—how that has driven up rent prices—or, rental costs in the last two years?

**Mr. Sala:** I really appreciate the question from the member from St. Boniface.

We certainly have continued to hear about a lot of Manitobans who've been facing 'renovictions' driven largely by these out-of-control above-guideline rent increases.

We can take control of this issue. We can ensure that Manitobans, or at least many fewer Manitobans, face 'renovictions' by actually adopting the changes proposed in this legislation. It would help to minimize the issue. 'Renovictions' are a real concern and we need to ensure that Manitobans are able to get relief from these massive above-guideline rent increases.

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** I really want to thank the member for St. James, my colleague, for bringing forward this important legislation that I know will have a critical impact on renters in Wolseley.

I'd like to ask the member why—sorry, what sort of expenditures could be eligible for a landlord to have an above-guideline increase approved under this bill?

**Mr. Sala:** I appreciate the question from my colleague.

The types of expenditures that could be included under this bill include an extraordinary increase in municipal taxes, an extraordinary increase in utility costs or some capital expenditure that represents an extraordinary investment.

So this bill seeks to limit the types of expenses which are currently being submitted, which, again, tend to be a laundry list of things like banking service charges and tool costs. This absolutely limits that down to extraordinary costs that would be incurred by a landlord.

**Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips):** I want to thank my colleague for bringing in this bill.

This—a question for the colleague. The previous administration eliminated rent controls on new builds, I believe in 2005. I'm just curious, how does Bill 218 address that situation here in Manitoba?

**Mr. Sala:** I appreciate the question.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're here today, right now, trying to ensure that Manitobans get some relief from this affordability crisis that they're facing. We're trying to help ensure that they get relief from out-of-control rental costs in this province.

So, again, it would be good to see this government look at the merits of this bill, to seriously consider adopting this bill so that we can ensure that Manitobans today get the help that they need, instead of looking back 20 years.

**Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** I'd like to thank the member from the St. James for bringing this very important bill forward.

\* (10:20)

The cost of inflation is going up. The cost of hydro is going up. The cost of food is going up. On top of this, the PC government cut renters' credit from \$750 to \$525.

I just want to know from the member, who are these renters? Are these people with a high income, low income, seniors? Can you please explain to the House?

Thank you.

**Mr. Sala:** Yes, I'd like to thank my colleague for that really important question.

The reality is, as we know, renters in this province tend to often be our lower income Manitobans. We're talking about seniors, we're talking about individuals on fixed incomes, individuals with disabilities. These

are our Manitobans that are in our most challenging positions economically, and we need to make sure that we don't put them in a position where they're at risk of rent eviction. We need to make sure we help to respond to their housing insecurity, because these individuals deserve to be able to access affordable housing in this province.

We have the ability here to do something about this problem. We can change this situation by adopting the amendments proposed in this bill.

**Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson):** I want to thank the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) for bringing forward this bill. I think there's lots to discuss. It might take some time to work through all of it.

Full disclosure: I used to be a tenant and I used to be a landlord. I'm neither at the moment. I was encouraged to hear the member talk about balancing interests of landlords and tenants near the end of his speech.

And I just want to ask him if he agrees with me and with many officials within the residential tenancies work, that the purpose of the act, the purpose of the commission, the purpose of the board, is indeed to balance those interests of landlords and tenants.

**Mr. Sala:** Yes, I appreciate the question.

I think it is a good question, that we need to ensure that when we bring forward a bill that we are balancing the interests of renters and tenants—or, sorry, renters and property owners. And that's important because we want to see continued investment in our buildings.

But, you know, I would argue this bill does not threaten the ability for property owners to make those investments. In fact, it's a very fair set of amendments that ensures that they can continue to make those investments, and when they have those extraordinary investments, can recoup those costs.

So, we want to make sure we find that balance. That is important, but right now, the balance is tipped in the favour of property owners, and we need to make sure we do more for renters.

**Ms. Naylor:** I'd like to ask the member for St. James, you referenced consulting several people in—or, several groups in developing this bill.

Could you give us a little more detail on your consultation process?

**Mr. Sala:** Yes, I thank my colleague for the question.

So, in the process of developing this bill, we did, of course, consult with many, many renters in this province to learn about the scope of the issue, to learn about the nature of the problem, and that's where a lot of our biggest insights came in terms of the scope of the problem.

We also consulted with housing experts here in this province, specifically, individuals who work with the West Broadway neighbourhood corporation who provide a lot of housing supports in that community, to understand about their proposed responses to this issue.

And we've also consulted with individuals from the Public Interest Law Centre.

Thank you.

**Mr. Guenter:** I'm wondering how the member opposite comports the fact that the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) was a commissioner for the Residential Tenancies Branch and approved many rent increase applications.

I'm wondering if that may be why the members opposite voted against our two-year rent freeze for Manitobans.

**Mr. Sala:** Again, we're looking backwards instead of looking to now and helping Manitobans and the problems that they're facing right now.

But, again, there's no question that the issues with this legislation have been in place for some time. And, you know, this is to say this problem exists now. The government has the opportunity to take action in response to that issue that Manitobans are facing right now. We can do something about this.

We have an affordability crisis in this province. We can take action. You're able to actually put the E-brake on out-of-control rental costs for Manitobans.

We're facing an affordability crisis. We need to look ahead, and this is an opportunity to take that problem and—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Ms. Naylor:** I'd like to ask the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) if you could share with us in some of the other ways in that the Pallister and Stefanson governments really made life harder for Manitoba renters over the past six years?

**Mr. Sala:** Well, we do know—and I do appreciate the question. We do know that last year we saw the removal of the Education Property Tax Credit for

renters, which had a significant impact in terms of the affordability of renting in this province.

We also know that the Portable Housing Benefit itself was reduced by this government, and our Manitoba Housing wait-list continues to grow. We have a gigantic wait-list for Manitoba Housing units in this province, and we're also seeing this government sell off Manitoba Housing units, like at 185 Smith, where they sold off 380 units of social housing. That will be irreplaceable, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we need to, again, look at solutions moving forward. I'd like to see this government embrace this legislation to respond to—

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

The time for questions has ended.

### Debate

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

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** I want to thank, again, the member for—opposite, for bringing the bill forward as it provides an opportunity to reflect a little bit on what our government has done and put some things on the record in terms of our government's supports for Manitobans in need of affordable housing.

And we know that Manitoba's vulnerable populations—Indigenous women, single mothers, youth and so on—are the demographics that are often impacted and really dependent on these supports. And so, as the government, we've been listening and focused on enhancing supports and creating new programs and providing assistance.

Before I go too far, though, Madam—Mr. Speaker, I did want to issue a very happy St. Patrick's Day and—all members of this House. After a long winter it feels like a great kickoff to what I think will be a wonderful spring and summer, so.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to remember that 10 years ago, just by way of providing some context, that 10 years ago under the NDP government the rental vacancy rate in Manitoba was 1 per cent. And so that left a lot of renters, a lot of these vulnerable populations, in a really tough spot where, if they were in a bad situation or were looking for options, they didn't have them. They weren't able to move because the market was so tight.

Today, under the leadership of our government, there's a 4 per cent vacancy rate in rentals in

Manitoba, meaning that—the—this provides an advantage to renters and allows them to shop around, to look for a better place to live if they need one, and so I think that that's significant as well.

There's a number of things, as I said, that we have done, notably a two-year freeze of rent increases, in addition to an injection of \$30 million just last year in the Rent Assist program; and yet, Madam Speaker, we were opposed by the members opposite, by the NDP. And we know the record, Manitobans know the record, that this is the party that may now be choosing to throw some words around on the issue of affordability, Mr. Speaker, because we're feeling the effects of inflation and that sort of thing, but Manitobans know that it was the government opposite—the members opposite, when they were in government, that raised the PST.

I find it astounding, Mr. Speaker, that for every dollar that you spend paying your Manitoba Hydro bill, 40 cents of every dollar goes to servicing Manitoba Hydro's debt.

Why? Why? Why, Mr. Speaker? Because of their 17 years of NDP—of the NDP mucking around with Manitoba Hydro and the billion-dollar cost overruns. This is absolutely outrageous—40 cents of every dollar on your Manitoba Hydro bill.

Now think of the single mothers, the vulnerable Manitobans, the youth, young families—so many people who need every dollar to get ahead and pay the bills, and of the costs that they're having to incur.

\* (10:30)

So this government has been listening, Madam Speaker. And as I said, the two-year freeze on rent increases as well as the \$30-million injection—and I wanted to—into the Rent Assist program—and I wanted to just share a little bit more about that as well.

So, we're providing financial supports to protect vulnerable Manitobans who might otherwise become trapped in a cycle of poverty. So, the Rent Assist program provides benefits to Manitobans on and off social assistance, unlike programs in many other jurisdictions. It's tied to the actual cost of renting and it's indexed annually.

Rent Assist is open to all household types, whereas programs in other jurisdictions are restricted to certain kinds of households such as those with single parents.

Just last year, Rent Assist and non-employment income assistant or non-EIA Rent Assist recipients

will see an increase—saw an increase in their benefits of up to 11 per cent.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's an 11 per cent increase that Rent Assist and non-EIA Rent Assist recipients saw. So that is incredibly helpful and I think very well appreciated.

We know that currently approximately 23,000 households on EIA and 7,700 low-income households not on EIA received the benefit.

Over the past seven years since we've formed government in 2016, investments in non-EIA Rent Assist have increased steadily and significantly to a tune of \$62 million in 2021, 2022 from \$13 million in 2015, 2016. That's a paltry \$13 million that the NDP spent in their last year in government. After 17 years, it's the best they could do, and we've brought it up to \$62 million.

So, Madam Speaker, for all the words about affordability, we have a record of actually delivering. And so—through tax cuts as well as through investments in programs like this.

I think it's important, too, to thank the Minister of Families, the member for Riel (Ms. Squires), for her creative, compassionate and determined leadership in her file. One of the things that we brought forward was a rent bank—an investment of \$5.9 million in a rent bank to assist low-to-moderate-income families who need help paying their rent.

So the program works by handing out interest-free loans to people who are behind on their rent or need to move to more appropriate housing, and it's administered by the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association—again, provides housing stability and protection for families that are unable to pay shelter costs due to unforeseen circumstances.

Madam Speaker, I could go on. There's the \$12 million last year that our Province provided to municipalities. And there are several members of this House who will have welcomed that funding. I don't know if they would have said so publicly on the opposite side of the House, but this funding had an impact in the municipalities of Brandon, Dauphin, Flin Flon, Morden, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk, Steinbach, The Pas, Thompson and Winkler. And it allowed each of these 10 municipalities to determine how to address their objectives for housing affordability and development.

So in—importantly, Madam Speaker, I said this funding is targeted at those who face barriers to



housing such as Indigenous households, single-parent families, new Canadians, refugees, youth-led households, seniors and people with a physical or mental disability. So these are all people who are dependent on these supports, and as I said, Madam Speaker, we as a government are delivering.

Madam Speaker, we could talk about the tenure bilateral agreement between the provincial government of Manitoba and the federal government to invest over \$450 million to protect, renew and expand social and community housing and support priorities related to housing repair, construction and affordability.

Mr. Speaker, we also partnered with the federal government to provide over \$150 million over eight years through the Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit, which provides housing affordability assistance to Manitobans, again, young adults transitioning out of—or who have aged out of child—the child-welfare system, people who are at risk of becoming homeless, people dealing with mental health or addiction issues and are living in designated supportive housing buildings.

So, Madam Speaker—or, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of things we have done. But I just take issue with the members opposite, the NDP, talking about affordability when clearly their record—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Guenter:** —speaks very clearly that there was never a tax that they didn't like, Madam Speaker, and that they didn't hike.

And so, I take issue with their comments on affordability. We will continue to deliver for Manitobans, Madam Speaker, through things like investing in Rent Assist—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Guenter:** —the rent freeze and tax cuts.

Madam Speaker—Mr. Speaker, affordability is what this government is all about.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Just a friendly reminder to all members that I am not Madam Speaker. Okay.

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** Housing is a human right and all Manitobans should have access to affordable, safe, quality housing.

The member of Borderlands brags about vacancy rates without thought to the Manitobans who have

been priced out of the market, some of whom are now just living in tents, in shelters or on a friend's couch, if they're lucky enough or if they haven't been forced to leave the province altogether.

In the fall of 2020, I appealed directly to the minister on behalf of tenants in my constituency. This is just one example, but one specific building at 812 Wolseley had an increase of up to 29.9 per cent affecting the tenants who lived there.

Like many Manitobans, Larissa, a tenant there, lost her job at the beginning of the COVID-19 shutdown in March of 2020. With the blanket approval of above-guideline rent increases, her rent was slated to increase—sorry, thank you—her rate was slated to increase by \$306 a month as of December 1, 2020. While upgrades had been made to other units in the building, Larissa had not had any upgrades in the unit she lived in.

I was able to see photos of the unit. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to visit in person because of the—where things were at with the pandemic. But she sent us extensive photos of her unit showing the condition of her suite. And despite not receiving any benefits of renovations that took place in other parts of the building, Larissa was being asked to cover the costs during one of the most economically challenging times in our province.

Another resident in that building, Lindsey, was a student trying to focus on her education. She had lost her part-time job due to COVID-19, and a rent increase of \$300 a month took effect November 1, 2020. Like many students, Lindsey was accumulating debt in order to continue studying during the pandemic, and without the opportunity to earn an income, an increase of roughly \$3,200 a year in housing costs would have been added to her total student debt that she would owe.

Many students were in similar situations, and this was forcing many students in my constituency into even more debt than they were already incurring.

The blanket approval of above-guideline rent increases during the global pandemic was making it more difficult for Manitobans to meet their basic needs. Many were no longer able to pay their rent and were forced to look for alternative housing options in the middle of a provincially mandated shutdown.

Increasing the instability of housing in Manitoba has the potential to adversely affect the economy,

as well as the health, safety and wellbeing of Manitobans.

\* (10:40)

At the time, I urged the minister to reconsider this blanket approval of above-guideline rent increases and to work within an affordable range for all Manitobans. Of course, that's not what happened.

Ultimately, on her own, Larissa successfully negotiated her increase to drop from 29.9 per cent to 27 per cent, but because that was simply not sustainable, she was forced to move, and soon after, Lindsey, the other tenant I referenced, also was forced to move.

The Pallister-Stefanson governments sold off social and affordable units and cut the maintenance budgets while raising rents. They haven't built a single unit of affordable housing during their time in government. Manitoba Housing has disposed of hundreds and hundreds of social housing units, and those in Manitoba Housing were forced to spend more of their income and rent: from 25 per cent of their income in 2016 to 30 per cent today. And we still have a fast growing waiting list for social housing.

Under the Progressive Conservative government, homelessness has increased. So, it's increased because of the sell-off of housing units. Homelessness has increased because of the above-guideline rent increases. It's increased because expenses are going up. People can't necessarily pay their hydro bills or their water bills.

According to the latest Street Census, more than 1,100 Winnipeggers are homeless, the majority of whom are Indigenous. The census was based on data collected over a 24-hour period in April, 2021, and it recorded 1,127 people who are experiencing homelessness in this city alone. Homelessness during the pandemic has caused untold suffering, including a horrendous rise in addictions challenges and recent incidences such as the explosion at a homeless camp. End Homelessness Winnipeg conservatively estimates that at least 1,340 new units are required by 2025 to address the gaps in low-income housing units in Winnipeg.

It's been over two years since this government signed on to the National Housing Strategy and they're already not on course to meet their targets. Their own transition binder says that they're failing to meet their own targets because they aren't funding it sufficiently. Instead, they're diverting it to back-fill. They're covering the costs of repairs and maintenance, which are

still being cut. And the budget for the repair, maintenance, modernization and improvement of existing social housing is the lowest budget in the last six years. And now the Pallister-Stefanson governments have transferred hundreds of units of rent to gear-rent-gear-to-income housing to third parties with no guarantee that these will remain social housing.

The Stefanson government should instead commit to a housing-first model. More affordable and accessible housing should be built for Manitobans so that it is, in fact, available to all.

Last year the PCs reduced benefits for renters. Manitoba renters, as you recall, used to get a \$700 tax credit, but this has been reduced by 25 per cent. For any members in this House who have a significant amount of renters living in their area, you've probably started to get the kinds of emails that I've started to get, because not everyone has the time or inclination to follow the news and knew what was happening when you were doing it to them. But now that they're filing their taxes and they're finding out that they don't get that credit that they counted on—the plan is to phase out the tax credit for renters completely, meaning renters will be out \$700 at tax time.

I know for many people in this House, the \$125, I think that it was this year, that people are out might not feel painful. That, you know, with all the money on your kitchen tables and your \$31 million worth of property ownership, you probably don't think much about that. But for some people that is literally the difference of an entire month's worth of groceries for some individuals.

**An Honourable Member:** But what about Tommy's hockey game?

**Ms. Naylor:** You're right. It also might just, you know—

**An Honourable Member:** We don't talk enough about that.

**Ms. Naylor:** We don't talk enough about private school and that option that's not available to many renters.

At the same time, landlords were given a rebate—landlords. Landlords who might own \$31 million worth of property got rebates, and that's not fair. In fact, they're getting seven times more in rebates than the average homeowners when renters are losing out. While landlords are getting more benefits, renters lost the few benefits they had, all while their rents still get jacked up through above-guideline approvals.

This bill—sorry, lost my place, I will find it—this bill prevents landlords from applying for larger rent increases unless the landlord has incurred eligible capital expenditures, or there's been an extraordinary increase in taxes, utilities or security service costs.

The current guidelines are far too vague. While landlords need to argue that material improvements they made to the property are significant enough to warrant a rent increase, they allow landlords to increase rents for expenses that are part of ongoing maintenance. And as I shared from my example, the young women that reached out to me in my constituency had had zero maintenance in their own units, and they were still being charged—one of them 27 per cent, and one a 29.9 per cent increase on their rent. That's not fair.

Landlords should get a fair return on their investment and that means recovering funds from capital investments, but Bill 218 makes it clear that renters cannot be charged the above-guideline increase until after the order is issued. Many tenants were being charged more before the order was even issued, and they—this can't happen while their appeals to RTB are still continuing.

Bill 218 clarifies language to ensure that tenants are protected. It also allows the Residential Tenancies Commission to consider the affordability of rent for renters.

So, I—heartfelt thanks to my colleague for bringing forward this very important bill that will help many, many people in my constituency.

### House Business

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business, thank you.

Pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Resolve the Surgical and Diagnostic Backlog.

Miigwech.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been announced by the honourable Opposition House Leader that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put

forward by the honourable member for Concordia. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Resolve the Surgical and Diagnostic Backlog.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips):** It's always a pleasure to rise in the House, today, on St. Patrick's day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I bring up St. Patrick's Day—he was the saint who allegedly, in the fifth century, banished all the snakes from Ireland. So, it is in that vein that I hope that our brothers and sisters in the Ukraine are able to banish the snakes, which are the Russian troops, from their homelands.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House, and as I reflect on what's going on in the world, I think it's quite amazing that here we are in the Legislature here in Manitoba and we have the privilege and the ability to debate Bill 218, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. And I do believe the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) actually has made a number of valid points in this legislation that are definitely worth exploring.

But it does—I think it does fall upon all of us to be cognizant that, while we are debating support for renters here in the province of Manitoba, that our Ukrainian brothers and sisters across the way are dealing with shelling of their apartment buildings, and that they—their reason for leaving isn't extraordinary cost, it is life and death, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So it is with that backdrop that I do, like I said, acknowledge the privilege that we have in this House to be part of that democratic process.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is valid—in particular, the member for St. James—and I'd only wish that the member for St. James had come to us prior to this legislation for a more fulsome discussion, in order to solicit understanding and support as to just simply maintaining it within the hour and unfortunately using some time for partisan sniping, because as I said, there are some valid components within Bill 218. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let the historical record show that the member for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey) would rather engage in heckling than actually discussion the residential tenancies amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So it is truly unfortunate.

\* (10:50)

And now, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), Mr. Deputy Speaker, let the historical

record show that the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) would rather engage in useless heckling—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Martin:**—from her seat than actually listening and debating her own member's legislation. So, if the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) can't even get his own party on board, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to support his legislation, you have to wonder.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did listen to the member's speech. I do believe the member indicated that there was 310 applications in 2020-2021 for applications above the rent guideline; and, if I am correct, the member for St. James is more than welcome to correct the record.

What's interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is historically, if we look back—and I know the members don't like to look back. But, I mean, context is important in terms of just at least, finding trend lines.

So the 310 figure used by the members for a backdrop against their bill: in 2010, there were 312 applications approved; 2011, 327; 2012, 347; 2013, 391—[*interjection*]

Once again, let the historical record show that the member for St. Johns would rather engage in petty sniping from her seat as opposed to actually engaging and support her colleague's legislation. So, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask you to call the member to order and ask her to at least listen and allow the member's bill to be debated today, because I believe that is the point of democracy.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not sure—unfortunately, I've lost my train of thought, so I will just simply start at the beginning.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to rise today in this House and be part of the democratic process. As I indicated earlier, it is, indeed, St. Patrick's Day, and as I indicated, Mr. St. Patrick actually drove the snakes from Ireland. So it is my hope in that vein that our Ukrainian brothers and sisters are able to drive the Russian snakes from their homeland.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Wolseley, in her criticism, and, again, I will say, in some components, government language by all governments is big, and the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) did indicate that the guidelines were, quote, too vague—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I would ask you to engage the member for St. Johns to simply be part of the democratic process. We see what's going on across the way. We see the shelling of civilians. We see the—actually, the fight in eastern Ukraine for democracy, the privilege that we have in the House, and the member for St. Johns would rather use it for petty purposes, especially when I'm rising today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to actually support components of the member for St. James' legislation.

I want to rise and I want to give the member credit for the legislation. I want to say to the member that the member for St. James does have a valid point that rent increases should not apply until such time that they are actually approved, that they should not apply prior to their approval by the Residential Tenancies Commission. I do believe that is a valid component.

And I thank the member for Wolseley for that heartfelt applause. It is touching.

So, I mean, I do hope that the members opposite continue to support this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and components of this legislation as I do—that I do believe that Bill 218 does have some legitimate components.

But as I was indicating, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I do listen—unlike members opposite—to the speeches of my colleagues in this House. The member for Wolseley used that term, guidelines, far too vague, and, again, I do acknowledge that. But the members also—and the member in St. James, in the legislation uses the term extraordinary, that extraordinary costs would be covered. But there is no definition of extraordinary which, again, ties into the vagueness.

However, the validity of this legislation—I mean, we just see what's going on. We only need to look what happened recently, several months ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Florida with the condo collapse. Absolutely millions upon millions upon millions of dollars in deferred repairs to those condo units, all because they didn't want to accept those rent increases—which, at the time, absolutely would have been incredibly shocking, and may have played a role in the deferral of those repairs and the ultimate collapse and death.

So we obviously don't want a situation like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where individuals are deferring any kind of maintenance, especially structural maintenance. So I do appreciate that the members opposite acknowledge that, you know, both renters need to be protected. More importantly, landlords need to be able to ensure that they get a reasonable rate of return on

their investment. The word balance is often overused in this Chamber, but I do believe that components of Bill 218 help strike components and portions of those balance.

We have to ensure that renters at all instances aren't being extraordinarily put-upon in terms of rent increases that aren't justified, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is why we have the Residential Tenancies Commission. However, if other parameters need to be put on the commission, if clarifications need to be put on the commission to ensure that tenants aren't being taken advantage of, that situations aren't being unfolded that make residency untenable for those tenants, then definitely that is warranted.

And as I said, in particular, the member's amendment to stop the—sort of, the pre-application of rent increases, I think is definitely valid. It's no different than, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you receive your—for most of us who are homeowners and may still have a mortgage, you'll get your notice but the bank doesn't pre-charge you. It is not until the moment you actually sign.

So I don't see any reason why the member for St. James' (Mr. Sala) concept and proposal put forward—at least one of the proposals put forward within Bill 218, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, in terms of ensuring that delay in terms of process, Mr. Deputy Speaker, isn't looked at further. I think it is something that would protect renters, would actually protect tenants, because if there is a situation in which the residential tenancies board doesn't approve that rent increase, then they are simply going to have to refund it and I would hope refund it with interest.

But that being said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, always appreciate being part—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I'll just put some brief words on the record.

This—we do support this bill. This is an important bill because the residential tenancies in Manitoba had not been sufficiently looking after the interests of residents and there are a number of areas where the bills—there is no protection at all for renters. That's one of the things that needs to be mentioned when the government says, oh, look, you know, we're putting in a rent freeze. Well, that actually doesn't apply for huge numbers of renters.

I have a constituent who's a mother with three kids, wants to get a bedroom—an apartment that's

going to cost \$1,600 a month. There is no rent control on that at all. It's—there could be unlimited increases, and that's what's been happening with evictions and 'renovictions.' One of the things that happens in a crisis is that people use it to price-gouge. And that's what's been happening with inflation. Inflation is not being caused by governments so much as people using a crisis to jack up rent, jack up costs.

And I will—without going over the entire history of the—affordable housing in this—in the last 20 years in this province, it's been a huge problem because affordable housing has been sold off. Investments were not made in keeping—in upkeep, including for public housing. And we have to make sure that this is fair because in—though there are—there might be lots of, you know, small landlords, the fact is, is that it's big landlords who comprise the vast majority of the market and who are in a position to be able to extract extra rent without justification.

So thus, we're happy to support it. Thank you.

**Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson):** Again, I want to thank the member for bringing the bill forward. I think there's lots of food for thought there. Lots of things to discuss and I think—I also want to appreciate the time that he put into researching the bill and taking the time to put together a bill that's, you know, reasonably complex and I—it appears to be quite—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Radisson will have 10 minutes remaining.

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 6—Calling on the Provincial Government to Improve Adult Education

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hour is 11 a.m. and we will now move to private members' resolutions.

**MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** I move, seconded by the member from Point Douglas,

*WHEREAS adult education helps adults achieve sufficient levels of literacy, numeracy and other essential skills necessary to obtain or qualify for higher levels of employment or education and improve economic and social well-being; and*

*WHEREAS the benefits of adult education include stronger and healthier families and communities, improved school outcomes for children, significant reductions in poverty, major steps in the direction of reconciliation, enhanced tax revenues and reduced social assistance and related costs; and*

*WHEREAS currently there are 192,600 Manitobans between the ages of 16 and 65 whose literacy levels are at stages 1 or 2, meaning their literacy levels are not sufficient to enable them to participate fully in society; and*

*WHEREAS enrolment in adult literacy programs in 2020/21 was 1,150, which is less than one percent of those who need to advance their literacy skills; and*

*WHEREAS adult education has been cut by the Provincial Government because funding has failed to keep up with inflation; and*

*WHEREAS there were 42 adult literacy programs in Manitoba in 2009/10 and in 2019/20 there were only 30 resulting in a decline of 28.6 percent; and*

*WHEREAS the number of adult learners in Adult Learning Centres and Adult Literacy Programming has continued to fall under the Provincial Government from 8,450 in 2015/16 to 6,058 in 2020/21 and 2,182 in 2015/16 to 1,150 in 2020/21, respectively; and*

*WHEREAS one of the biggest barriers to accessing adult education is that many people who receive EIA are not made aware of opportunities to advance their education and are often discouraged from pursuing adult education; and*

*WHEREAS currently the EIA Administrative Manual does not always include adult education as part of a EIA recipient's action plan; and*

*WHEREAS the benefits of properly funding adult education and promoting the option to people on EIA would be significant.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to make meaningful investments in adult literacy and education, support adult learners as they seek to improve their education and ensure adult education is an option available to EIA recipients so they can successfully develop their skills and abilities.

***Motion presented.***

**MLA Marcelino:** Today's resolution is not a hit piece against the PCs. The Province's dismal track record on this file predates the Pallister and Stefanson governments.

Today, I am asking the government to reconsider its current orientation away from adult education.

I am sincerely requesting that this government seriously consider and focus on adult education and

the track record that it has for improving the lives of many, including mothers and children, out of poverty and getting families off of long-term social assistance.

I sincerely request that this government seriously consider adult education as an integral part of the path towards reconciliation with Indigenous families and communities across Manitoba.

And more specifically, today's resolution brings up a very important concern that this government must consider right away. This regards current, existing, harmful employment income assistance, or EIA, regulations that have for a long time and continue to this day—limit a person and a family's access to adult education programming.

*Mr. Brad Michaleski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

In the months leading up to the pandemic, I was in full swing as an MLA trying to do community advocacy on the issue of lead contamination in soil, in schools, on playgrounds, on boulevards, near railroad tracks in my area.

Part of what I was trying to do was getting experts in the field to meet with parents, community leaders, community members and others who are impacted by lead contamination in soil and have some meetings so we could discuss the ways to raise community awareness on this issue and also specific things that regular folks can do to mitigate their risks of getting lead contamination, especially for children under the age of seven.

My constituency assistant and I, Reynaldo Sangalang, we went to one of these schools—which I'm not going to name right now—because I wanted the principal—I wanted to request that the principal would send home a note to the school community and inform them of an upcoming community meeting that we were going to have on mitigating the effects of lead contamination.

I was shocked when the acting school principal said to me: I'm sorry, but we don't send notes home. Our parents can't read.

It's hard to put into words what that statement did to me at the time. I couldn't really fully process it. What do you mean, you don't send notes home because your parents can't read? How do you communicate to the community? How do you communicate to students? How do you—like how do you communicate?

It was really jarring. I ended up leaving. I had to go to another school, set up another meeting, a future

meeting on the lead issue, but I never forgot that interaction and it really stayed with me.

I started to do some research. I contacted some principals at an adult learning centre that was kind of based out of a mission—a church mission—in the city. And I said, can you tell me about what adult education is like here in the province, or in your centre. And he just proceeded to tell me what it was like—very, very grim news—how underfunded they were. They don't even have papers and pencils for their students. Staff make minimum wage. These are adult educators.

There's a lot of lack of progress from these mature students because they don't have access to child care. They don't even have access to transportation fees, like, you know, a bus pass, and let alone—sometimes they don't even have food to eat. So there's a lot of barriers in the way. But the biggest barrier was the lack of funding and support from the Province. And that was kind of plain to see.

I then went on to speak to Jim Silver, who is a noted academic and researcher, a life-long anti-poverty advocate and an expert on this field of adult education in our province. And I spoke to him about the interaction that I had at the school, and I asked him if he would, you know, undertake a study to give us an idea of what, you know—a snapshot of what the challenges are, what the current snapshot is of adult education in our province. And maybe some, you know, recommendations towards steps that we could take as a Province to improve these outcomes that we currently are seeing.

And, you know, Mr. Silver really did so much with this study. He was able to canvass almost all the adult-educators across the province—directors—and he was able to get the participation of almost half of them to participate in this study for these findings. And this study has yielded so much.

And I really encourage members opposite to take some time with advocates like Jim Silver and directors of adult education centres, as well as folks with lived experiences as mature students, so that they can really get an idea of what adult education is like currently and where it can go and why we should be doing that.

Some key findings from Mr. Silver's latest study—and it was called, unearthing this buried treasure—was how abysmally funded this current adult education system is. So, it's been fat, flat funding for the past 15 years. That means de facto cuts. And there have been closures for about 30 per cent of our adult education centres.

The study went over how much demand there currently is for adult education. For example, in one northern centre there's a waiting list of 2,000 persons on this list. And many centres just don't advertise because they know they won't be able to keep up with the demand. There is also mention of some cost-benefit analysis in terms of getting folks properly prepared for life in the late—and working in the labour force.

A work was cited by Eleanor Thompson from the Winnipeg's Urban Circle Training Centre. She concluded that moving adult learners from social assistance to paid employment produced a cumulative net saving of \$53.5 million to taxpayers from 1990 to 2010. And a senior economist with the Toronto-Dominion Bank found that, for the country as a whole, high levels of illiteracy were costing Canada, quote, hundreds of billions of dollars in lost opportunity. End quote.

The organization for economic co-operation development has estimated that moving up one level in literacy proficiency, quote, translates to a 9 per cent increase in hourly wages in Canada and a 20 per cent more likelihood of being employed. End quote. So, in short, it makes very good economic sense to invest in literacy and adult education apart from the moral imperative that we should have to help our fellow citizens improve their lives.

Unearth this Buried Treasure also made note of comparisons to other provincially-funded systems. So, for example, a K-to-12 student gets on average about \$13,000 per year, compared to an adult education student, who gets on average about \$2,000 per year.

\* (11:10)

Let's compare this to federal inmates and provincial inmates that cost our community up to \$70,000 per year or up to \$115,000 per year. And let's compare other community costs that get incurred when we assist homeless persons in Winnipeg, that's up to \$45,000 per year. It really makes sense to make these preventative measures that adult education would provide to prevent things like homelessness and incarceration as well as abject poverty.

Jim Silver's study also looked at the need and the impact that adult education would have for Indigenous families and Indigenous communities across our province, especially in northern, rural and remote areas, that we should view successful adult students as a natural resource of the North because these are folks

that can stay in their communities and be part of much-needed labour force.

So, there are so many important findings in this study and, you know, I believe a really great start to how we can craft appropriate policy responses across ministries, including Families, Indigenous and northern affairs, Education and Labour.

But last, I'd like to draw your attention to some changes that your current government should seriously consider regarding current employment income assistant regulations that are preventing many from accessing adult education.

Social assistance has a work-first mentality. Those on social assistance are discouraged from pursuing adult education. Indeed, one adult educator said that discouraged is not a strong enough description. Their experience is that countless students are—

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** Member's time has expired.

### Questions

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** It's now time for questions.

The honourable member from Swan River. [*interjection*] Oh, sorry. Sorry.

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

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Yes, can the member explain why the NDP froze funding for adult learning and literacy centres?

**MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** I thank the member for that question.

If the member were paying attention, within my first sentence I did say that this isn't going to be my regular hit piece against you, that both—that this province has been dismally underfunding adult education for at least 15 years. And that pre-dates the Stefanson and Pallister governments.

I do know that there have been many initiatives under the NDP, especially towards Indigenous adult centres, that occurred during the last-'90s. But if

I really needed to get into making to—this into a hit piece, I certainly could, beginning with how you repealed adult literacy—

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** I thank my colleague for bringing forward this resolution, which is wonderful.

I'd just like to ask: What are the main benefits of adult education?

**MLA Marcelino:** There are so many benefits and they're way more explained in a better way in Jim Silver's *Unearth this Buried Treasure* study, but it can go from everything from, you know, having the life skills and education necessary to participate fully in society, having better outcomes with your own children, being able to graduate from schools and having stronger families and stronger communities.

Having a better chance at, you know, meaningful work instead of that endless poverty cycle of part-time, precarious work, then you're laid off again and then you're back into poverty and then you're back on social assistance.

You know, it's a way to move forward out of that cycle of poverty—

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** The member's time is up.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this resolution.

When the NDP were in government, investments in the Adult Literacy Program for adult learning actually did go down, and I just want to be very clear here as I was listening quite intently to her speech, and I understand that this does not want to become a back-and-forth thing, even though we've seen that in her first response to the first question, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Please put on record—will the member please put on record if the funding she is calling for will include the Adult Literacy Program?

**MLA Marcelino:** I thank the member for her question. I—this is—adult learning—the Adult Learning Centres—that has to do with getting enough credits for your mature high-school diploma, and then adult literacy programming has to do with getting you up to speed so that you can even try to attempt that mature high-school diploma from the Adult Learning Centres



at what they provide, so we definitely have to provide funding for adult literacy programming, because there are very many folks who are not at that point where they could even attempt to do the mature high-school programming. So it would be really, really integral to do that.

As well—

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** Thank you, I really appreciate the member bringing this forward—really important.

And when we look at the connection between adult literacy and adult education, they're very closely linked. We know that about 56 per cent of adult literacy learners are between the ages of 25 and 44. That's their key income-earning years, and their key years to be productive in our economy.

So I want to ask the member: What impact would not having a good adult education—adult literacy programs—in our Manitoba have on the people who are not able to gain those skills during their key income-earning years?

**MLA Marcelino:** I thank the member for the question. I don't have specific numbers for Manitoba, but we do have information from the—I think it's the OECD study that I referenced earlier, about literally hundreds of billions of dollars being lost from our economy because of these missed opportunities to educate people in their prime working years.

So, and that's in addition to the other costs of, you know, providing social assistance to these families, other costs including incarceration and things along those lines. So it's really—you know, dollars and cents is one thing, hundreds of billions—

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** Lower enrolment numbers in adult learning and literacy centres would seem to mean there's a decrease in demand for that service.

Can the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino) speak to why numbers in adult education programs in Manitoba are lower?

**MLA Marcelino:** Thank you very much for your question, member from Riding Mountain.

And, you know, I guess it would kind of seem that way on the page, but nothing could be further from the truth. According to these latest studies, there is huge unmet demand for these programs.

Just speaking to one of the directors from a centre up north, again, they have a waiting list of 2,000 persons and they're actually over 90 per cent Indigenous. And it's the same if you speak to other directors. They don't even, you know, bother to advertise because of how full this—these programming would be.

One of the reasons why—another reason why there is declining—

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Brar:** Can the member reflect on the main barriers to accessing adult education in Manitoba?

**MLA Marcelino:** I thank the member from Burrows for that question.

There are very, very many barriers. Everything from self—lack of self-confidence and lack of self-esteem from the actual adult learner to, you know, not having child care, to not having bus tickets, to not having a centre in your geographical location.

\* (11:20)

It could be, you know, the result of the government funding cuts. Just over the past 15 years we've seen a decline of 30 centres. So there's so much that is currently happening right now that is incurring these barriers for folks to get into this programming that, you know, can literally change their lives.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Is the member aware that adult learning is currently available to EIA clients to develop and gain skills and abilities in their journey to financial independence?

**MLA Marcelino:** I thank that member for that sincere question.

Yes, it is, legally entitled if you are an EIA recipient with a child from two to five years old. It is one of the seven things that you can access, but—some EIA recipient workers do provide this option, but there are many who do not.

And most EIA recipients are actively discouraged by their EIA recipient workers from taking this program, and they say that if you access this centre, if you access this 'educationing'—education programming then you will lose your benefits. And that is

exactly what this resolution is hoping to raise your attention to—

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Moses:** I'm glad to ask a question on this.

It's clear that having an enhanced and—adult education and adult literacy helps people be more complete in their community. It helps them have better job and economic prospects. It also would help us as a province further ourselves along our path to reconciliation.

Can the member talk a little bit about some of the great benefits that she can—sees by enhancing our adult education program in our province would have on many communities?

**MLA Marcelino:** I thank the member for his question on reconciliation.

Whether Indigenous families, Indigenous communities across the province, there's so much that needs to be done for these Indigenous families and Indigenous communities. We have learned that there are, you know, adult learners that come into the centres with only grade 3 or grade 4 levels of education, and it just takes up so much more time for them to get up to speed so they can eventually get into adult literacy programming, and then, finally, to an adult learning centre programming for—to get that mature grade 12 high school diploma. This is so key to our goals as a province for reconciliation. Because this will mean economic independence for these communities and for these family members. This could mean, you know, the start of a healthy—

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** The member's time has expired.

And time for questions has expired.

### Debate

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** Debate is open.

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families):** I do want to thank my colleague from Notre Dame for bringing forward this very important resolution. And I also want to thank her for the way in which she's bringing it forward: coming to the floor of the Legislature in a non-partisan way and, to use her words, she's, like, I'm not coming in with a hit piece, I just want to have an open dialogue and debate.

And these are moments that are rare, but very much appreciated. And I think I can speak for many of my colleagues, these are some of the reasons why we got into politics, so that we could come here and talk about issues, that are really important, in a non-combative way. Because I can tell you that, as a minister, I learn about issues from a variety of ways, but one of the main ways is by being briefed by my department. And I have always gone in with the belief that's only half the story. The department is not always connected to the people. And so I always try to listen to my constituents, but, of course, I come here as a minister to listen to every constituent in the province, and regardless of where they live—in my constituency or the member for Notre Dame's (MLA Marcelino) constituency, or wherever else.

And so her coming forward and presenting the views of what she's heard from her constituents is really a great opportunity for me to learn something new, and I would also welcome an opportunity to continue this dialogue with the member, as well as to go over—I've had the opportunity to read Jim Silver's report that she had referenced in her comments.

And there's some points of interest in here and there's some points of clarification that I'd be more than happy to sit down with the member to chat about—or any member in this House that is interested in this. This is also something that our education, our—and poverty task force is looking at: ways so that we can reduce poverty. And the linkages between education and poverty is really profound.

One of the things that I believe that we could do—if we could accomplish two things, we would lift so many people out of poverty. And that's, No. 1, keep kids in school, and that is something we're working on, as well as getting people back on a learning track who are not—who are challenged in the learning and literacy area.

So those are two key goals, and this is a very pertinent discussion.

I'm going to focus my remarks on the EIA component, because I know my friend from Education will likely focus on the continuing education piece. But our government does believe in making investments so that we can—and reducing the barriers for people on EIA to getting education opportunities, and learning and literacy opportunities.

We do provide, and the member was right to point out, that we do provide that education opportunities must be available to all of our EIA participants, and

that all the opportunities should be made available to them. And we know some of the barriers include things like child care and transportation, and that is why our government was very pleased to work with Taking Charge! and the Single Parent Employment Program, in particular, to ensure that new mums could have access to child care while they were enrolled in a learning program, and that's why last year our government invested \$1.9 million in this partnership with Opportunities for Employment so that we could get training and literacy and learning opportunities available for people enrolled in EIA to attend training and literacy programming.

And we do a personalized, tailored approach with all of our EIA recipients to find out exactly what it is that they need and what barriers are preventing them from getting what they need in their path to learning and literacy. And the member has pointed out that there are some barriers that may certainly not be addressed, and that need to be addressed, and that's why I would be more than happy to learn more about that and work through those challenges, because we are committed to ensuring that vulnerable Manitobans continue to be supported.

Last year, I was very pleased to make a \$32-million investment to ensure EIA recipients and participants in the program could receive assistance, help them regain their independence through employment and training opportunities, and help them achieve their destiny.

So we had a \$20-million endowment program that we had established last year; grants will start to flow this year, and that will be specifically for helping EIA recipients regain their independence and achieve their higher destiny, and we know that there's no greater way than education to achieve that higher destiny and adult education is integral to that.

And I can say that as a person who has first-hand experience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's—I've mentioned it many times. I never graduated from high school. In fact, in 1986 I walked out of high school and I said I'm never coming back. And true to my word, I never did return to high school. And I didn't actually drop out of high school; I was expelled from high school. It was a policy at the time where, if you were truant for such amount of time, you would be expelled.

And so my mother and I were hauled into the vice-principal's office, and the vice-principal had said to my mum, if you can't get your daughter to come to school on a daily basis, we're going to have to expel her. And my ears heard that as a dare. And so, the

angry teenager that I was, I took him up on that dare, and sure enough, a few weeks later, I was expelled, and never went back.

So a few years later, when I found myself with my young son and in circumstances living on EIA, I did enrol in a program such as the one that we're discussing today, and it changed my life. And I know that one of the greatest pleasures that I have today as a minister is meeting other people who have had their lives turned around, that they've had the opportunities given to them through some of the programs that we're funding, through Adult Basic Education, through the Taking Charge! or the Single Parent Employment Program, because with this tailored approach that we're providing all of our EIA recipients.

\* (11:30)

There are many paths to this lifelong journey of learning and other barriers, and so creating the life skills programs are so integral to getting them into—that is one of the steps that I had taken—was it was just a basic life skills program that led into the adult basic education learning journey which led into other avenues.

And so I really think that it's important to have that laddering available for our clients. Ultimately, meeting them where they're at, finding out what their barriers are and how we can move to support them so that they can achieve their destinies and go on to fulfilling lives. And it's the fastest route out of poverty.

And so it is a great honour to do this work on behalf of Manitoba. I would say, arguably, there's way—a long ways to go. We've got to do more to lift more people out of poverty and that is a task that I take very seriously. Our government takes it very seriously and I know my colleague from Education takes very seriously. And the investments that we are making—in particular in our EIA transformation, in particular in getting more opportunities available for EIA recipients to pull themselves out of poverty and to achieve their destinies is important and that work will continue.

And, again, I'm very pleased to look at this from a non-partisan view because I don't believe poverty is a partisan issue. I don't think any one particular party—and my friend from Burrows—

**An Honourable Member:** Tyndall Park.

**Ms. Squires:**—Tyndall Park had pointed out that no party, no government can claim success or take all the responsibility for the failures.

What's important today is: recognize that we've got a ways to go to eliminating poverty. And the No. 1 way to achieve that is through education and learning. And so it's a commitment that our government is making. It is a commitment that we are learning ourselves to see what we can do better.

And, again, I'd just like to thank my colleague for bringing this forward for us to have this debate and look forward to future productive conversations on how we can life all Manitobans up.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** I want to thank my colleague for bringing this forward.

Certainly, a very important issue that, you know, affected a lot of Manitobans—90 per cent of them Indigenous—on EIA seeking to get into—back into education.

As the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) alluded to, many don't graduate from high school. You know, we often put pressures on children to graduate by 18, and we know that that's unrealistic for some people. And often these young adults go on to EIA because they don't have the skills to get into the job market. And certainly, as an educator myself, I've worked with a lot of students who, you know, have been behind. They come from, often, First Nation communities.

When I was working at Maples Collegiate, I was a high school teacher. Many of these students came from northern communities and often their education wasn't up to par with the education system in Winnipeg or in Manitoba here—or in Winnipeg—mostly because they don't have the same resources in their communities.

And, you know, I was fortunate enough to work in Seven Oaks School Division where they had a program called Wayfinders; it supported students—often, you know, 18, 19, 20 years old—to get their grade 12—sometimes up to 23. These students would, you know, drop out, they would come back. Thankfully, Seven Oaks had an adult literacy program that welcomed these students back and would support them right through when they went to university as well.

I was also fortunate enough when I worked for Marymount to head up a program called cruising to success. It worked with level 4 car thieves who were

incarcerated and, again, you know, not receiving education in another system that sets Indigenous children up to fail. And many of these kids that were in my program couldn't read or write. So, you know, teaching them environmental text, teaching them life skills—you know, how to be independent when they move out of their parents' home. Those living skills are super important.

And, you know, the minister talked about OFE. Well, I've had several constituents come to my office not feeling fully supported by OFE. They're given \$87 every two weeks. They're given no shelter supports. So these people are still couch-surfing, because they don't get government funding to actually put a roof over their head. They can't apply for Rent Assist because they don't have any income, so they don't qualify for that.

And then, to top it off, when they're pushed out of this program into entry-level jobs where, you know, often they can't keep these jobs because they don't have the skills. So they're set up for failure. They're not given any, even, funds to buy work boots, so if they go into a construction job, they have to go to Siloam Mission, which thankfully has a clothing program, and, if they have their size, they're lucky enough to get a pair of work boots.

These are the types of investments that we're asking this government to make to ensure that those who want to get out of poverty can get out of poverty, be successful, have the skills that they need to do that.

The minister alluded to dropping out of high school. I also dropped out of high school. I had a son when I was 16. I went back when I was 23. But the only reason I succeeded is because I went into a program that actually helped me connect to my Indigenous culture, helped me connect to my identity, things that were taken away through education.

You know, so many of our people don't trust the education system. When I was an elementary school teacher, I would have parent-teacher nights. Maybe 10 per cent of my Indigenous parents would come to parent-teacher night. I had to set appointments, make relationships through going to their house or going outside to meet them for coffee because of what's happened through the residential school system.

And this is a, you know, way for this government to really show leadership in reconciliation. They talk about reconciliation. Well, this, you know, I implore them to support this. Ninety per cent of the people that are on EIA are Indigenous. They have been set up

through the system—a revolving door, as my colleague, the member from Notre Dame, spoke about. It's—they're not set up for success.

I want to talk a bit about Niji Mahkwa, which is an elementary—well, it's actually a K-to-8 school that was set up by community members because they were concerned about kids being connected to their culture and not feeling connected to the education system that they were in. So, the minister talked about, you know, truancy, not attending school. Well, a lot of these kids aren't attending school because the curriculum doesn't reflect them.

There was a program that I was fortunate to be a part of, which was called the Community-based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program that the NDP government set up, and I'm very thankful for that opportunity. It allowed me to get out of poverty. It allowed me to get an education, to help my children see the value of education because their mother was going through education. I could bring my children to school. At the time, my daughter was two years old, so I could bring her to class with me. And, again, it was embedded in culture. It was embedded in language. It was embedded in community projects. We would go into different communities and share knowledge, and it was a recidivism-reducing way of, you know, staying in education, to be connected to something greater than, you know, just education, but connecting with people in community.

And that's what adult learning centres do. They connect teachers, you know, have—and we heard this when we met with Jim Silver and, you know, Fran Taylor—I'm very fortunate enough to have worked alongside, because Wayfinders was in the same building, and witnessed the transformation of so many families because their kids were going to Wayfinders while their parent was going to the adult literacy centres. So you saw two generations going to education systems at the same time and the relationships that were built.

And, you know, I say that because now my children, they're—none of them are on EIA. They all have a job. They're all independent. They all have their own homes, and that's only because I went back to school. Had I not had that opportunity to go back to, you know, adult education, I probably would've still been on EIA. And we set people up to continually rely on those systems. So, you know, this is a way for this government to really make meaningful investments that are going to transform lives; that are going

to provide empowerment and independence to those that are on EIA.

\* (11:40)

But it's also going to be life-changing in terms of the ripple effect that it has on families—because my son now has two children. They're both in the education system. And it's come a long way. And we still have a long way to go in terms of, you know, reflection of Indigenous people within the school systems, and reflection of Indigenous content as well, because we are the first peoples of this country. And when I was in school, I saw no reflection. I had no Indigenous teachers. Now we see there's a reflection. But still, certainly, the curriculum can move in that direction more.

So, you know, certainly we support this—our colleague here—and, you know, all of those adult learning centre teachers that are underpaid. You know, you only have to have a grade 12 to teach many of these courses, and they're—you know, they're not paid enough for the work that they do. And as my colleague from Notre Dame alluded to, many of them come in with, you know, grade 4, 5, you know, literacy, and they need a lot of support. And they need some outside support, not just for one teacher.

And I know my colleague, the minister from Lac du Bonnet, is going to get up and speak about the education aspect of it, and he would know, himself, how much support teachers need when, you know, students are behind—and how valuable it is to have extra support in a classroom to support those who are trying to get, you know, the best education; that are trying to, you know, make their families proud; that are trying to lift themselves out of poverty and help, you know, their families see the value of education.

And this is going to be transforming. It's not just about, you know, investments, but it's also about making sure that those in Manitoba have the tools that they need to get out of the system and get those people off of EIA and help them be independent.

Miigwech.

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** The honourable member—*[interjection]*—or Minister of Education.

**Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** Sorry.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Is it me or is it—okay.

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** Honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I'm up. Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy minister. I wasn't quite sure if the—Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker—yes, thank you. Holy, it's quite the morning—quite the morning.

And I do want to say, sincerely, to the member from Notre Dame, thank you for bringing this resolution forward. I do think it's very important. And I'd also like to thank my colleagues: the Minister for Families and my colleague, the MLA for Point Douglas, as well, for not only speaking passionately about this topic and this resolution, but also for sharing their own personal journeys and stories through our education system.

And we all know that the education system doesn't—isn't just a K-to-12 system. It's now—you know, I'd like to give a bit of a shout out to the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), basically, just for recognizing that education isn't just K-to-12. So sliding in and bringing in early childhood learning into the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning, I think, is very important because there's lots of synergies.

That being said, today's resolution, we're talking about adult literacy. We're talking about adult ed centres. Moving forward on, you know, either filling those gaps in our system in this great province of ours, and to get additional staff, educators, resources in the hands and getting great Manitobans skilled up.

I had the absolute pleasure over the last year serving as the Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration minister, and I know—and I would think that all sides of this House would celebrate and definitely applaud the efforts of the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration for their work, not only on the Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy but also for their work working with our post-secondary institutions, and to try to lift up and fill those gaps for those Manitobans that need to get their skills upgraded, and whether that's because they had to leave their high school for whatever reason, whatever curveball life throws at us, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

It's—we all do know that many of the stories, and again I just want to highlight and thank the members in this Chamber that, on a day-in-day-out basis, share their own personal stories, because we all have those personal stories. We're all human beings; we've all put

our names on a ballot to—with the right intentions to get into this Chamber and to make better policies and decisions that will improve lives for Manitobans moving forward, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

I did want to also say—I wanted to thank the members for Burrows (Mr. Brar) and Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux) for also mentioning a few comments during question period and the other members on our side that asked a few of the really good questions.

The member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino) did mention, you know, over the last 15 years, the declining of the centres within our province. And I think, you know, when we go back to talking about Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy, which is housed in the Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration Department, it's not just that department's responsibility for making sure that, post-pandemic, that we're ready with the skills to be able to move forward, to help the economy strive and be successful here in this great province and the great country of ours, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

And it's not just a whole-of-government approach either, because I know there's many departments that take part in that strategy and have to be making sure that we're encouraging everybody for taking part, but it's also a whole-of-Manitoba approach—it's north, east, south and west—to make sure that we have the right people, the right skills at the right time.

And sometimes those people just don't quite know they've got the skills yet, right? And sometimes they just need that extra incentive, that extra help, you know, whether it's from government or some local peers or mentors within their own communities to uplift them, to take that chance, to go on to look for those other opportunities within Manitoba. Because we all know that if you graduate with a grade 12 diploma here in Manitoba, you've got some options. You've got some great options.

You've got—you know, you've got private vocational institutions; you've got universities; you've got colleges. You've got the apprenticeship program. And, of course, you can go out and you can actually get a job, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

I know that the minister for economic development and jobs, earlier on, spoke about our low unemployment rate. But this doesn't mean that we stop there, that we don't keep that foot on the gas pedal, continuously to move forward, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

I mean, we know, and I appreciate the member from Point Douglas sharing her story and expertise in regards to the education world. Her and I have had some really good conversations about our pasts in regards to being teachers and working, whether it's in student services, and she shared a couple times in regards to her experience with Wayfinders.

Wayfinders is an incredible program. My son had the opportunity to volunteer and help out with Wayfinders a couple years ago, and it's absolutely one of many, many organizations across this whole province of ours that step in and, again, try to fill those gaps, be advocates for students or young adults, or adults that don't quite know what their other options are moving forward.

\* (11:50)

I did want to quickly, though, correct the record just briefly, because I know that the member from Notre Dame referenced a dollar amount in regards to per pupil that we spend here in the province of Manitoba, and we're over \$15,000 per pupil right now. And with that, it's not just the money that you spend, it's how are we—what type of outcomes are we getting? What kind of successes? Because as we continue to move forward, we want to make sure—and everybody could agree on this, and I don't think there's anybody—matter of fact, I'm seeing a lot of heads nodding as—but not falling asleep, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker—but actually nodding in agreement that we all here in this Chamber want to see our students succeed and also stay in the province of Manitoba. And so we all want to see that, and so we want to make sure that our education system, whether it's early learning, K to 12, or then our post-secondary. We want to make sure that it's there now and into the future.

In 2020-2021, our adult learning and literacy provided \$20.3 million to support 67 adult learning centres and adult literacy programs to operate just over 130 programs across this province—programs, over 130 programs to help adults. Do we have more to do? Absolutely we do. We all do.

In 2021-2022, 30 agencies had received more than \$17 million in operating grants which it—also included the amalgamated Manitoba Institute for Trades and Technology Adult Learning Centre which will combine six separate adult learning centres into one centre with multiple program sites.

Before my time runs out, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I did want to mention something that the member from Notre Dame did mention in her speech,

and I did want to comment in regards to barriers. She also mentioned the fact that repealing of the act was a bad move in regards to the adult literacy act. An act—absolutely, this was indeed a great move, and why is that? It's because the benefits to the students—when we talk about barriers, it enables it to be a policy as opposed to a legislative framework. That means that there's—the centres and the various centres are able to be a little more flexible meeting the needs of the communities. This means that it doesn't necessarily have to be an 8:30 'til 3:30 centre. This could be one that operates in the evening. It's up to them. It provides them more flexibility, which I think at the end will reduce some of the barriers.

With those few words on the record, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the time, and I turn the floor over to others who'd like to speak.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I just want to spend a few minutes talking about this resolution that has been brought forward and really thanking the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino) for bringing the resolution forward. I think it's an excellent one, and we are going to be supporting it here today.

I also sort of want to echo some of the thoughts that have been shared by the ministers and our colleague from Point Douglas, and really just exemplify how much nicer it is to be in these chambers when we can come together and have a friendly debate, an actual conversation. And I know it makes doing the job a lot more pleasant, and I want to thank my colleagues for helping us all make this atmosphere possible.

So, to the resolution, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Many people attend adult learning for various reasons: sometimes it's to brush up on education to get their high school diploma, complete certain credits to prepare for post-secondary, sometimes jobs may require it and there are some programs that offer training and professional development workshops in these adult learning centres. Also, sometimes newcomers coming to Canada and here in Manitoba, they need to—whether it's top up or get the accreditation for their high school diploma.

There's multitude of reasons that people go back and study adult learning. And I think about—I have a friend who actually dropped out of high school because they had lost one of their parents and the grief was overwhelming, and they couldn't come back to high school and function as they needed to. So they

dropped out and went back just a few years ago, actually. So it's good that we have these adult learning centres in place here in Manitoba.

So knowing this and the demand for adult learning, there are several things that we should be debating here today.

And I want to thank Jim Silver for authoring a report that was released just this past January on the 25th, and I'm tabling a report—this report—for the House here, today, because I think it's important that it be included on record. It was conducted by 30 adult educators in different parts of our province between May and November, 2021 and it shares the concern that adult education is not being taken seriously enough. And Manitoba actually has an opportunity, here, to lead in Canada because education and adult learning isn't necessarily being taken seriously enough throughout Canada. And so nothing is preventing our province to be the province that actually steps forward and does something more on this.

We know by investing in adult education the way we do in primary, high school and post-secondary, that it strengthens families. It creates more employability. It is an important step towards reconciliation. And all of this information can be found in the report, specifically on page 12. I want to share what the report specifies and how it says, approximately 18 per cent of Manitoba's population is Indigenous, and in the 2019-2020 school year, 45 per cent of students in adult learning and 38 per cent in adult literacy programs were Indigenous.

Investing in adult learning is an important step toward strengthening families, employability and reconciliation. Many factors need to be considered with adult learning the way that it currently is in Manitoba. We can talk about staffing; the inequities for staff—that staffing face. Some are not unionized. Some are paid poorly. Many don't have benefits. Many teachers are paying for supplies out of their pockets and we all saw this throughout the pandemic—teachers across the board, not just adult learning centres, but we're seeing it even in our adult learning centres. When you talk about students, how there's not enough spaces—and this was discussed a little bit in the question portion. But programs can't even advertise because all the slots, all the spaces are already full. This is an issue, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

There's the availability of child care. You know, I've spoken with many from Seven Oaks adult learning centre who have shared that they could not

have gone back to school if child care was not available, and this isn't the case for all adult learning centres. There needs to be more regulation around this. There needs to be more tailored made programs for particular communities, and the government needs to do a better job that ensuring that no matter where you are living in Manitoba, you have access to a strong education. This might be a good conversation to be having. Perhaps we should be including adult learning under the education portfolio rather than economic development and jobs.

A lot of debates to be had, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm wary of the time, so I'm going to shorten my remarks here. But we need to make sure that programs are being funded fairly and adequately. Programs deserve services such as counselling services, the way high schools and post-secondary institutions have them, because there has actually been a drop in enrolment because of all these unmet needs.

So I'm grateful that the MLA for Notre Dame has raised this resolution and I'm hopeful that the government will support it as well.

Thank you.

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** I want to thank the member from Notre Dame for bringing this resolution forth.

Adult education is definitely very important, and I want to also echo the member from Tyndall Park on bringing—or coming together on issues. I know we still get a lot of, you know, smear campaigns going on from across the floor in question period and stuff like that, and it's very hurtful that we can't come together and respect each other in a positive way.

Manitoba's a province of opportunity, and our government realises the importance of adult education. So we have invested and continue to invest in this type of education. As an educator for 35 years and in the trades program, I fully am aware of how important adult education is. And I recall back in my days it was, kind of, well, are you going to go to university when you finish? Skills and getting people empowered with skills—

**The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski):** Order.

Time for debate has expired. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member from Swan River will have nine minutes remaining.

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



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, March 17, 2022**

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