

**Fifth 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
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLEIN, Kevin E., Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice, Hon.	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James, Hon.	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Morden-Winkler	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, May 18, 2023**

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

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

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on 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 the 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.

Good morning, everybody. Please be seated.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Speaker's Statement**

**Madam Speaker:** And I have a statement.

I am advising the House that I have received a letter from the Official Opposition House Leader regarding her caucus's final selected bill for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 25 permits each recognized party to select up to three private members' bills per session to proceed to a second reading vote. The Official Opposition House Leader has advised that her caucus has selected Bill 226, The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Amendment Act, as the third and final selected bill from the official opposition caucus for this session.

In accordance with the Official Opposition House Leader's letter, the process on this bill will proceed as follows: second reading will begin at 10:30 a.m.;

the questions shall be put on the second reading motion this morning at 10:55 a.m.

**House Business**

**MLA Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** First, pursuant to rule 34(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 Point Douglas.

The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Prioritize MMIWG2S by Implementing the National Inquiry's Calls to Justice.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Point Douglas.

The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Prioritize MMIWG2S by Implementing the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice.

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**MLA Fontaine:** Would you call for a second reading debate from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., Bill 204, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Licence Plates for MMIWG2S Awareness)?

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 204 this morning for the first half hour.

**SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 204—The Drivers  
and Vehicles Amendment Act  
(Licence Plates for MMIWG2S Awareness)**

**Madam Speaker:** Therefore, I will call second reading, Bill 204, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Licence Plates for MMIWG2S Awareness).

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** I move, seconded by the member from St. Johns, that Bill 204, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Licence Plates for MMIWG2S Awareness), now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mrs. Smith:** I just want to begin by sending our condolences to June Johnson's family, the community and of course all of her friends. She is another, you know, woman that's been taken too soon in our community, which is why it's so important to create awareness through this licence plate. And certainly to set up some funds for children who are left behind due to their parent being taken through violence.

This bill has been worked on for the last couple of years in co-operation with families who have asked for this for a while now. And we've been working on two different designs. Because we have, you know, families that we represent that are two-spirited that don't wear dresses and wanted something symbolic that would, you know, represent them.

So certainly, the hand is something that the families—the 2S families have supported and would like to see. And, you know, it's something that we need to certainly listen to the families. Families tell me often that their voices are not heard, that they feel like their loved ones are forgotten, that society has forgotten their loved ones. And society has turned their back on the issue altogether.

So, this licence plate will help community, society, Manitobans, Winnipeggers all across our province be educated on what's happening here in Manitoba. And help the families to have hope that things will shift, things will change.

Because it's going to take all of us to do that. The police aren't going to be able to do it—alone. The government's aren't going to be able to do it alone. It's going to take all of us as people, as society to shift the way that we treat each other, to shift the way that we come together when there's a crisis. And certainly to look at prevention, because we are losing way too many Indigenous women in this province and right across Canada and the country. And we as a society need to start doing our part in ensuring that that doesn't continue to happen.

And, you know, families often will talk to me when I'm at, you know, wherever I am: What is the government doing to address, you know, the high rates of violence that are happening in our city and in our province? And there's not a lot I can point to in terms of prevention. And this licence plate would be a part of prevention because it would help people get educated on the issue.

But we also need action. We also need to ensure, you know, going past this licence plate, that folks have access to the resources that they need. And we have

children who want to pursue post-secondary but have a parent who, you know, has been taken through violence. And that leaves one parent or another caregiver or the child might be in care as a result of their parent's death.

\* (10:10)

The funds generated from these licence plates would go into a trust fund for these very children to be able to access, whether they want to go to school, to upgrade; whether they want to go into the trades; whether they need a laptop for university; whatever it is that they need to get educated.

And we know that, you know, poverty has stricken many of our families, and our families need support. My sister, you know, this year will be 15 years that she's been missing. She left behind four children—four children that have, you know, one parent now, that has to rely on one income. And my nieces and nephews have aspirations. They want to pursue post-secondary.

But when you have a one-income family, you're put in a situation where you don't have extra funds to be able to put into an education fund. So, this very bill would help do that, and I certainly look forward to unanimous vote—unanimous support in this House, because families, this is long overdue for them.

We, as a government, need to stand up as leaders and we need to show them that we care, that we support them and that we want to do something to address these high numbers. And certainly this is one step of many that we need to move forward on.

Miigwech.

### Questions

**Madam 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 any questions?

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** I'd like to thank my colleague from Point Douglas for her advocacy and her work on this file.

I'd like to ask a question: How many families have been impacted by tragic losses—how have families

been impacted by the tragic loss and murders of their mothers, daughters, sisters, wives and friends?

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** I thank my colleague for that question. You know, certainly I can speak for my experience and, you know, meeting with families for the last 15 years. It's been quite traumatic. It not only affects the family, but it affects, you know, the people around the family; it affects the community.

I know that families don't—Indigenous women don't feel safe leaving their house. They're seven times more likely to face violence and never to be seen again. And these are high statistics. You know, no one should ever have to worry about leaving their house and not coming home.

So, families have multiple loved ones who have also been murdered or gone missing, and it's affected them in a way that—

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

Further questions?

If not, the floor is open for debate.

Is there any debate on this motion?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 204, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Licence Plates for MMIWG2S Awareness).

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

**Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips):** Madam Speaker, I'm seeking if it's the will of the House to see the vote as unanimous.

**Madam Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to consider that that motion was carried unanimously? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted. So, the motion is carried unanimously.

\* \* \*

**MLA Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** Is it the will of the House to call it 10:30?

**Madam Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it 10:30? *[Agreed]*

### **Bill 226—The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Amendment Act**

**Madam Speaker:** And as earlier determined, then, we will now move to second reading of Bill 226, The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Amendment Act.

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** I move, seconded by the member for St. James (Mr. Sala), that Bill 226, the universal screening—Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

#### ***Motion presented.***

**MLA Asagwara:** I'm—while I am somewhat disappointed that I've had to bring this bill back now for a third time, I'm hopeful that, given the awareness and the education that has been garnered around CMV, congenital cytomegalovirus, that we'll all be unified in supporting this bill today.

So, in 2008, Rob and Michelle Tetrault had a son, Alexandre. And Alexandre, when he was born, did not appear to be symptomatic for CMV. It was only thanks to an ultrasound that they realized that their son, their beautiful newborn baby boy, did in fact have CMV, and he was able to receive the treatment that he needed as a newborn and now he's, you know, he's a healthy kid growing up.

And as a result of their experience, Rob and Michelle created CMV Canada. And they created this foundation in the hopes that they could generate awareness and education and raise money for research around CMV and ensure that all families across Canada, but certainly here in their home province of Manitoba, would learn about CMV and be able to have their babies screened for CMV as newborns.

We know that CMV is the leading cause of non-genetic hearing loss in children. It's also a leading cause of intellectual disabilities. You know, this is a disease that has an incredibly high disease burden, impact, on the health-care system.

And being able to implement universal newborn screening for CMV would make a huge difference in the health outcomes of newborns in Manitoba.

It would improve their outcomes long term. It would ensure that families, many of which have no idea what CMV is—most folks have never heard of it—you know, but thanks to efforts like Rob and his wife, Michelle, you know, more and more folks, including health practitioners, are learning about CMV and the

importance of being screened for it within the first 21 days of life.

And so, I'm honoured to be able to bring this bill forward again. Currently, Rob is running across Manitoba for his foundation; he's running across the province to raise money and awareness and education for CMV.

He's done a lot of media on this issue, and he's made it very clear that he hopes that this government, this PC government, will do the right thing, support this legislation and be a leader in Canada in regards to making sure that all babies born in Manitoba have the ability to be screened for CMV.

And right now, Saskatchewan has implemented this universal newborn screening; Ontario was the leader in doing it first. We know that, you know, babies—over 100 babies are born in Manitoba with CMV, and most of those newborns are asymptomatic, meaning that they don't have symptoms that would, you know, cause someone to think that they have CMV.

So, we have an opportunity today, collectively, to support the efforts of a family that, you know, even though their son had a good outcome and they were able to make sure he had treatment early as a newborn and he's living a healthy life, you know, they made the efforts to make sure that they raised awareness and that, and are fighting so that all families have that opportunity.

And I think that is a testament to the good nature of Manitobans, that even if folks have a good outcome through what can be a scary experience, they're going to put in the work to make sure that their neighbours and fellow community members, fellow Manitobans, also have access to the health care that they need in order for their babies to be born and raised and live healthy lives.

And so, you know, I'm obviously very happy to answer questions on this issue. But, you know, the most important point for us to leave here with today is, this is an opportunity that we have, collectively, as legislators, to make sure that all babies born in Manitoba are screened for CMV and have the best chance at good health-care outcomes.

\* (10:20)

We can do that simply by passing this legislation today in the House and I sincerely hope that unanimously, we'll make that decision.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** In accordance with the earlier announcement, the vote for this bill will now take place at 10:40 and the rest of the morning debate will also move forward by 15 minutes.

### Questions

**Madam 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 only one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Are there any questions?

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** Can the member opposite please explain how this bill will maintain best practice and evidence-informed practice, given that these are constantly evolving technologies?

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** I thank the member for that question. So, you know, part of the importance of this bill is it's going to ensure that medical practitioners across the province have the education and awareness to implement this into their practice when it comes to newborn health care. And that's really a fundamental step that, right now, isn't fully in place and this bill would help support that being put into practice.

The other thing to note is that the cost of a test right now is around \$10. It's highly cost-beneficial to our system and actually, the rates and the cost are decreasing as technology improves.

It's really a benefit across the board.

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** I just want to start by thanking my colleague, the member for Union Station, for all they do in this province to improve health-care outcomes but also for bringing a bill forward three times now to respond to this issue with CMV in Manitoba.

My question to them is: How will this bill benefit infants living with CMV and their families?

**MLA Asagwara:** I thank my colleague from St. James for his kind words and that really great question. So, it is so critical that newborns are tested within the first three weeks, within the first 21 days of life, in order to maximize the benefits of the medication and the treatments available.

We know that the treatments available can reduce the incidence of hearing loss by 55—can improve outcomes by 55 per cent. That is significant, but really the most impactful, beneficial way to make sure that we give babies the best chance of good health-care outcomes is within the first 21 days.

And so, it's crucial that this is implemented and put into practice for babies within that window of time.

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** It's always good to know when a bill is brought forward who the member consulted with, and I'm wondering if they could just share a little bit more about who they consulted with.

**MLA Asagwara:** I thank my colleague from Borderland for that question. It is a very important question and I'm happy to answer that. So, clearly, I've already mentioned Rob and Michelle, who are the founders who created the CMV foundation.

But there's also a ton of research out there. We're really lucky, actually, to have a lot of research on this issue, so whether you're looking at the American Medical Association; you can also look to Montreal, you've got the pediatrics and microbiology and immunology department there.

There's a lot of great evidence and research out of the United States, but actually, I would say, more relevant, here in Canada, we've got a ton of research and pediatricians 'across'—across the country support this effort.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, I thank the member for bringing this legislation forward.

It's my assessment that by screening these kids and saving what could be lifelong problems, that you're actually going to save quite a bit of money for the health-care system. I wonder if you'd comment.

**MLA Asagwara:** I thank our colleague for that really important question. The cost savings to our health-care system would be significant.

So, we know that CMV nationally, has a cost burden of approximately \$400 million, across the country. We know that the cost burden here in Manitoba is also significant.

Again, most babies born with CMV are asymptomatic, and so it's crucial that this screening is implemented to ensure that all babies are screened and the majority who are asymptomatic would therefore get the treatments in the right amount of time, improve their health-care outcomes and decrease the cost

burden on our health-care system which is massive, at this time.

**Mr. Schuler:** Was this bill inspired by the work of former trailblazer MLA Leanne Rowat, who first brought forward the universal newborn hearing screening into the Manitoba Legislature?

**MLA Asagwara:** This bill has been inspired by families. And so, you know, I think it's important that when we talk about any legislation that's being brought forward to highlight the root of it. And at the root of this bill, and the efforts being made around CMV, are families.

And I should have mentioned that when the member for Borderland asked about consultation. I've talked to families. I've also talked to folks, you know, who do work in the hearing loss community.

And it's so important that we centre families and newborns, newborn Manitobans, when we talk about this. So, I want to thank Rob and Michelle again for their efforts, but I also want to thank all the families across the country and here in Manitoba who are advocating for this bill to be passed.

**Mr. Sala:** This bill, this focus on CMV screening is a great example of preventative medicine. And I'd like to ask my colleague: How has this current government failed to invest in preventative medicine in Manitoba?

**MLA Asagwara:** That's a great question. You know, unfortunately, we've seen this government be very, very reactive to health care. We're seeing folks across the province, we're seeing kids in Manitoba having increasingly concerning health-care outcomes that, you know, had we intervened as early as possible could have been mitigated.

And so, this is a really good example of what this government can finally start doing, which is taking a proactive and preventative approach to health care at really the earliest stage possible for Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Are there any further questions?

### Debate

**Madam Speaker:** If not, debate is open. The floor is open for debate.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** Well, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation.

As someone who has spent some time here, I remember my colleague, Leanne Rowat, who was a pioneer in this kind of legislation. In fact, I believe she

brought forward similar pieces of legislation multiple times before it was passed.

In fact, it was the NDP. It was under this current Leader of the Opposition's party that the legislation was deemed to not be necessary, that focusing on children was not important. And this particular issue, although it is rare, is very important that it be identified quickly.

And I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Leanne and the work that she did tirelessly. And she was never one to back down. She kept introducing it 'til finally it was adopted. Rightfully so.

For those of us who've been present when a baby is born and know of how difficult that process is and what a miracle it is when a child is born and what a beautiful moment that is.

But there are a lot of hazards. And if we were to go back in history, we would now be able to identify why it is that there was such a high infant mortality rate.

And without going into details today, there are many things that can go wrong. There are things that led to children passing away soon after birth. And there are things that, if on a preventative basis be done quickly, can certainly help the child not just survive but also grow and move on through an education process and move on with life.

So these kinds of tests are important. There is already some process in place for this. This legislation reinforces a lot of what's being done and adds more encouragement into the process. Because one of the last things as a parent that you consider when you get this beautiful, pink bundle of joy into your arms is, does the child have hearing issues? Is there potential for the child to have a problem? I mean, that's the last thing you're thinking about.

Probably one of the first things you do is—as most parents—is you count the fingers and the toes. It's just funny. That's one of the things you do. You count those little fingers and the little toes.

And the baby's usually laying on the warming tray, and the warming tray is beeping. And the baby usually is crying, curled up, testing, you know, this new world of now room, where you don't—you're not restricted by how far your feet can go or your hands can go.

\* (10:30)

And the last thing you're thinking at that moment is, we should have a hearing test done. Having been in this situation three times, that would've been the last thing we would have thought about is, should we have a quick hearing test done on this beautiful new life.

And I think that this is important. I would say to anybody who has gone through this process, it's a beautiful process, and probably these tests are great, and they certainly will help the child in the long term.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there further debate?

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** A few words on the record in terms of this bill, which is to have universal screening for cytomegalovirus.

Cytomegalovirus is a significant infection—infection, and if not screened for and treated early on, it can be a long-term health issue. And so, it can be very valuable to screen and detect and help those newborns who have cytomegalovirus infections.

And so, I'm in strong support of this legislation, and I hope we're able to get it passed today.

Newborn screening began as early as the early 1960s, perhaps even before. But in one of the major early screening programs was for phenylketonuria, and this was a disease which was universally very damaging to the brain and ended up, in many cases, in death of the child.

And it was discovered that you could treat phenylketonuria with a diet, and these children—children would do very well in a diet low in phenylalanine, which is the amino acid which was building up. And it causes—when it accumulates, it causes brain damage.

And when it was recognized that this was readily treatable, and when a screening process was found for screening for phenylketonuria, and the screening programs started primarily in the 1960s; and I think that in Manitoba it was probably toward the end of the 1960s that we started screening every child born in Manitoba for phenylketonuria.

Gradually over the years more and more conditions have been added to this list, and we now screen for many, many conditions, and this is a very positive thing. The member for Springfield was talking about the universal newborn hearing screening, and this is a bill which amends The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Act.

The bill to have universal newborn screening—hearing screening, was first introduced by myself, and



then I worked with Leanne Rowat, and we got it passed in 2013. It became effective in 2016.

And to provide an example of the amazing impact that the universal newborn hearing screening has, I talked quite recently to a physician who is an otolaryngologist, who looks after children with hearing problems.

And the problem before there was universal newborn hearing screening was that these children were being found when they were 3 or 4 or 5, at which time many of them already were starting to have difficulties in developing language, in speaking fluently.

And the marvellous thing about the universal newborn hearing screening is that these children are now detected very early on. They can have, for example, a cochlear implant at age six to nine months; their hearing can be corrected.

And these children then develop their—not only their hearing early, but their speaking patterns. Because speech depends on hearing, and if you don't have the ability to hear early on, then your ability to learn to speak can be impaired.

And so, it is phenomenal to see kids now, who would have had speech impairments, who are now doing—and detected very early—who are doing absolutely phenomenally, because there was universal newborn hearing screening. And I am hopeful that we will see with the 'cytomegalic' virus screening, that we will see a significant impact.

We've already heard that the total across the country is in the order of about \$400 million, I think that's annually. And so, there's tremendous cost savings. It is adding on a screening process. It's true that there is some cost to that, but it makes a big difference in the lives of children. And through preventing problems, it actually enables our whole health-care system to function better and save costs in one area, and money that can be used, then, for other areas of health care, where we have many desperate needs.

So, I rise now to speak on this, to support it strongly, and hope that we will be able to get it passed and move forward on cytomegalovirus screening for all newborns in Manitoba.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there any further debate on this motion?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 226, The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Amendment Act.

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

**MLA Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

**Madam Speaker:** A recorded vote having been called, call in the members—oh, sorry.

All those in favour of the motion—no.

A recorded vote having been requested, in accordance with rule 24(7), this vote will be deferred to 11:40 a.m. this morning.

**MLA Fontaine:** Madam Speaker, is there leave to call it 11:40?

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House—[*interjection*]. Oh. The Official Opposition House Leader, in order for Hansard to pick that up.

**MLA Fontaine:** Madam Speaker, is there the will of the House to call it 11 a.m.?

**Madam Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it 11 a.m.? [*Agreed*]

And we will be revisiting the time of the vote now, as we proceed.

## RESOLUTIONS

### **Res. 16 – Condemning the Provincial Government for Failing to Uphold the Right to Housing for All Manitobans**

**Madam Speaker:** So, the hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Condemning the Provincial Government for Failing to Uphold the Right to Housing for All Manitobans, brought forward by the honourable member for Wolseley.

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** I move, seconded by the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino), that to condemn the provincial government for failing to

uphold the right to housing—[interjection]. Right, sorry.

I move, seconded by the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino),

*WHEREAS Canada has recognized the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 25(1) which includes housing as part of the right to an acceptable standard of living; and*

*WHEREAS Canada has also recognized the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Article 11(1) that declares housing as part of the right to an "adequate standard of living," and calls on governments to "take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right"; and*

*WHEREAS housing is a basic necessity required for survival, and the Canadian National Housing Strategy Act calls housing "essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities"; and*

*WHEREAS other jurisdictions have put forward legislation that would affirm the human right to housing, such as Ontario, which proposed establishing an Independent Housing Commissioner and a Housing Inequities and Disparity Working Group to study "housing on the basis of it being a human right for individuals and groups"; and*

*WHEREAS access to affordable housing contributes to achieving beneficial social, economic, health, and environmental outcomes; and*

*WHEREAS many Manitobans face homelessness or housing instability, and according to the 2022 Winnipeg Street Census there were more than 1,200 people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg, including more than 100 who were unsheltered; and*

*WHEREAS End Homelessness Winnipeg estimates that experiencing homelessness cuts 7-10 years off a person's lifespan; and*

*WHEREAS this situation has been made worse by the Provincial Government's failure to build any new units of social and affordable housing, instead selling off hundreds of social housing units; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government has further hurt renters in Manitoba by allowing for massive above guideline rent increases, including approving 100% of above guideline rent increases in 2019-2020, resulting in some renters paying up to 30-50% more in housing costs, and hiking taxes on renters by cutting the renters' tax credit; and*

*WHEREAS provincial goals, timelines and initiatives relating to housing and homelessness are essential to improving the quality of life for Manitobans, particularly persons in greatest need.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the provincial government for failing to uphold the right to housing for all Manitobans and for selling off hundreds of social housing units, failing to build new units, cutting the repair and maintenance budget by millions of dollars and cutting Rent Assist.

\* (10:40)

***Motion presented.***

**Ms. Naylor:** I'm bringing this PMR forward today because it is very clear to me now, as I end—near the end of my first term as an MLA, that housing is one of the most critical issues facing my constituents. Each winter finds many of my constituents living in bus shelters, and in milder weather it reveals that folks are living in parks, on riverbanks and in parking lots. There's communities of homeless folks right outside my constituency office every summer.

*Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

And throughout the constituency where it used to perhaps—you know, there used to be tents in one park. Now it's in three or four, making it very difficult for children and families to use parks for what they were intended for; but making it far more difficult for those folks living in such unsafe housing conditions. This issue is replicated across the city. And more homelessness is happening in northern and rural regions across the province.

So, it's very important to me to stand here today to state that housing is a right. Housing is a right that all Manitobans should have access to. Access to housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of people, and to building sustainable and inclusive communities.

The federal government recognizes housing as a human right, and other provinces have also put forward legislation which affirms the right to housing. Unfortunately, the PC government has failed to uphold this right. They have sold off social housing and failed to build any new units. They have approved above-guideline rent increases and they have cut Rent Assist.

Madam Speaker, the United Nations first recognized housing rights in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has since reaffirmed housing

rights and seven core human rights treaties. The 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights contains the UN's broadest recognition of the right to housing. And I quote, the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate housing and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.

I know we all can agree that the language is dated, but the intent is very much the same; 22 countries have enshrined just-'judicable' housing rights in their constituencies. Together, they recognize a range of freedoms and entitlements connected to the right to housing.

While many of these nations include housing as a stand-alone right, others recognize it as a part of other rights, such as the rights for children. And some countries include special rights for certain groups of people, such as low-income families or those living with disabilities. Others grant the right to a certain standard of living—or housing. For example, in Venezuela, Venezuelans have a right to adequate, safe and comfortable hygienic housing.

Housing rights can best amount to much more than a roof over one's head. Most definitions also specify that housing must be adequate. Adequacy means that housing meets social, economic, environment or cultural needs. Several of us in the Legislature, myself and the member from Notre Dame, have—and others—have focused on some of the very concerning housing conditions that exist where some of the most vulnerable people in our city are living.

In fact, primarily folks who have been moved from public encampments into housing. But housing that's not adequate. Housing where doors don't lock, where anyone can enter the building, where there's regular violence and dangers, regular overdoses, deaths, shooting, knives sticking out of the wall. You know, sewage running through the basement. Needles lying around on the floor. And where the owners are profiting a substantial amount through money that they receive from EIA and from this government because nobody is enforcing any standards.

And it's completely shameful—completely shameful—not only that we have people living in parks but that we have people in 2023 living in housing conditions such as this where they—and not, you know—we're talking families, families with small children as well as, you know, regular adults who deserve a safer place to live.

And so, it's not just about housing; it's about adequate housing.

In addition, the fulfillment of housing rights may differ from one person to the next depending on their circumstances. For example, people with disabilities may have a right to priority access to government housing programs.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the treaty body charged with monitoring the implementation of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, offers two sets of general comments that define adequacy in relation to housing rights under that covenant. And they are arguably the most widely accepted definition.

The CESCR's 1991 general comment No. 4 lists seven characteristics of adequate housing, and they are as follows:

Legal security of tenure, which means people have protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats.

Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure, so that housing contains the resources necessary for health, security, comfort and nutrition.

Affordability: Housing costs do not prevent people from satisfying their other basic needs.

And habitability: So, housing contains adequate space, guarantees physical safety, and protects occupants from the environment, health threats and structural hazards.

Accessibility: Housing must be accessible to those entitled to it, and disadvantaged groups are given some degree of priority consideration in the housing sphere.

Location: Housing is situated away from polluted sites and allows access to employment options, health-care services, schools, child-care centres and other social facilities.

And cultural adequacy: The way housing is constructed, the building materials used, and the policies supporting these appropriately enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing.

In addition to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, six core UN human rights treaties include specific housing rights as part of other rights, and these are as follows: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Collectively, these treaties recognize all persons' rights to adequate housing, without distinction as to their gender, ability, race, colour and national or ethnic origin. They also enshrine the right of all people to protection against arbitrary or unlawful interference with their home.

The Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination in employment and services under federal jurisdiction including housing and, in addition, the National Housing Strategy Act, which was passed in 2019, recognizes housing as a human right. It declares that the government of Canada's housing policy recognizes that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law.

It recognizes that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building inclusive communities, and it supports improved housing outcomes for the people of Canada and furthers the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The act requires the federal government to maintain a national housing strategy, taking into account key principles of a human-rights based approach to housing. It's not just the federal government. Here in Manitoba, in our Human Rights Code, the definition of social disadvantage includes a characteristic protected against some forms of discrimination. It means diminished social standing or social regard due to characteristics including homelessness or inadequate housing.

Section 13 protects people on section 9 grounds from unreasonable discrimination with respect to any service, accommodation, facility, program or privilege normally available to the public with some exceptions for age.

\* (10:50)

There's much more to share about the Human Rights Code, and about the PCs' failures on housing in Manitoba, but fortunately, since I'm almost out of

time, there's the opportunity for many of my colleagues to speak on those failure in the hour we have ahead.

Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker.

### Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

Oh, okay, before I recognize questions, I just need to explain how the rest of the morning is going to run. So as—we're delving into the manipulation of space and time here.

So, as the House called it 11 at 10:38, the deferred vote will happen on Bill 226 at 11:33, and then the House would recess five minutes later at 11:38, unless that vote that we call at 11:33 goes beyond 11:38, in which case we finish what we've started with the vote, and then the House recesses after the vote.

The bells are going to ring for five minutes. That's what the rules stipulate for these situations; they cannot ring more than five minutes.

I feel like saying any questions, but I don't know if we can—I can say that here. So, let's go on with the question period, and ask the clerks if you have any—if any of that isn't clear.

Okay, so, now we're going to move on to the question period, and I'm going to recognize the honourable member for Dauphin.

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** I want to say, Rent Assist keeps housing affordable for Manitobans with low income, and each year benefits are indexed to reflect 75 per cent of the assessed medium market rent.

But in 2021-22, the Manitoba government increased the indexation rate from 75 to 80 per cent for families not enrolled in EIA, meaning some families received up to \$80 more per month.

Can the member opposite explain how providing more money to individuals assessing Rent Assist is a cut?

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** While there may be some families who have experienced a slight increase

in Rent Assist over the last couple of years, what we're also seeing is that there have been cuts to Rent Assist, to who qualifies for Rent Assist and who is receiving it.

More of my constituents are not receiving it that I believe should be receiving it, and there have also been cuts to social housing during that time, making it more difficult for people to find an affordable place to live.

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** It's always an honour to get up here representing the people of Transcona, and having the opportunity to debate consequential PMRs such as this, brought forward by my colleague, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor).

I'd like the member for Wolseley to reflect on her previous role as a school trustee, and her current role as an MLA, and why is it important that we recognize the right for housing for all Manitobans?

**Ms. Naylor:** Thank you to the member for Transcona for actually making that link between schools, education and housing. In my experience as a school trustee, one of the greatest barriers to school attendance, obviously for many children, as we've repeated many times in this House, is food, lack of nutrition.

But in many cases, students were not living in places with adequate housing, so some older students may have been couch surfing; kids transitioning out of CFS may not have had the appropriate resources to allow them to live in a safe place; and in some cases, entire families are living in inappropriate housing conditions where there's so much noise at night no one's getting any sleep. They're dealing with bedbugs, they're dealing with, you know, heat turned off.

It makes it hard to—

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

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** Has the member opposite spoken to the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), her NDP colleague, who raised rent for many Manitobans above guidelines during his time on the RTB?

**Ms. Naylor:** I'm not going to take any time with a fictional question on a fictional topic, but I am going to say that, right now, this government has—*[interjection]*—a fictional MLA. This—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Naylor:**—this government has had seven years to make a change and make a difference, and all they've

done is roll things back when it comes to housing. There's—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Naylor:**—no way they can have another term and cause further harm to homeless Manitobans.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, I note that the member quotes a number of 1,200 people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg. My guess is that the number is much larger than that and that that's a significant under count.

I wonder if the member would comment.

**Ms. Naylor:** Thank you for that question. I'm literally looking back on my notes, because I don't even recall quoting that number. But, you know, I know that every year, there are housing advocacy groups that do—who do a survey to understand what the housing numbers look like, and every year that number grows.

And it's also not accurate because it doesn't reflect people who are couch-surfing or who have not been able to be reached by those community organizations.

**Mr. Altomare:** Like I said earlier, it's an—incredibly important PMR that we're debating this morning, and I want to thank the member for Wolseley for continuing to passionately really advocate for something that Manitobans really care a lot about. We do know the important roles that schools play in a lot of this piece.

Can she reflect a little bit on how housing permanence and predictability can really impact a student's assess—performance at school?

**Ms. Naylor:** Housing permanence is everything when it comes to students getting to school and staying at school. I know, during my time at Winnipeg School Division and prior to my time there, there was a very strong push to try to encourage families to keep a child in the same school for a full year, because of the meaningful impact on their learning.

Unfortunately, that—the focus is only on families and what they can—the choices they can make, but when people are constantly evicted or forced to move around because of costs or bedbugs or inadequate safe housing, it really impacts on the ability for a child to stay in the same school for a full year.

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, undisputed fact that the NDP member for Fort Garry was on the RTB. Undisputed fact that he voted rent increases for tenants.

Can the member answer: Did she speak to the NDP member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), why he is offside with this resolution?

**Ms. Naylor:** Everybody in this caucus is in support of this resolution and is fighting for adequate housing for Manitobans.

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

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

**Mr. Altomare:** Again, like I said earlier, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) for bringing forth this consequential PMR.

We need to be discussing these pieces when we're here in the House. This is what Manitobans expect us to do when they elect us to represent them here in the House. It's interesting that we're not having any real debate when it comes to questions from the opposite—from the government benches.

But I will ask—this next question is: How has this government failed to provide Manitobans with affordable housing, especially for young families that are trying to get started? *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Naylor:** This government has failed to build a single unit of social housing or affordable housing during their seven years in government, and instead they have sold off units and they have cut maintenance budgets.

They ended their freeze to evictions and rent increases in the middle of the pandemic, and, of course, the education property tax credit for renters was also cut by 25 per cent while giving corporate landlords huge breaks.

\* (11:00)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there any further questions?

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** Is the member opposite aware that for the first time ever in this province, we put forward a homeless strategy which adopts a co-ordinated multi-system approach that includes community-led solutions which has an aim to end homelessness in Manitoba?

**Ms. Naylor:** I am profoundly aware that in an election year, literally minutes before an election, this government made—took some public action and made a speech about what they were going to do about

housing. But we haven't seen it happen yet; we don't know that it's ever going to happen.

But this party will have a plan and will change homelessness in this province.

**Mr. Altomare:** Once again, this is a—like I said earlier—an important PMR and one that I'm really learning a lot about as the member for Wolseley is answering these questions.

I want to—I would like to ask her: Is recognizing the right to housing something that housing advocates here in Manitoba, in Winnipeg and in our neighbourhoods—is that something that has been—they've been calling for?

**Ms. Naylor:** Thank you to the member from Transcona for that question. Absolutely. The Right to Housing Coalition is made up of a number of housing activists and homeless activist groups in this province. They have done the research and made the recommendations.

They've actually done the hard work, so that the government doesn't have to. They just need to take advice from the experts in this area and follow the recommendations because everyone in Manitoba deserves a safe, adequate place to live.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for—okay. Time for questions has expired.

### Debate

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We're going to move to debate. The floor is open for debate.

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** Again, it's always a pleasure to get up in this House and say a few words on behalf of the constituency of Dauphin. It's been an extreme honour and privilege to do so.

And some of the resolutions that are being brought forward by the NDP, they need some correction. They need—because there is some misleading information in there.

And in fact, in my constituency, there's a—I know the NDP government had an affinity—didn't have much of an affinity to help the Dauphin region out with their economic potential. And I can say that as being a lifelong resident in that region.

But they did like to seem to grow and support government-sponsored social and low-income housing. That was something they liked to do. But yet, they never let the region develop so people would buy and afford their own homes. That wasn't a priority.

And there's other issues, as well, that I'm sure the member is not familiar with and should merely be made aware of, that this NDP call and this condemnation of our government regarding housing is not fair when we look at all the good work that this PC government has done over the last seven years, recently—and more recently—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Michaleski:** —the Stefanson government. All the great work and investments that are being made into our economy that help—both directly and indirectly—have addressed the housing issues in Manitoba.

Now, the NDP, I recall them saying and getting a little uptight about the—some sort of electioneering. Well, I looked at this resolution and it sure seems that they're a champion for housing for everybody. And that's in line with NDP ideology. This is most certainly—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Michaleski:** This is most certainly in line with NDP ideology where we need to provide housing for everybody.

But what—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Michaleski:** —the PC government has done in the last seven years is first of all—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Michaleski:** —address the mess, the tangled mess, the knots left by the NDP in this province. And helped to create an environment for people to own their own homes.

And the opportunities that are coming from—because of this government, again, not only for people to address their housing needs on their own, but the very important, targeted funding supports over the last number of years directed towards social housing. And giving those—making sure that those dollars go to the people that actually need them. Not—[*interjection*]

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

I'm calling the opposition benches in particular to show some respect, some decorum. This is not an outright ban on heckling. If there is an appropriate heckle, I'm not calling that out. I'm calling out the incessant, non-stop mockery, laughter and side commentary that is accompanying the member who has the floor. So, I want to make that distinction.

The member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) has the floor.

**Mr. Michaleski:** This is a very important issue. I will agree. Housing is, you know, one of those major things that we all need. You know, food and shelter.

And—but far from the NDP approach where they're—you know, they'll get up on a stage and promise housing for everybody; we need to make sure that everybody gets a house. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's just wrong. That's just the wrong approach and it leads to a lot of bad outcomes.

And if we reflect around the world, you can see that. Where Manitoba, our government, is creating the environment, a very positive environment for people to own their own homes. And this is a stark contrast to the NDP. But for the past seven years, the PC government has done more to create and develop a positive, strong and vibrant Manitoba economy, giving people the opportunity to buy their own homes. And making sure that real and sincere social housing supports are going to those people that really need it.

That is so important versus the revolving-door approach of the NDP, where you wanted these people to come into the social system. We need to create jobs for—build housing for these people while you completely ignore and, in fact, stifle the growth of this province. This is no more clear than in the Dauphin region.

And I'm just going to say—reflect one other thing. And one member of the NDP that applauded Mincome, and how he was so happy to go in there and sign up for that state income assistance. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that message from that member of the NDP had incredible damage in the Parkland region. And it had incredible damage for decades. And it still exists today.

But our PC government is finally addressing that issue and allowing that region to develop and grow, address the housing issues on their own; plus this PC government has done tremendous work in focused support towards the people that need it.

\* (11:10)

And it was mentioned already once—and this is such a great announcement; something I'm incredibly proud of—the government understands that addressing homelessness calls for co-ordinated, multifaceted approach, and this is why, for the first time, a government put forth a homeless strategy, a place for everyone. Mr. Deputy Speaker, a strategy is based on

housing-first approach and aligns with rights-based approach to housing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is important about this? This is a great initiative, but if the NDP was in power and in the background, it means nothing. It is just another circle around the revolving door.

But what's—this PC government's been doing has creating a new opportunity for all Manitobans, giving them hope to buy their own homes. So, this investment in itself is important. It's only when you bundle it and couple it with the great work of this PC government that it really, really can help Manitobans across this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the issue of poverty, on March 20—on March 4th, 2019, the government released Pathways to a Better Future, Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy, and we're well on way to, again, indirectly and directly addressing this.

I want to—I have only a few more minutes left, but I have to say, the support that went towards direct-care support workers was absolutely the right thing to do by this PC government. I cannot say that loud enough, and the minimum wage increases help as well.

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

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** I would like to thank my colleagues on this side of the House, Deputy Speaker, for that rapturous applause, and having me—giving me the opportunity to speak on this important PMR.

As noted in my earlier line of questioning, housing is incredibly important: permanent, affordable, something that is accessible to people.

I just want to correct the record regarding my experience in the '70s, regarding a certain government program. That program really helped my family because it was prescient, forward-looking. And we were able to afford certain pieces because a certain NDP government recognized the importance of having programs like that to give people a hand up, as opposed to a handout. A hand up, and brought it properly.

So, I just wanted to correct that record, because that was incredibly important to our family, and not something that could be trivialized, like that member just did a few minutes ago. You know what? That part was really quite offensive and something that really shouldn't be brought to the floor of this House.

But on to the PMR, Deputy Speaker. I do recall in my experience as a person that worked in schools, how important predictability and permanence was to families, especially when it comes to housing. What this PMR does is bring forward how important that is to families.

And, ultimately, this is an act of reconciliation. This is where we take hard-earned dollars by our Manitoba taxpayers and Canadian taxpayers and put it into areas that are important to create communities that are sustainable and where people can feel a part of something bigger than themselves.

I can tell you all—I'll go back to my youth as a young person growing up in Transcona. I recall a number of my friends lived in an area, Day and Victoria Avenue, where they were living up on a second-floor area. And it wasn't the best place to live, but as kids, what did we know about that? We knew nothing about that, right? We were just kids going to school, Deputy Speaker.

But what happened was along Plessis Road close to Dugald Road, Manitoba Housing had built the Plessis town houses, the Plessis Road town houses in and around the mid-1970s. And what a change it was for the family that lived—that Victoria and Day were able to move to a beautiful, new Manitoba Housing complex that provided not only a great, safe place to live, but also provided permanence, where they were able to establish roots and be part of their school community.

I remember that distinctly because I remember the pride that my friend took in showing us that unit and how important it was not only to his development, but also to his family, to feel part of that community again, to feel something pretty good about being able to say that this is our place and we're going to take care of this place.

Now, you say to yourself, Deputy Speaker, why was that particular location chosen? Because in that time—and I'm sure in times moving forward, as well—these Manitoba Housing units were built across from light industrial areas.

So right now, the Plessis Road town houses are found across from fairly major employers; employers such as New Flyer Industries, the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, Burnbrae Farms Gregg egg—all of those areas that require labour.

And where are they getting a lot of this labour from? These units that are built in these areas. It's very important because not only does that housing security



provide them a secure place to be that's also safe, but it also provides them the opportunity for economic development, meaning that they can then earn a salary and move out of Manitoba Housing so that they can become people that are not only just earning their living, but also becoming part of their communities. That's why this PMR's incredibly important. We have to talk about these things in order for us to get a direction as to where we're going to move with Manitoba Housing.

As I began my debate, Deputy Speaker, I said that this is important because it's also an act of reconciliation. We talk about that a lot. And it's an important piece. Manitoba needs to take the lead in this area. We have a tremendous responsibility as 57 members of this House to ensure that reconciliation is at the top of everything that we do, moving forward.

Housing is that basic fundamental piece that we can use as that act of reconciliation so that we're serious about—when we say that we care about the development and the ability of Manitobans to be part of something bigger than themselves, housing is that foundational piece that remains very, very important.

Why, Deputy Speaker? Because it brings dignity. Again, in my role—previous role to being here in this House, I worked with many families that struggled with housing permanency and the ability to find affordable housing. Once that was taken care of, a family was able then to provide permanency, and able to provide some predictability for their children as they were attending school.

Some of the worst things that can happen to children, especially in early years, is having to move around from place to place to place to place. That creates an incredible amount of insecurity. It doesn't allow them to become connected to their home schools. It doesn't allow them to become connected to their communities. This is a very important piece.

I recall housing being built close to schools. It's done on purpose, right? And because of that you're able to then get a person permanently ensconced into their neighbourhood and feel part of something, something that they can contribute to. And then take tremendous pride in saying that they're from Transcona or they're from Dauphin, right? Because people take pride in where they come from.

A government that allows for that permanency and that pride development is something that's quite important. I think it's something that, when we're here today, talking about this PMR, it's something that we

cannot diminish because we know how important it is for kids to establish permanence in their communities.

I mean, I know I talk about my area a lot. A lot of us don't move from where we're from. If you talk to people from Transcona, they've lived in Transcona their entire life. Why? Because we love the neighbourhood. And because of that, a number of us benefitted from programming like public housing, like Mincome. That is something that was something that is really important and continues to be. It still influences a lot of my thinking. Many of these units that are in Transcona that we have, unfortunately have fallen into disrepair, Deputy Speaker.

\* (11:20)

And what we would like, through this PMR, is to really impart the importance of predictable maintenance schedules so that we can keep kids where they are and they can stay in their home and school communities. It's really important, right?

Because we do have issues, of course, with maintenance; other issues, of course, with bedbugs and these kind of things. These are challenges, but challenges that need to be met. And I think there is goodwill in this House to have these challenges met, Deputy Speaker.

I don't think there's anybody in here that would discount the importance of having a child in a permanent residence where they can grow and become contributing members of society. This is all very important; many of us understand that.

And I think what this PMR, what it does, is it allows us to focus on the importance of pieces like affordable housing. And so, when we have places like—I do know the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe)—oh, he just moved—the member from Concordia has talked about the importance of housing in his particular constituency as well.

We did have that Panet Road piece that was torn down, was torn down a number of years ago. Those were important pieces that allowed those people to be part of that community, but we still don't have a plan to replace those units on Panet Road.

They were 90 units that need to be replaced and put back into that community, and would be really important for that community, Deputy Speaker. It's something that we look forward to having put back into the constituency of Concordia.

But the other piece, Deputy Speaker, when it comes to housing, is that this is recognized, not only

by the United Nations, but also by other advocacy groups that are right here in Manitoba. And what they're asking for is they're asking for leadership from this government.

And we know, Deputy Speaker, that we've had record revenues come in through income tax, through Manitoba Hydro, through federal transfers. And these need to—these dollars need to be used and invested into Manitobans, so that they can have an establishment of a permanent residence where they can contribute to their communities and have their kids attend schools continually in their neighbourhoods.

I thank you, Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to put these few words on the record.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** Today, we have the opportunity to debate housing in Manitoba. Important that we have these debates. I would like to point out that, for 16 years under the NDP, there was no housing strategy, there was very little done, there was no plan.

We had the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) get up and say, they might, sort of, maybe, some point in time have a plan; they just don't have one right now. But they'll come up with one and they then just want to go on the attack, which is really unfortunate.

This is the fictitious approach from the NDP; it's the mistruths they like to put on the record and they claim that that is debate. So, 16 years of government—nothing. Seven years that they sat in opposition in the penalty box, they should have at least have come up with some ideas, something new and creative—nothing.

And now they have a resolution which is just all about attacking. And we know that other than attacking, they don't seem to have much else. In fact, they have their member, the NDP—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Schuler:** —member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), who was on the RTB. And the member for Fort Garry, who at most instances seems to be very preoccupied, not just collecting his pay as an MLA, but also being a lawyer and defending drunk drivers and others—the thing is, the member for Fort Garry voted for rent increases and now the NDP is trying to explain that away somehow.

The member for Wolseley had some kind of an explanation, which, again, we know is just an attempt to try to explain away the member Fort Garry and the fact that he was an individual who voted for rent

increases, and they won't even stand in this Chamber this morning, and defend what he did.

He will not stand and speak to this resolution. Why won't he? Why won't he defend his record? Why doesn't he get up and speak to this?

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

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

**MLA Fontaine:** Deputy Speaker, I would caution or I would ask the Deputy Speaker to perhaps review where this member is going with his comments in respect of the member for Fort Garry.

I think it's on the cusp or over the line of what we are allowed in this Chamber to reflect on for other members.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** On the same point of order?

**An Honourable Member:** Same point of order.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Schuler:** Same point of order.

At no point and time did the member for Springfield-Ritchot reflect on any member's absence or presence. Also, he reflected as, that maybe individuals should get up and defend themselves. But he never, ever mentioned someone's absence or presence.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Any other comments on the same point of order?

I'm going to rule this as a dispute over the facts. Members are not allowed to reflect on the presence or absence of an individual member from the Chamber, from the Legislature.

It's not a point of order, but it is a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot does have the floor.

**Mr. Schuler:** I would like to point out to the member—to all members—is the member for Fort Garry will not get up and defend his record.

And you have to ask yourself why, because obviously there is a division in the NDP. They speak one thing one moment, do another thing another

moment. Typical of the NDP. Certainly the front bench and it carries over to others in their caucus.

How unfortunate because they want to put themselves up as these defenders of public housing, and then are the same individuals who go out and raise the rents on the same people that they're speaking in favour of today. And then those individuals won't get up and defend what they said. How unfortunate.

So, after 16 years of nothing, after seven years of having learned nothing, now they want to talk about housing the last few moments before an election. How unfortunate. They had seven years to debate this and chose not to.

So, I would like to point out to the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), who is going to evidently heckle me the whole time, that maybe she would cede the floor to myself and stop heckling. She heckles the entire—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Schuler:** She sits—the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) continues to heckle—*[interjection]*

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

I'm going to repeat my earlier call for decorum and respect, that the member who has the floor should be permitted to speak without ongoing commentary from others who see things differently. This is a legislature and those individuals will also have the opportunity to have their say in due time. So, I'm calling for decorum.

And the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) does have the floor.

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, there seems to be an awful lot of excitement all of a sudden on the NDP benches. The different factions are now heckling the Conservatives—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Please pause the clocks.

I'm going to get up as often as I need to, and call for decorum.

The honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot has the floor. Please restart the clocks.

**Mr. Schuler:** So, first of all, let's talk about basic deduction. And that impacts a lot of individuals. I listened to the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) intently. He tells a very compelling story. I'd like to point out that as someone who lived in an apartment

for six years during my junior high and high school years in Elmwood.

And heckling doesn't stop in the Chamber. You know, you have members on the run when all's what they can do is heckle while another member's trying to speak. When the member for St. Johns, who talks about respect, shows no respect at any point in time when she's in this Chamber. So she might want to respect other member's desire to have a few moments to speak.

So, the member for Transcona reflected on his time in Transcona, about the same time I was living in Elmwood. I'd like to point out to the member for Transcona, occasionally we actually would allow individuals from Transcona to come to Elmwood High School. Wasn't that often, but there was this healthy rivalry between people from Transcona and Elmwood High School. And clearly, we always proved them when it came to sport and other things that we were a better high school than Transcona.

\* (11:30)

But, you know, that would be another one of those—it would be a dispute over the facts, so we'll leave it at that one.

And basic deduction is very important. It's where we allow individuals to work and keep their money. And that's very important. It is important that—under the NDP it was appalling. We were amongst the lowest in the country, probably amongst the lowest in the world.

We are now going to allow not \$12,000 but \$15,000 of the first money earned by individuals; they get to keep it. And that is so important for individuals who are working and trying to achieve—*[interjection]*—and the member for St. Johns just will not stop heckling.

And I would say she should show the respect that she asks for in this House. She refuse—*[interjection]*—and the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). I know they just want to shout members down, and that's fine.

But basic deduction is so important—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Schuler:** —for individuals who are working, that the first \$15,000 that they earn, they get it tax-free. That is so important.

And the member for Concordia thinks this is all a joke, because he lives—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Schuler:**—his cushy lifestyle as an MLA, and he thinks this is just all a joke for him. But basic deduction, and certainly, for those families who grew up—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Schuler:**—like we heard from the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare), who grew up in Elmwood, who grew up in EK—the basic deduction is a big deal because the first \$15,000 of what you earn, you will be allowed to keep. Very important for starters.

I would like to also point out that our government, amongst other things, has, since March 2016, 827 new social and affordable housing rental units.

So, we heard from the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor), again, mistruths. They will not put any fact on the record. The fact is that there were 827 new social and affordable housing units, and 320 new shelter beds have been developed with funding support from Manitoba Housing.

It shows you—[*interjection*]—and there is a tremendous amount of enthusiasm from government benchers, because we know when the facts are finally put on the record, as compared to the mistruths of the NDP, we have done lots for social housing, and seeing as I was heckled most of the time and am not going to be able to get all the comments on the record that I'd like to—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) will have two minutes remaining.

## SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

(Continued)

### Bill 226—The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Amendment Act

(Continued)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** As previously announced, I'm interrupting this debate to conduct a recorded vote deferred from earlier this morning.

Accordingly, a recorded vote having been requested, call in the members. And I remind all members the bells will ring for a maximum of five minutes.

Order, please.

The question before the House is second reading—is the second reading motion for Bill 226, The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Amendment Act.

#### Division

*A RECORDED VOTE* was taken, the result being as follows:

#### Yeas

*Altomare, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Cox, Eichler, Fontaine, Gerrard, Guenter, Guillemard, Johnson, Johnston, Klein, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Martin, Michaleski, Morley-Lecomte, Moses, Naylor, Reyes, Sandhu, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Squires, Teitsma, Wharton, Wiebe, Wishart.*

#### Nays

**Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Yeas 34, Nays 0.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. today.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 18, 2023

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