

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

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 6—The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act

The Speaker: The honourable official government Minister of Families.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I move, seconded by the member for—the Minister for Labour and Immigration, that Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Fontaine: Many Manitobans enrolled on Employment and Income Assistance, or EIA, are required to participate in employment enhancement measures.

These measures can range from employment or vocational training and treatment, simply engaging in supportative planning with their case worker. Bill 6 would ensure that it is considered whether adult education is the most appropriate employment enhancement measure when determining how program requirements will be fulfilled.

While this Bill 6 will not be—substantively change current practice, it will be legally entrenched into the consideration of adult education in the process of determining how an EIA recipient will meet program expectations.

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for consideration.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on
Social and Economic Development
Second Report**

MLA Billie Cross (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the second report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on December 4, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- ***Bill (No. 2)*** – *The Louis Riel Act / Loi sur Louis Riel*
- ***Bill (No. 4)*** – *The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day) / Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi et la Loi d'interprétation (Journée du chandail orange)*

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Min. CABLE*
- *MLA CROSS*
- *Mr. EWASKO*
- *Hon. Mr. KINEW*
- *MLA LOISELLE*
- *Mr. NARTH*

Your Committee elected MLA CROSS as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected MLA LOISELLE as the Vice-Chairperson.

Your Committee elected MLA REDHEAD as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received during committee proceedings:

- *Hon. Min. BUSHIE for Hon. Min. CABLE*
- *MLA REDHEAD for MLA LOISELLE*

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- *Ms. LAMOUREUX*

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 2) – The Louis Riel Act / Loi sur Louis Riel**:

Joël Tétrault, Union Nationale Métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba

Anita Campbell, Infinity Women Secretariat

David Chartrand, Manitoba Métis Federation

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 2) – The Louis Riel Act / Loi sur Louis Riel**
- **Bill (No. 4) – The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day) / Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi et la Loi d'interprétation (Journée du chandail orange)**

Your Committee agreed to report these Bills without amendment.

The Speaker: The—it has been moved by the honourable member for Seine River—sorry.

The honourable member for Seine River.

MLA Cross: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Accessibility): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to table the Report of the Second Review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act annual report 2022-2023.

The Speaker: I have a report to table as well.

In accordance with section 4 of the Members' Salaries, Allowances and Retirement Plans Disclosure Regulation, I am pleased to table the members' annual Report of Amounts Claimed and Paid respecting 2022-2023 fiscal year.

No other reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: I would indicate that the 90 minutes' required notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

International Volunteer Day

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Today, December 5th, marks International Volunteer Day, a day to acknowledge the extraordinary work of volunteers worldwide who dedicate themselves to supporting and advancing the causes, organizations and people that they believe in. Today, we especially recognize the many Manitobans whose generosity led them to give back to their communities in so many amazing ways.

The first International Volunteer Day was held in 1985 to honour everyone's ability to participate in positive change making. One does not have to look hard to see how volunteers advance community health initiatives, combat food insecurity and create safe spaces and belonging among those who are often pushed to the margins of society. The NGOs and community resource organizations on which many Manitobans rely would not exist if it wasn't for the tremendous efforts of Manitoba volunteers.

This year's International 'volunday'—Volunteer Day theme is The Power of Collective Action: If Everyone Did, which encourages everyone to envision the type of world we might live in if everyone had the capacity to volunteer. What kind of power for collective action could we mobilize if everyone found a way to dedicate themselves to advancing causes that matter most to them?

We sometimes take for granted the movements towards equality and civil liberties originated and sustained by volunteers. They are people who stood up in the face of injustice and put in hard work to see their vision for society, for all of us, become reality.

I particularly want to highlight the important work of BIPOC, 2SLGBTQ two—Q—and disability communities across the province who work to break down barriers and foster greater inclusion for all Manitobans.

I encourage my fellow members in this Chamber and Manitobans everywhere to reflect today on the important work of volunteers in your communities whose actions often go unrecognized and to imagine the ways we as Manitobans can show more appreciation and show more support for their important contributions across our beautiful province.

Miigwech.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge and address International Volunteer Day, which takes place annually today and allows us to celebrate the work of volunteers at every level, whether it be local, regional, national and across the world, and truly acknowledge the fantastic contributions that they make to our societies.

Today we shine a light on all those who have—are currently volunteering, as we on this side of the Chamber recognize the value of volunteerism in every aspect of our world. But I want to take a moment today to speak on this idea as it relates to our province of Manitoba, which has such a vibrant, strong and longstanding history of volunteerism.

I look at my own constituency of Midland, made up of very small—many small communities, and we are reliant on the support of volunteers within our community. Whether it be our volunteer fire departments—which we had the opportunity to recognize this morning with the member from Waverley's bill—PACs at schools, daycare boards, volunteer coaches and community centres, the list can go on and on.

* (13:40)

But I also want to consider something that happened within my own lifetime and something that was important with my family. And I think of the 1997 Red River flood, in which we desperately needed people to help assist in building dikes to protect properties. My husband's family was displaced. Their farmland was being flooded. And Manitobans arose to the challenge, with volunteers from across the province working fast and efficiently to mitigate the harmful effects of one of the most damaging floods in our history

I also think, today, of all those that are currently volunteering at Harvest Manitoba to help distribute food to more than 380 food banks and agencies in every corner of our province. This is particularly important to us today, as we know that food bank usage in recent months has seen a drastic increase. However, those volunteers contribute toward ensuring that food can be put on the table for people in this province.

Honourable Speaker, I could speak all day about the many examples of Manitobans volunteering from every walk of life who have shown their willingness to help others.

In closing, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today to this important day and recognize the willingness from all volunteers who selflessly use their skills, looking beyond their own circumstances and helping with the needs of others.

Each of these individuals, groups and agencies make such immense contributions, and we take today to thank them, celebrate and pay tribute to their paramount role in helping people.

I encourage all Manitobans to consider volunteering, and thank you for the opportunity today to speak on behalf of this Chamber of the House to address this important topic and this important day.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, I seek leave to respond to the minister's statement.

The Speaker: Does the member have leave?
[Agreed]

MLA Lamoureux: I am thrilled to rise to speak to International Volunteer Day. This year's theme—recognizing the power of collective action: if everyone did it.

We know that volunteering is straight-up good for us. It reduces stress. It regulates emotions. It saves resources. And time is valuable, Honourable Speaker.

Volunteering often brings people together. I'm sure all of my colleagues can attest to this with their campaigns. It promotes personal growth, it strengthens our community and it challenges us. Volunteering is a real example of how strong a village can be.

One of my favourite quotes is to find yourself in the service of others and, Honourable Speaker, volunteering is a terrific way to do this.

Now, I would be remissed if I didn't take a moment to mention the many incredible volunteers who have played, and continue to play, such important roles in my life.

As you can imagine, Honourable Speaker, I wear many hats. My No. 1 priority will always be my constituents. But in addition to my MLA-for-Tyndall-Park hat, I have a Manitoba-Liberal-leader hat as well as a legislative hat, especially while we're here in session.

All of these responsibilities, Honourable Speaker, are only achievable because of my team, who truly are

a force to be reckoned with. And that's why I want to use this opportunity to thank all of my volunteers, who work tirelessly, not only during the campaign, but even now, for your efforts with legislative communications, advice, constituency events and party events and board meetings.

I wouldn't be standing here if it wasn't for all of you.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: At this point in time, I'd like to draw attention to guests in the gallery. We have, from Walter Whyte School, 10 grade 9 students under direction of Bryan Ryz. They're from the constituency of Lac du Bonnet.

Also in the public gallery, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today guests of the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine), Luba and Bill Krosney.

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

Further, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today guests of the member from Union Station: their mother, Doris Asagwara, and Pastor Solomon and members of the Great Door Bible Church.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

John Morrisette

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): Today, I rise to honour the late John Morrisette.

We are joined today by John's daughter, Jade Morrisette, and two sons, Jewles and Jean-Michael, as well as members from the Fearless R2W family. Thank you all for joining us here today as we honour your dad and friend.

John was and will always be a huge part of the North End community. An important part of John's life was an organization called Fearless R2W. Fearless R2W supports our families who are navigating the child-welfare system and searching for community-centred and culturally appropriate supports.

John was influential in transitioning our Fearless R2W from a grassroots group to an organization. John tirelessly worked to strengthen the sustainability of the organization by developing long-term planning and ensuring sustainable—stabilization of services. He did all of this while pursuing education and reunifying with his own children through the child-welfare system.

While working with Fearless R2W, John received his grade 12 from Urban Circle Training circle, and after graduating, he asked to be on the board of directors.

Fearless R2W and the Urban Circle are establishing an annual scholarship in John's name for student parents who are pursuing higher education. John also worked at the North End Community Renewal Corporation and recently was working on a community advocacy certificate from the University of Winnipeg.

John represents the endless love and strength in the North End community. John will forever be remembered for his many contributions to the North End community and for the betterment of our province. He was a compassionate and dedicated community member and will be—forever be admired and loved by our community; his legacy will remain with us forever.

Please join me in thanking John's family and friends who are here with us in the gallery.

Rest in power, John.

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

Ms. Smith: I ask that the members that are in the gallery names be added to Hansard.

The Speaker: They will be added.

Family: Jade Morrisette, daughter; Jean-Michael Morrisette and Jewles Morrisette, sons

Friends: Donald Allen Jolly, Mary Burton, Mel Critch, Kyrra Rudolph, Haven Stumpf, Ayla Wonzy

The Speaker: Further member statements?

The honourable member for Midland—no, Morden-Winkler.

Coleen Voth and Colleen Mourant

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, today I have the pleasure to acknowledge two amazing women that have

represented my constituency of Morden-Winkler and the province of Manitoba through Special Olympics.

I am honoured to welcome Coleen Voth and Colleen Mourant today as they are seated in the gallery.

Special Olympics is an organization with an aim of achieving great recognition and social participation of people with intellectual disabilities. They strive to enrich individuals' lives through love of sport.

With the help of amazing volunteers, Special Olympics has created a supportive, rewarding and inclusive space, teaching the values of overcoming challenges. I have also had the opportunity to be a volunteer coach for our local Special Olympics snowshoe team. It's a fun group of athletes and an amazing experience.

This past June, Coleen Voth travelled and competed in the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, Germany. Coleen represented Manitoba on Team Canada in the sport of 10-pin bowling. With her—with the help of her coach, Chris Sumner, Coleen was one of the eight Manitobans selected for Team Canada.

With the goal of coming home with a medal, Coleen spent countless of—hours practising and training with her coach. Through hard work and a positive spirit, Coleen won a silver medal in women's singles with an impressive bowling score of 405.

Also, this past summer, Special Olympics Manitoba hosted an awards ceremony here in Winnipeg, where Winkler's very own Colleen Mourant was awarded the prestigious title of Athlete of the Year.

Colleen's involvement in Special Olympics spans more than a decade, participating in a handful of sports including track and field, basketball, bowling, snowshoeing and bocce.

* (13:50)

Manitoba Special Olympics chose Colleen because of her dedication to her sport, her teammates and her coaches. Her positive attitude, kindness, perseverance and ability to lead makes her the perfect individual to represent the community as Athlete of the Year.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Morden-Winkler constituency and all of us here in the Chamber, we would like to congratulate you both on your

achievement and your contributions to inclusive sports in Manitoba.

John Hindle

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): Today, I recognize John Hindle, the president of the St. Vital Museum and historical society and their entire team.

Honourable Speaker, located within St. Vital fire hall at 600 St. Mary's Rd., the museum shares historical narratives about influential individuals, significant places and pivotal moments in St. Vital's rich history.

That rich history, which includes the fact that my wife's great-grand uncle, Art Martin, was the first captain at the St. Vital fire hall, and a fact that I was proud to share with my son when we visited the fire hall this past September for their annual BBQ.

Now, John Hindle became president earlier this year following the passing of long-time president Bob Holliday. Bob Holliday was a driving force behind the museum for many years. And I was proud to stand with Bob as he received the Queen's platinum jubilee medal in this very building last December.

Now, new president, John Hindle, who is with us here in the gallery today, grew up in St. Vital and is an alumnus of Dakota Collegiate. His passion for baseball materialized into the creation of Home Run Sports, a flourishing national company. In 1994, John made history as the first general manager of the Winnipeg Goldeyes Baseball Club, achieving attendance records during his eight-season tenure.

Inducted into Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame in 2004, John is also a distinguished author, earning acclaim for his work, including the award-winning book *Jackrabbits in the Outfield*.

I invite all Manitobans to visit the St. Vital Museum, on—open on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., to take a look at the amazing artifacts that they have—having been collected and tell the story of St. Vital.

So I invite all members today to join me in celebrating John Hindle and the entire St. Vital Museum and historical society team for all the wonderful work they do to enrich our St. Vital community.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources.

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, I ask that my guests' names be included in Hansard.

The Speaker: Names will be included.

Cameron Dempster, Sharon Golin, Bev Hindle, John Hindle, Kerry Pedrick, Nancy McQuade

The Bridge

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Honourable Speaker, for Steinbach Community Outreach, the dream of building a low-income housing for those in need in Steinbach and the southeast seemed just that, a dream.

But in November of 2021, a \$1.3-million grant from Manitoba Housing helped kick-start what would soon become known as The Bridge, a 24-suite, three-story apartment building which provides low-income individuals with an affordable rental option in Steinbach.

Irene Kroeker, executive director of Steinbach Community Outreach, wondered if this would ever truly happen, but with the completion of the building on November 30, the dream became a reality. In addition to the provincial grant, more than an additional million dollars was raised in private donations from local businesses and community members who want to ensure that no community resident is left behind.

At the official opening ceremony, I was truly inspired to see the number of people who had given financially to this very important endeavour, simply because they care about people who they may never know or ever meet.

In particular, I want to mention Reg Penner, formerly of Penner Farm Service, who took on the role of raising 'munds'—raising money privately for this important project. Reg retired from business in 2020 and dedicated his time to helping people from around the world and at home. He passionately raised money for The Bridge so that those in need could find a home.

Sadly, Reg passed away from cancer earlier this year, and while he didn't see the opening of The Bridge, his wife Ingrid was presented with a plaque with Reg's picture that will have a prominent place at The Bridge as a reminder of his contribution to the project and that a caring community cares for those around them.

Honourable Speaker, I want to commend all those involved with Steinbach Community Outreach for filling the gap, for building The Bridge. Their efforts speak to the love and compassion that strong communities have for their neighbours and demonstrate the heart of which we all have as Manitobans.

West Broadway Shooting

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Honourable Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart. On Saturday, November 26, five people were shot inside a home in the West Broadway neighbourhood of the Wolseley constituency. Four victims have died. Their names are Crystal Shannon Beardy, Stephanie Amanda Beardy, Melelek Leseri Lesikel and Dylan Maxwell Lavallee. A fifth victim remains in critical condition in hospital.

Crystal and Stephanie were sisters and they were mothers, each loved by their children. The Beardy family, from Lake St. Martin First Nation, has experienced catastrophic loss over the past few years.

Dylan was a father of six and his ex-partner has spoken fondly of his parenting. Melelek was well loved by his family in Kenya and his partner here in Winnipeg.

I attended the vigil at 143 Langside avenue on Sunday organized by the West Broadway Bear Clan. Drum song and prayers were offered to the victims and their families. Candles and roses were laid at the steps of the home. We don't know the circumstances of why their lives were brutally ended Sunday morning but we do know that each of them was loved, is missed and will be remembered.

This week has been a difficult one for our community. Neighbours are relieved that an arrest has been made, but they're afraid, and they're angry and they're grieving.

West Broadway is one of Winnipeg's oldest neighbourhoods, with a gorgeous tree canopy and many apartment blocks and rooming houses intermingled with modern infill homes, yet, the community feeling is strong and people care about each other. At times like this, we all come together.

Thank you to the community members who have reached out to share their feelings and their ideas for improved community safety. Thank you to the West Broadway Bear Clan for their consistent efforts to love the underloved in our society and to provide leadership in times of crisis. And finally, I offer deep

gratitude to the first responders who were on the scene that Sunday morning. Thank you.

Honourable Speaker, I ask leave of the House for a moment of silence to remember the victims.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence?
[Agreed]

A moment of silence was observed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Carbon Tax on Home Heating Bills Request for Manitoba Exemption

Ms. Heather Stefanson (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yesterday, the Premier tabled a memo written by his staff, telling him how he is not advised to move forward to help make life more affordable for Manitobans. Meanwhile, right next door in Saskatchewan, the Premier of Saskatchewan, Scott Moe, has been given a legal opinion and is moving forward to make life more affordable for those people in Saskatchewan.

My question for the Premier: Why won't this Premier stand up for Manitobans and take the carbon tax off of home heating?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): The legal opinion of the Department of Justice, which counts for a lot more than the words of the Leader of the Opposition, says quite plainly that what the PC Party recommends would be illegal. They made some interesting comments yesterday that they want to flout the law. We, on the other hand, respect the constitution. Importantly, we also respect the people of Manitoba and your 'har'-earned tax dollars.

* (14:00)

Today, we shared publicly the news that the outgoing PC administration left our province with a \$1.6-billion deficit. We all knew that they were going on a huge spending spree on their way out the door, but how could they leave a \$1.6-billion deficit on September 30?

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

Ms. Stefanson: Honourable Speaker, nobody believes the Premier's NDP junk math.

What I will say, now the Premier has found a newfound love of the law in the province of Manitoba. Next door, the Premier of Saskatchewan is moving forward to make life more affordable for people in

Saskatchewan when it comes to the carbon tax and home heating that is being charged.

The—Saskatchewan is moving forward with that. They have a legal opinion to say that they are moving forward on that.

And I'm just wondering, why is this Premier—why will he not move forward and stand up for the people of Manitoba and take the carbon tax off of home heating for the people here in Manitoba?

Mr. Kinew: What the PCs are recommending is illegal. What we are doing is helping you directly by cutting the provincial fuel tax come January 1.

You can see that they don't understand some important economic and legal principles, not only in this very flawed line of questioning but also in the fact that they left this province with a \$1.6-billion deficit as of September 30. Crucially, this was just a few days before Manitobans voted.

So, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition would like to look into the camera and tell you, the people of the province, why she didn't care to tell you she was leaving a \$1.6-billion deficit before you went to the polls.

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

Ms. Stefanson: Well, I will gladly look the people of Manitoba in the eye and tell them that this is nothing more than NDP junk math. Do not believe them.

Again, the Premier of Saskatchewan is standing up for those in Saskatchewan right now, to ensure that carbon tax is taken off of their home heating bills.

I am just simply asking the Premier: Why will he not do the same? Why will he not stand up for Manitobans and make life more affordable for Manitobans?

Mr. Kinew: What the PCs are advocating for is illegal. What we are doing is to do something that they never did throughout their two terms in office. They kept charging you money every time you went to go fill up at the pump.

We're saying we're going to bring the provincial taxes on gasoline and diesel to zero to help you and your family get by.

Importantly, we are also going to chart a path towards long-term affordability for people in this province by wrangling the \$1.6-billion deficit that the PCs left us with on the way out the door. This is the

combined value of all the promises that they were making, trying to win back support across the province.

But you know what? I would say to the Leader of the Opposition through you, the Chair: You can't say yes to everything.

Provincial Financial Forecast Impact on Taxes and the Economy

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, no one believes this Premier. He's taken enough liberties with the truth in his brief career.

Now he stands in this House and is laying the groundwork for a massive tax hikes everyone knows he plans to introduce. He refused to answer media today, but he owes Manitobans an answer.

Will he commit today to the tax breaks our government introduced in Budget 2023?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, I will excuse my friend from Riding Mountain from reading from the pages that he's been handed to on his way in the Chamber. I know that he respects me, and he knows that we're going to deliver on affordability while charting a course towards a balanced budget.

But what I know about the members opposite, including those who served in Cabinet, is that there is the open question as to whether they knew about this \$1.6-billion deficit. Clearly, the last premier knew and decided to conceal this from the people of Manitoba.

But I'd like my friend from Riding Mountain to tell the House: Did the rest of Cabinet know as well?

The Speaker: The honourable member from—Riding Mountain, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, this Premier shouldn't play politics with people's livelihoods and spin tales with his own forecast, especially this close to the holidays, when families are noticing cost increases the most.

Why does this Premier refuse to commit to the tax cuts and 'affordabilibity' measures that will give Manitobans some breathing room?

Mr. Kinew: This is a non-issue. We have not created any space for us to vary from our commitments to you, the people of Manitoba, that we made during this recent election.

That's why we're delivering on something the PCs never did during their time in office, which is by bringing the provincial gasoline and diesel taxes to zero.

However, this last administration under the PCs concealed from you, the voting public, that on September 30, the deficit in this province was \$1.6 billion.

Clearly the Leader of the Opposition knew. But did my friend from Riding Mountain know, sitting at the Cabinet table, that he was leaving the people with such a financial mess?

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

Mr. Nesbitt: Well, Honourable Speaker, the Premier writes fiction. Now he's doing the same with a rushed report for partisan purposes.

These are not audited numbers, and it is irresponsible to fear monger to Manitobans—have repercussions throughout the economy. Health-care expenditures and hydro water levels are reflected in this document.

Does the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) think government should have denied surgeries, or make it rain?

Mr. Kinew: I want to reassure all the members of the former PC Cabinet that there is an audit coming, and they will be held accountable for the poor decisions that they made.

Some of the key contributing factors of this \$1.6-billion deficit is that did—they didn't account for inflation when building this year's provincial budget. The spending spree that they went on across the province, countless announcements being made, were not included in this year's budget. They expected to pay for everything out of slush funds and contingency amounts.

There is nothing fiscally responsible about the Progressive Conservative Party in Manitoba anymore.

The good news is, our team is going to fix this mess while improving health care and lowering costs for your family.

Manitoba Critical Mineral Strategy Government Intention

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): I will let—I would like to, before I start asking the question, I'd like to also welcome the Manitoba Chambers of

Commerce here today, who we had the opportunity to meet. I know they weren't recognized earlier by government, but this side of the House would like to recognize them and thank them for coming.

Honourable Speaker, we know Manitoba was poised to once again lead the world in sustainable and responsible mining. We have what the world wants. We have an abundance of critical minerals, clean hydroelectricity and hard-working people right here in Manitoba.

Manitoba can compete on the global stage. Manitoba critical mineral strategy is an action plan where—created to do precisely that.

So, can the Minister of Economic Development please tell us and tell the Chambers members today why—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): I welcome members from the Manitoba chambers here in the building today, and not only that, I was pleased to meet with them earlier this morning.

* (14:10)

And that's part of our government's collaborative approach to working with Manitobans to develop not only a critical mineral strategy that works for Manitobans, but an economic plan that works for all Manitobans.

That's something the former government failed to do, something that we're going to deliver on to make sure that we have an economy that works for all of us.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Red River North, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wharton: Manitoba's Critical Minerals Strategy was informed by input and feedback from First Nations, industry groups, academic institutions and companies undertaking mineral exploration development right here in Manitoba.

I was honoured to have—to be the minister to lead and oversee this very important work to grow our economy. Our strategy brought a record \$170 million in exploration spending to the province last year, permitting increases of 6.6 per cent.

Understand this, members opposite: We have now lapsed from 32nd under the watch of the NDP to 14th in the Fraser's institute global mining rankings.

What signal does he think his government is sending to industry that Manitoba is open for business, yes or no?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, I'm very happy to say that yes, we are open for business, and we're going to do it in a collaborative way with all Manitobans.

As we continue to work collaborative—in a collaborative way to develop a real critical mineral strategy, something the former government failed to do, we'll ensure that we listen to First Nation and Indigenous voices, local community, and ensure that we have a balanced approach when it comes to dealing with critical minerals in Manitoba.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Red River North, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Wharton: In partnership with the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, the Manitoba Mineral Development Fund has approved more than \$11 million for 68 projects across this province.

This has created more than 400 net new jobs and 160 partnerships, while leveraging \$70 million of private sector investment. Our government has committed to \$20 million to establish the fund in 2020.

Now that the minister plans to rip it up—the mineral strategy—and apparently provide the Manitoba chambers group here today a real strategy, which is not correct, will—can he tell the House and the Manitoba chambers what he plans to cut from the mineral strategy that the Manitoba chambers supports?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, we are very pleased to meet with industry partners like the Manitoba chambers. We're very happy to meet with people right across Manitoba, like we did at AMM, like we met industry partner right across when we traveled to the North in Manitoba.

And as part of that listening, something that that government failed to do, we will develop a real critical mineral strategy so that we can get the economic advantage of all the resources we have in Manitoba, and actually get jobs here in Manitoba; again, something the former government failed to do.

School Construction Projects Government Priority Inquiry

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): That member over there had seven and a half years to get something

in action, and they failed to get anything done, Honourable Speaker.

Yesterday, Honourable Speaker, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Consumer Protection and Government Services said she had, and I quote, had to sort out what projects can proceed, when asked about schools for communities.

Is the minister implying that the new schools and built-in child-care spaces for these communities are not a priority for her government like it was for ours?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): Once again, I thank the critic on Education for directing questions at me. And I'm happy to answer on behalf of the government.

First of all, when it comes to education, this government cut education funding year after year for all seven years that they were in government. So, there is absolutely no track record of an interest in education, unlike on this side of the House.

When it comes to any of the projects that have been committed to by this government, I think we all understand a \$1.6-billion overage. Just for the record, both the departments I am responsible for have a total budget of \$1.6 billion. So imagine what that means in terms—in overage that—

The Speaker: The minister's time is expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, they actually were left with a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar surplus. It's nice to know that the minister finally understands what, actually, part of her portfolio is involved with.

The minister have—of many hats also spoke about school board experience yesterday. That was a courageous move considering her own experience.

The last time she had administrative control at the Winnipeg School Division, Dr. John Wiens authored a report encouraging the NDP Minister of Education to sack the lot of them.

Why does this minister think Manitobans should trust her to decide what communities get schools and which will not?

MLA Naylor: Honourable Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to correct the record. When that study was completed at the Winnipeg School Division, when it—when the interviews were done for that study, I had been a school trustee for four weeks.

So, I take no lessons from this MLA on the other side of the House. What I will say is that over the seven—over the years that this government, when they were in power, when I was a school trustee, they cut funding year after year.

But, I am here to speak about infrastructure and to speak about government buildings. We want to build this province. We want to build schools and take care of communities.

And we will continue to build this province after we have completed the audit and review—

The Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, I quote and table from the report, in quotations: The unwillingness of the board to consult, consider, reconsider any opinions other than their own, and their penchant for playing political games with each other, schools and parents and their staff. End quote.

That description seems to still fit, Mr. Honourable Speaker. The former board chair, the member of Fort Garry and the minister is playing games by confusing—refusing and confusing to commit to the nine much-needed schools.

Why has the minister not learned from Dr. Wiens' report, and why will she not commit to these schools today? Yes or no, Honourable Speaker.

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I can tell you, on October 3, Manitobans rendered their judgment on that former government over there, and said to them that their faulty, faulty accounting principles are done.

They elected an NDP government because we will be truthful with the finances. We will ensure that projects that are important to communities aren't being played politics with, like that former government used to do.

Instead of pitting Manitobans against each other, we are going to bring Manitobans together and create an education and school system that everybody will be proud of.

Provincial Financial Forecast Impact on Taxes and the Economy

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): The former PC government left this NDP finance minister with a booming economy and the third highest GDP growth in the country.

Only the NDP could take this gift from their predecessors and using NDP math, turn a quarter-million–quarter-billion-dollar surplus into a deficit.

Will the Finance Minister just admit that he and his Premier (Mr. Kinew) are using this junk math to fear monger and to lay the groundwork for broken promises and tax hikes?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, \$1.6 billion; \$1.6-billion deficit, the single biggest non-pandemic deficit in the history of this province. That is the legacy of the members opposite.

* (14:20)

Overspending and fiscal irresponsibility have put this province in a very challenging position. Our government was elected to fix the mess that they created. We're here to fix health care, make the province more affordable, improve education. We can't wait to improve life in this province.

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

Mrs. Cook: I watched, and I'm sure many other Manitobans watched, the Premier and the NDP Finance Minister's news conference an hour ago. And it was an Oscar-worthy performance. This is—they know that this is just junk math, designed to set the stage for broken promises and tax hikes.

Budgeted tax changes scheduled to come into effect on January 1st will save the average Manitoba family \$800 next year.

Manitobans want to know: Is the NDP planning to cancel the tax cuts they've already committed to, yes or no?

MLA Sala: You know, one of the things we revealed today was not only that Manitoba's now staring down a \$1.6-billion deficit, but we also revealed the lack of transparency Manitobans saw from this previous government. They went to extreme lengths to hide the depths of our issues that we're facing fiscally in this province, including hiding the fact that we were heading towards a very tough water year at Hydro.

Over and over, Manitobans have seen this previous government be lacking transparency and failing to show Manitobans the reality of the situation we have before us.

Things have changed, Mr. Honourable Speaker. We're going to bring fiscal responsibility and transparency back to government in Manitoba.

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

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, the third highest GDP growth in the country; average weekly earnings, up; employment, up; manufacturing, up; retail sales, up; agriculture, up; international trade, up. Only the NDP could turn this into a deficit.

Will they just admit that the junk math they've put forward today is just to set the stage for what they're planning to announce next week after the House rises? Tax hikes and broken promises.

MLA Sala: You know, the members opposite are putting a lot of words on the record today and in previous days that they will come to regret. We are going forward with a review, which will reveal, from a third-party perspective, the reality of the fiscal challenge we are facing. And, unfortunately, I think the members opposite will find that quite embarrassing.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Sala: The members opposite left us in an incredibly challenging position, Honourable Speaker, a \$1.6-billion deficit, again, the biggest non-pandemic deficit in this province's history. We're going to work to fix that. We're going to continue to follow through on our commitments to fixing health care, making life more affordable, improving education and making life better for all Manitobans.

Selkirk Region Bridge Replacement Timeline for Reconstruction

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Minister, in Selkirk, we see the NDP promises crumbling just like our bridge.

When will the NDP minister commit to proceeding with the replacement of this bridge?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I know that this member asked a question about that very important bridge last week. And I don't know if he knows that there's actually over 1,600 bridges and overpasses in the province, so it wasn't on the tip of my fingers. I invited him to reach out to my office, and I would get him that information; he hasn't bothered to do that. But I'm going to reissue that invitation.

At any time you want to know about a specific project, please reach out, and I could get that information for you.

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

Mr. Perchotte: I had previously asked the minister the question, hoping they would do their homework and get back to me. This bridge was already promised by the PC government and was scheduled to begin previously. So the people of Selkirk see through the NDP junk math and its purpose to excuse them for the promises they have made.

Will you continue cancelling projects or will the bridge go forward?

MLA Naylor: If the member of Selkirk had chosen to reach out to me last week, as I indicated, I would have been able—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

MLA Naylor: —I would have been able—it's hard to answer. I would have been able to tell him—can you hear me over there? Because it's an important answer. Do you want to hear? I would have been able to tell him that that bridge is in the final design stages and is proceeding forward as planned.

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

Mr. Perchotte: Honourable Speaker, what we're seeing from the NDP is promise, promise, promise, blame, blame, blame, cut, cut, cut.

When will this bridge get done?

MLA Naylor: I know that the folks in the Selkirk area have been waiting a long time for this project, and I'm sure some of them are appreciative that that project is proceeding forward.

I'm sorry that their MLA isn't and can't be bothered to say so.

Home-Care Services Funding Inquiry

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): We know that many Manitobans depend on home-care services across the province. According to the Department of Health's most recent annual report, funding to home-care services delivery organizations was cut by \$3.8 million.

I'm tabling a page from the annual report here.

Will this government commit today to fully restoring home-care funding in the province?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I appreciate the question about seniors and health care and, really, at the end of the day, about the ability of Manitobans to be able to age in place with the necessary supports to continue living with dignity.

Now, today we have shared some troubling news about the \$1.6-billion deficit that we inherited from the outgoing PC administration. Now, key among the puzzling dimensions of this news is that even as the outgoing administration burrowed us into such a deep financial hole, health-care and home-care services still continued to get worse under their watch.

Our team is committed to fixing this, beginning by ensuring that those who deliver home care on the front lines have the necessary pay and mileage to be able to spend time with those who need this important service.

That's one of the first steps that we'll be taking, among others to come.

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

Personal-Care Home Residents Request for Increase in Hours of Care

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Over the past few years, we have heard horrific stories of neglect and abuse to care-home residents. The Manitoba standard of personal-care hours is still 3.6 hours of care, which lags far behind the national standard of 4.1.

Increasing the total number of hours of care per resident per day will ensure residents have access to preventative care. This was an election promise by the NDP.

How many hours of direct care will this government increase for personal-care-home residents and when can Manitobans expect this increase to be implemented?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for that question, which is really important. We know that seniors, and not only seniors—there are actually many Manitobans who are not seniors who live in personal-care homes—who depend on the hours per resident per day being what they need to be to have a good quality of life.

Unfortunately, under the previous government, we saw that those hours were essentially cut. We saw that folks working in personal-care homes lost their jobs under the previous government. We saw wages frozen for a very long time, and we saw no efforts taken whatsoever to adequately staff up those personal-care homes.

Our government is taking a different approach. We are actively working toward achieving that 4.1 and working with partners to ensure that we continue to move that marker as we move forward.

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

Seniors Hearing Aid Program Government Intention

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Constituents have expressed concern as the Health Minister has not given a straightforward answer if they will be keeping the seniors hearing aid program.

The program has been a game changer for many seniors, especially those on fixed incomes.

Yes or no, is this government keeping the program?

* (14:30)

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Our government is committed to making sure that programs that benefit seniors are not only in place, but that we actually explore other opportunities to provide more supports for seniors so that they have good health-care outcomes.

I think it's really important to note that the previous government actually didn't do their due diligence and ensure that the Manitobans who need access to supports the most actually were aware that these programs existed. Our government is taking an approach that is going to ensure that what we roll out for seniors is accessible, is transparent and is sustainable long-term.

So, Manitobans can rest assured, seniors in our province can rest assured, that our government is taking an approach that puts people first, is committed to strengthening outcomes and not worried about the bottom line like the previous failed government.

Collection of the Carbon Tax Legal Opinion

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): Yesterday the Premier (Mr. Kinew) tabled a legal opinion that says, in fact, it would not be lawful for a province to refuse to collect the federal carbon tax. That's about as clear as it gets.

Yet some of the members opposite still seem to think the law doesn't apply to them. To make matters worse, not only is the plan illegal, it would also waste taxpayers' dollars. But perhaps that's not surprising, given the \$1.6-billion deficit they left Manitobans.

Could the Minister of Finance please explain the financial consequences of the opposition's reckless and illegal plan?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I want to thank my colleague for that important question.

You know, the opposition has claimed for months to have a legal opinion on this issue. But where is it?

It's clear that they don't have it. The member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Jackson) told media he doesn't have it, and we know Manitobans don't have it, either. But yet members opposite would have government break the law and waste millions in court for the sake of their own ideology.

Manitobans remember the dark days of endless costly legal battles under the PCs, but those days, Mr. Honourable Speaker, are over. Manitobans elected a new government that will get real results on affordability and manage the books, finally, with integrity.

Fire Along Highway 311 Bridge Replacement Inquiry

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure.

The La Vérendrye constituency is home to many of the economic horses that pull this government's newfound social cart. In order for us to pull the social cart, the economic horses of southern Manitoba need stable infrastructure investment.

The Highway 311 goes from the east to the west across much of the region that I represent. As a result of a wildfire in the spring of 2023, this past spring, the bridge was burnt. This has caused great interruption for the constituents of that corner of Manitoba.

And can the minister answer: When will the constituents see that bridge start to be reconstructed?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): It's kind of fun to be so popular. I feel bad for, like, the Minister of Environment, who's probably never going to get a question from this crew.

Again, there are 1,611 bridges and overpasses in this province, so I can't specifically speak to that bridge today. I absolutely invite you to reach out to my department. I'll get an answer for you on that. I can get that answer for you today.

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

Highway 201 Upgrade Inquiry

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): This is a question and request that was made to the department by myself and the municipalities involved.

Another crucial infrastructure upgrade for southern Manitoba, in order to pull the economic load of this province is, in southern Manitoba, the RTAC expansion of Highway 201, which will allow the unrestricted trade and commerce between southern communities of southern Manitoba.

This highway upgrade was committed by the previous government after many years of consultation and assessment.

Will this government commit to the upgrading of this crucial piece of Manitoba infrastructure?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I am very pleased to have had the opportunity over these short weeks in office to speak with many, many municipalities, and the ones I haven't yet had the opportunity to meet with about their infrastructure needs, we have meetings scheduled over the next few weeks.

So it's such a good opportunity to hear about these very types of projects that you are talking about. In terms of any of the RTAC projects on any of the 96,000 kilometres of highway across the province, again, that's a very specific detail about a stretch of highway that I'm happy to look into for the member if you—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for La Vérendrye, on a final supplementary question.

Highway and Road Upgrades La Vérendrye Constituency

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Since my questions have been quite specific, I'll broaden the scope.

Stable and consistent growth within Manitoba relies on the investment of Manitoba's infrastructure. This government, since elected this fall, has shown very little leadership in the forward progression of the infrastructure system in our province.

Can I go back to my constituents and update them that there will be a commitment to the plans put forward by the previous government to continue the growth and stability of our infrastructure in this province?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Despite the horrendous deficit left to us by this government, the projects that are in budget in this year are proceeding as planned, and I have said that publicly. I have said it at Manitoba Heavy. I have said it at the HEAT. I have said it at AMM.

Everyone else across the province understands that the projects in budget this year within the Infrastructure and Transportation Department are proceeding.

Education Property Tax Rebate Government Intention

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Honourable Speaker, today the mask came off. This NDP government is preparing to unleash fiscal and economic hell on Manitoba families.

This NDP government is plunging Manitoba back into years of deficits after our Conservative government left them with a quarter-billion-dollar surplus, and they're going into it in a big way with a record-breaking \$1.6-billion deficit.

Can this NDP Premier (Mr. Kinew) look moms and dads in the eye and promise not to cut the education property tax rebate?

The Speaker: Before we hear the answer to that question, I would like to caution the member about his language. Please refrain from using those kinds of words again.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. You know, I know it's hard for the members opposite to accept that they left the province in this type of a hole: a \$1.6-billion hole. The single biggest non-pandemic

deficit in our province's history; that's their record, Honourable Speaker. That's what they've left Manitobans to cope with.

It's a new day in this province. We're here because Manitobans elected us to deliver on improved health care, improved education, improved affordability. We're going to work hard to make life better for all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Guenter: Can this NDP Premier look farmers in the eye and tell them he will not cut the education property tax rebate?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): No, I won't. What I will do is clean up the absolute mess left by that outgoing administration.

We are bringing a new approach; we are going to honour our commitments to the people of Manitoba, including to ag producers when it comes to that tax credit. We are going to restore a path to fiscal sanity, something that was completely lacking as the outgoing PC administration tried to buy back support from you, the people of Manitoba.

The one thing that we are going to do continuously is to do this with you, the people of Manitoba. We're sharing this information in the spirit of openness and transparency, and while we know the outgoing PCs left us with a big challenge, we know that we can solve it together with you, the people of Manitoba.

* (14:40)

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we go on to petitions, unfortunately, we had some guests in the gallery that had to leave before we got the announcement out.

We had, seated in the public gallery, from Miskoosepi School 21 grade 10 students under the direction of Cecil de Guzman, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie).

PETITIONS

The Speaker: The honourable member for—I should—Springfield-Ritchot.

Personal Health Information

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) In 2023, health-care spending proposal contains health information sharing conditions, which raises concerns about privacy rights.

(2) Digital ID is still in its infancy in Canada. The digital ID and authentication council of Canada is currently partnering with private and public stakeholders to provide the framework to develop a digital identification and authentication ecosystem. This is supported by a September 2022 resolution by the office of the privacy commission of Canada, giving the federal, provincial and territorial privacy commissioners and Ombudsman responsibility for privacy oversights of the ongoing evolution of a digital identity ecosystem.

(3) Governments and third party stakeholders across the world have started to roll out digital ID policies, calling for invasive collection of biometric markers, location data, banking information and personal health information.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to not surrender nor weaken any personal health privacy rights when signing a new Canada Health Transfer agreement.

(2) To urge the provincial government to not create a digital ID nor accept any requirements for the creation of a digital ID tied to health-care funding.

(3) To urge the provincial government to not share any personal medical information with the federal government or third parties, as this information is protected under The Personal Health Information Act, PHIA, and sharing any personal health information would be a violation of the act.

This is signed by Myrna Flett, Jillian Johanneson, Carol MacLellan and many, many others.

Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY*(Continued)***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

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

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): On House business, Honourable Speaker. Could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to waive rules 139(4), 139(6), 139(12) and 139(13) for Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day); Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act, and allow them to be debated at concurrence and third reading this afternoon, despite the fact that they were reported back from committee today.

The Speaker: Is there leave to waive rules 139(4), 139(6), 139(12) and 139(13), for Bill 4, the Employment Standards Code amendment and interpretation act, Orange Shirt Day, and Bill 2, The Louis Riel Act, and allow them to be debated at concurrence and third reading this afternoon, despite the fact that they were reported back from the committee today?

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

MLA Fontaine: Could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to waive rule 137(2) for Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act, to allow it to be debated at second reading this afternoon, despite the fact that it was introduced today.

The Speaker: Is there leave to waive rule 137(2) for Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act, to allow it to be debated at second reading—*[interjection]* Order. Is there leave to waive rule 137(2) for Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act, to allow it to be debated at second reading this afternoon, despite the fact that it was introduced today?

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

MLA Fontaine: Can you please call Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, for a second reading debate—resume second reading debate.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS**Bill 5—The Adult Literacy Act**

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will now resume Bill 5 second reading debate, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Families, who has 13 minutes remaining.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Again, I just want to finish up a couple of my comments in respect of Bill 5, and once again just reiterate for Manitobans that we have an amazing NDP team here and a Cabinet that is working so hard on behalf of Manitobans, including the minister for Bill 5, and I want to just lift her up and tell her that we're very excited for her first bill in the House here.

And as I said yesterday, we have lots of educators that are very excited to put a couple of words on the record in respect of Bill 5 and the importance of adult literacy here in Manitoba.

Miigwech.

The Speaker: Is there any further debate?

MLA Mike Moyes (Riel): I'm happy to rise today to speak to this Adult Literacy Act. I'm happy for a number of reasons. First of all, as I mentioned in my inaugural speech, my mom was a newcomer in this great country, and coming from Taiwan, not as an adult, but as someone in high school, she wasn't able to speak English and her literacy was non-existent.

And so often, as a child, she would tell me stories about the difficulties that she would have in terms of being able to read just regular things in school, learning just even small things like whether it was following along in a textbook, reading a menu, trying to see what was in the daily news, a whole variety of things that we often take for granted when you are able to read and write.

Now, she was able to get over that. She was able to overcome that barrier that so many new Canadians face and so many long-term Manitobans face that don't have the necessary literacy in order to take part in daily life.

Now, she went on to be successful in school and went on to post-secondary, as we want so many of our Manitobans to do. And she was able to become gainfully employed as a nurse. But one thing that she really imparted to me—to me, as a child and now as an adult, is just the importance that that literacy piece played in her own life.

She was able to read me stories, overcoming that. Think about the importance of story time with kids. It's incredibly important in terms of bonding. It's incredibly important in terms of developing literacy in the next generation, and oftentimes my mom would read me stories, my sister stories, and I can only—I can't imagine what that would be like if a parent wasn't able to do that with their child.

Now, this story is so similar to the situation that other Manitobans face. I was a long-time teacher at Victor Mager School. I taught at that school in St. Vital for over 13 years, and oftentimes I would hear of parents struggling. And it was often the kids that would be helping the parents out with the correspondence from the schools.

And it shouldn't be like that. I think that all members in this Chamber would agree that it should be the parents helping the kids, that they should be the ones guiding the kids, whether that's through homework, whether that's through difficult situations, whether that is just trying to understand life.

* (14:50)

And instead, at Victor Mager School, we would have parents that were unable to read. And so, if a letter would go home, an email was sent out. It would be the child—it was dependent on the child to translate and to bring that forward to the parent and explain to them what was happening.

These are young kids. This was an elementary school, junior high, but oftentimes we would have elementary students that were having to explain to their parent what was going on. And that shouldn't be the case.

And so, I'm incredibly proud of this act to bring forward this important piece of legislation to talk about adult literacy.

One of the things that was discussed with this bill—or one of the individuals who's done so much work on this and someone that we have consulted, as a government, is Dr. Jim Silver. Dr. Jim Silver is a professor emeritus from the U of W and has done incredible work when it comes to adult literacy. It is something that he has advocated for time and time again, whether we—whether you've read about it in the paper; he's written numerous articles for the Free Press. He has also written a number of books in terms of addressing poverty. And it often would go back to improving the literacy of the parents.

There was one specific study that was done, and it had to do with the Lord Selkirk Park. Lord Selkirk Park is a low-income place to live. They—there is a centre there that helped families out, and in this study, one of the things that they did was that they worked to improve the literacy of those parents. Without doing anything for the child, they noticed that there was improvements with the kids' schoolwork.

And so, there was questions asked on what exactly was happening here. Why were the kids able to do better in school? Why were the kids all of a sudden seeing their literacy levels improve without any direct action taking place for those kids?

And what it was found in this study and was the fact that when you improve adult literacy, those parents start reading to those kids. Those parents start to have books around the house. Those parents are able to start guiding those children in reading time, with their homework, in a whole variety of different things.

And so, even without a direct action, you start to have an impact on the kids. And I think, regardless of the side of the Chamber you're on right now, every member here would agree that improving children's education—or at least I would hope that all members—I know, on this side of the House, we would agree—that improving a child's education is paramount.

And so, if we're able to do that just by increasing the literacy levels of parents, then we're all going to be better off. And this is something that I think that we all can agree on.

Now, when I went over—after I finished teaching at Victor Mager School, I went over to Glenlawn Collegiate, and I taught English and history. One of the things that I would notice is that the kids that struggled, by the time they got to me in high school, it was incredibly difficult. There's often stigma that would be there for those kids that—and young adults that would be struggling. And it's tough. It's tough to reach those kids; it's tough to give them the skills.

And so, anything that we can do to improve the literacy levels of adults when they are perhaps a little bit more motivated, perhaps when they have developed that independence, is going to just improve our societal—there's going to be societal benefits throughout.

And this is just incredibly difficult but important work, and so, I'm just incredibly happy to see, as one of our first bills, that we're bringing this forward.

One of the issues—or one of the things that I particularly like about this bill is the measurement. As a teacher, we know that whatever we measure is going to be focused upon. And the fact that we're going to be reporting on this is going to hold the programs that we're implementing on adult literacy accountable. It's important not to just put forward bills for the sake of putting forward a bill, but rather to put forward bills that are actually going to move the needle and actually improve adult literacy.

And so, this is an incredibly important bill, and I'm incredibly happy that the Minister for Advanced Education, as her first bill, is moving this. This is going to ensure that the department is reporting on this. This is going to ensure that we're going to implement programs, and they are going to report back, and we're going to hear about it, and we're going to be able to make adjustments if necessary. But it is going to really improve the literacy levels of our population.

Now, let's just think about where you would be at, as an adult, if you were not able to read. Think about it every day. You know, there's sheets of papers in front of us, there's newspapers all around us, there's signs, there's menus, there's things everywhere. And we often will take for granted how important this is.

And so, one of the things that I really feel passionately about is that we really need to ensure that everyone has a good education, has a literacy level that is at a level where they can understand, participate in and flourish in our society.

Newspapers, depending on which one you're discussing, are read—or, are written at a grade 5 or grade 8 level typically. Now that's—might sound pretty elementary in terms of the level, but there's been high school students that I have taught that have read at a beginner level, if—they have read at a grade 2 level, and if they were to pick up a newspaper, they wouldn't be able to understand. They wouldn't be able to understand what is happening in our world.

And I know that we're living more and more in a digital age, but let's be real, there is reading that needs to continue to go on. There's a literacy level in terms of understanding what is happening, to make sure that we're not having—that we're not just able to be fooled by folks and that we're able to understand what's going to be taking place.

Now, one of the things that I particularly like is that we're a listening government. We've really made that clear in terms of who we're collaborating with, in

terms of developing a—different strategies, whether we're talking about the economy or whether we're talking about, you know, education.

And when we're discussing this bill, one of the things that is put forward in this bill is that we want to work with all of the different partners in adult literacy. We want to work with all of the different partners in adult education and ensure that we're hearing people around the table, that we're going to take those views in.

Yes, there's experts in terms of—that can guide our work, people like Dr. Jim Silver, but there's a whole variety of different stakeholders that can play a role. And one of the people, or some of the groups that can play a role are, in fact, the people that need it most, those people that are struggling with literacy. They're going to be able to talk about some of the barriers they face.

I know yesterday we heard from the members opposite—give their support to aspects of the bill, and—in talking about some of the barriers that could be faced. And I appreciate that.

I appreciate the fact that they're looking at ways to reduce barriers, because we're not going to be successful if there's literacy programs, but there's things getting in the way of people accessing those programs. And so, I appreciate the members opposite bringing forward those experiences and that perspective, so that we can implement that in the programming.

Because we do need to collaborate with everyone. We need to collaborate with those stakeholders, we need to collaborate with the people that are accessing the system and we need to collaborate with the experts that are going to be designing these programs to ensure that they're the most effective.

So, one of the things that I'll just, maybe, touch on is, in my community right now, there's a Ukrainian couple that has taken over the—I guess, cafeteria, I guess I'll call it—the cafeteria at Dakota Community Centre. And the reason I'm bringing this up is, being new Canadians from Ukraine, you can see how important their integration into our society is linked to literacy. Right now, they would be functionally illiterate. They struggle with communication, they struggle with understanding what is occurring, if it's in written form, they struggle in terms of processing some of those details.

* (15:00)

Now, the reason why I'm bringing this up is because at the Dakota Community Centre, we have this phenomenal couple that has been doing a lot of work. They've taken over the cafeteria over at Dakota Community Centre and they have some of the best Ukrainian food around, but they're still struggling; even though they're gainfully employed, they're still struggling.

And you can just see—they have kids; they live, I believe, in the Transcona area, and every day they're working hard. But we can see that if they're able to gain a literacy level that is high enough, that they're able to start to read to their kids, that they're able to read a newspaper, that they're able to function in our society, their life is just going to become so much better.

They are going to be able to start interacting with their kids. They're going to be able to ensure that their kids can function in school. They're going to be able to help their kids with homework.

And I know I keep coming back to school because, I guess as a teacher, that's where—just where my mind goes, but the everyday life is just so much better. It's so much richer. Never mind the fact that, if they start to enjoy different aspects, whether that's, you know, the reading of poetry or writing of music or whatever, all the other rich things that take place in our life.

And so, it's incredibly important that we move on this bill, that we enact a comprehensive program in order to address adult literacy, and to really ensure that it's easy for Manitobans to enrol in that education program.

You know, one of the things that I really like about the bill is the fact that it is going to put forward a comprehensive framework for adult literacy centres. This is so vital for really improving that literacy rate, and it's going to be effective. It's going to have mandated reporting. It's going to just really move the needle in terms of our literacy in our province.

Oftentimes in Manitoba, we just assume that everyone has an adequate literacy level, and that's just not the case. It's unfortunate, but it's just not the case. And as a father, as a teacher, as a member of this Legislative Assembly, I just cannot speak highly enough about education and about the importance of moving on adult education.

There's two areas that I'm pretty passionate about in terms of education. Like, you can see an excellent

bang for your buck if you start moving on early childhood education, but the other side of it is you can see some excellent bang for your buck if you start moving on adult education and that adult literacy piece.

It's going to—I just have the utmost faith that it's going to start moving in terms of our young people, whether they are impacted, like I mentioned, the study where those parents are able to positively impact their kids, even without that direct action on the kids.

It's going to impact all generations, and so I'm just so passionate about this bill. I was incredibly happy to see the member—or the Minister for Advanced Education move on this as one of our first bills, and I just look forward to really seeing the needle move on this important piece of legislation.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): I am pleased to rise today and put some words on the record with respect to Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, because it is actually an important bill.

And as I begin my comments today with respect to this bill, I want to first begin to highlight the work of my colleagues, who have already done a tremendous job in highlighting the importance of education, of literacy, of adult learning.

And I will first begin with the member who just spoke, the member for Riel (MLA Moyes), who did a tremendous job about not only talking about a personal experience in his own life that really stresses the importance of education and importance of education—role that education plays on families, on young people, as well as on adults.

But since he is such a good MLA, he was able to provide context about what that means in our broader communities and our society. And I know Dakota Community Centre very well, and so I'm glad that he's bringing that experience of already being an MLA, a member of this Chamber who can truly represent his community and do it with such grace and such dignity.

And then on top of that, Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to hear his words because, as an educator, he brings that experience from his working career as well. As someone I know who has taught in the Louis Riel School Division in multiple schools and specifically last held a position at Glenlawn Collegiate, I know that's direct experience from his own personal and professional career that is very

relevant and tangible to this discussion as we talk about education, as we talk about adult literacy.

And as we expand out, I want to also highlight the fact that I'm very thankful to be on a team that brings so much experience to the table, so many educators around this room and around our caucus and around this government.

And I can highlight the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage from his experience working many years in education and the broad scale and broad range of tasks that educators do. As much as it is about 'literacy'—literacy and tackling the real challenge that it is to get young people, in many respects, to learn how to read—and it does expand up to adults, of course, as we discuss specifically in this act—the task of being an educator is far broader than that. And I am sure the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage can attest to that from his experiences teaching young people through sports, through being active and through their engagement in their broader community.

And that is really what I wanted to highlight as I begin this—my comments, that we're very grateful for the strong work, the positive work, the work that educators put in each and every day to make sure our communities stay strong for not just now, but educating the minds of the future generations so that they have the possibility and the opportunities that we all hope for them, that we all wish for them and that we all want to see become a reality. And that making that reality happens because of bills like this, like Bill 5, like The Adult Literacy Act.

And, of course, this bill requires the minister to develop and implement and evaluate an adult literacy strategy in collaboration with others involved in adult literacy. And the reason that statement is so meaningful and so impactful, Honourable Speaker, is because of some very key words in it.

And the first word I'd like to highlight is collaboration. Our government takes that word very seriously, and we implement it in many different ways, in many different facets. I know the Minister of Education is working collaboratively with his colleagues around the Cabinet table. As well, I know the Minister of Immigration is also working very collaboratively. We have had many meetings that show our collaboration.

And adult literacy is among those collaborative works. And I think that collaborative works is a strong example of the power of having those literacy

tools and allowing us to engage in a meaningful and respectful way.

And I say particular kudos and thank you to the Minister of Immigration, because I know that she has done a large amount of work over the past many years when it comes to adult literacy, meeting with groups, meeting with individual stakeholders who deliver adult literacy education.

People who are deeply vested in adult literacy, the Minister of Immigration has met with them on countless times, including one of the important voices in our Manitoba community on adult literacy, Mr. Jim Silver, whose reports have been very impactful and very influential in terms of the role, in terms of our understanding of adult literacy and its impacts and its potential that it plays throughout our Manitoba community.

And so, I thank her for the job that she has done to elevate this issue throughout our province and ensure and help to, quite frankly, Honourable Speaker, help to pave the road for us introducing this bill, Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, into this Chamber and leading us to the debate where we stand today.

And I know as all members in this Chamber engage on this issue and engage on and, of course, raise their passion level for adult literacy and learning through this vigorous debate that we're exchanging in yesterday and today, and we'll see how long it goes for, Honourable Speaker.

But as we go through this process, as I think it's very important for all of us to recognize, very important for all Manitobans to recognize, as well, that adult literacy is really a tool. It's a key for us to be successful into the future. It opens up countless and numerous pathways and doors for our future potential.

* (15:10)

And that's exactly why it's important for us to focus on adult literacy and make sure that no people, whether you're young or old, fall through that literacy gap, and that we have a plan in place as government to help address those potential gaps. And this bill seeks to do just that.

And I think, Honourable Speaker, as we're talking about adult literacy, it's important to highlight that, you know, our traditional K-to-12 system which tackles literacy at younger levels for, I guess, particularly for children in kindergarten, in grade 1, grade 2 and grade 3. Specifically, I know there's a

large focus on literacy and learning and learning to read at those young levels.

But we can't forget that many Manitobans often don't go through our K-to-12 system, or don't go through it in the same way or the same manner; or don't have those, perhaps, additional resources to be successful through learning at—learning to read and learning their literacy skills at those early years.

And I think one of the reasons that have been quite well documented through many studies and many reports, Honourable Speaker, is that, you know, quite frankly, you know, kids go to school hungry. Kids go to school hungry, and that makes it more challenging for them to tackle the task of learning how to read, of becoming fully literate to a level where they can be successful members of our society.

Now this problem where young people are often hungry at school is a real issue when it come to their ability to learn. And so as we see this happen in our literacy program, it leads to many of these people not learning how to read, and at least to them, being the same people who need to have their literacy caught up as adults.

And, Honourable Speaker, I think it's exciting that we have a minister, a Minister of Advanced Education who is so knowledgeable, who is so passionate about this issue that already, just in the first few weeks of her tenure, she's already bringing forward a 'meaningful'—meaningful piece of legislation that not only addresses the issue, but sets us up for being successful into the future.

Mrs. Rachelle Schott, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And hopefully we can see, generations from now, the positive impacts, the reverberations throughout our community of this bill that we are debating here today; hopefully becomes law, and becomes passed and we can all reap the significant benefits of it.

And as we see, as I mentioned, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that we are now discussing and debating this bill, it's important for us to recognize that the reason many adults don't have their literacy skills in—at the level where we as a community would want to see it, is because, you know, they faced those challenges early on in life. And as I touched on, the fact that kids go to school hungry, I wanted to just dive into that briefly for a little bit.

Now, the reason that we see that happening is because we do know that child poverty levels are extremely high, and in fact they have been rising

under the former government for many years, that childhood poverty.

And those have real impacts and—kids in the classroom. Without the proper supports for kids to be able to learn as classrooms get bigger because of the cuts of the former government, because of the lack of support for educators by the former government, and by the fact of simply refusing to put in a proper and a comprehensive meal program by the former government, we have left many kids behind.

And sadly, we see that—we will see the negative impacts of those decisions that the former government made reverberate through our community. And this act aims to change some of that, as well as a commitment, a conscientious commitment to feed kids in school that this government has made. And we know that that will also have a lasting positive impact.

As we help kids tackle the challenge of being hungry in schools, we also allow them to be more successful throughout their educational careers. We allow them to instead of focus on the rumble in their stomach, we allow them to focus on their A-B-Cs and their one-two-threes.

Now this is an important message that I've heard, not just from own conversations, but I've heard from experts. I've heard from experts who have talked about the need for us to tackle some of those basic issues around poverty and education, and poverty that—childhood poverty that students are facing in order to better educate them and allow them to be successful throughout their educational careers, starting at the very lowest grades, going right up until grade 12.

And that leads us to The Adult Literacy Act, which is really a measure to ensure that those people who might fall through the cracks get caught by comprehensive system, a strategic system and plan that the minister of adult education is putting forward here—as this bill is part of that plan—to ensure that we help all Manitobans through their literacy journey.

And the other area, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that it's important for us to consider, are those new Canadians who come into our province here who are—perhaps not have the literacy skills that would allow them to be as successful in our economy. And as those people, you know, learn and understand Manitoba and the way of life that we're very proud of here, as those people come and join our community, I think that we want to have them welcomed into our community,

welcomed into our province, welcomed into our various cities and rural municipalities.

We know that many of those people who are coming here are looking for work. They're looking for work and they're looking for a place to call home. They're looking for welcoming communities. And they're also looking to be supported with their family. Well, how do we do that, Honourable Deputy Speaker? How do we tackle those three goals of ensuring that immigrants have family support, that they have a job that meets their skills and that they have—that they can also ensure that they have a welcoming community to be in. How do we do that?

Well, to make sure that they have a job that meets their skills, they have to have the language skills and the literacy skills to actually attain and work successfully in a job that meets their skills. That is a very basic part of our economy. And to help them accomplish that goal, this Adult Literacy Act is a key part of it.

And so in order for our new immigrants to—and newcomers into Manitoba feel welcome and have a job and a career that can be successful, we need to make sure that adult literacy is a key, basic part of that approach.

And second, for those newcomers to feel welcome here, they also need to have a community that embraces them, a community that welcomes them. And we all know that as people in our communities, that want to engage with each other, that also want to be, you know, get involved on your, you know, community centre board, get involved in parent-teacher, just be part of a community, is to be able to converse and speak with, you know, speak and read and understand in a way that allows you to be fully embraced by a community.

And this—and that is important—why it's important for us to have a literacy strategy for adults that are new to this country and this province. That is a critical part of it. And, you know, this is true for folks who are here in the downtown of Winnipeg. This is folks for—true for the folks who settle in my neighbourhood of St. Vital.

And I can highlight some particular resources in my neighbourhood, including the St. Vital adult literacy and learning centre, that is an amazing place for people in my neighbourhood, in St. Vital, in—adults in my neighbourhood of St. Vital—to learn those educational skills either because they, you know, need to brush up on them and improve them from the

K-to-12 system here, or because they maybe didn't have them, because they are, maybe, newer to the country.

Regardless of what the case is, Honourable Deputy Speaker, it's important that we have those resources in place, which Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act, aims to do. And so with that St. Vital Adult Learning Centre, which I—I've—proud to have been at in many occasions, and tour and meet with their director, I can see first-hand, and I've seen first-hand, the direct and positive impact that that place, that adult learning has on their lives.

And I've seen it. I've talked to parents who went through that program when they had kids. And I've spoken with them, and they've told me that this program is giving them the confidence they need to go out in community and engage and be involved. It's giving them the confidence to not only do that, but to inspire their neighbours, who maybe don't have the literacy programs, it's inspiring them to take on the task of getting themselves educated and going through adult learning programs.

* (15:20)

And as they also in—get the confidence to be involved to be the community, it's giving them countless economic opportunities as well. They now have the tools and the ability to go into the workplace and say to themselves, I can get this job because I have the confidence, I have the skills to actually make it happen.

And, Honourable Deputy Speaker, as they do that not only do they improve their own lives, but they also inspire their children to say that, yes, as I grow up in this society, I understand that literacy is important. It is important to read, it is important to understand our community because it is just a frankly important thing, but also because it gives us further opportunity to network, to build community, to get economic success into the future.

And I see all that first-hand at the St. Vital Adult Learning Centre. And I can remember actually quite proudly being there at the centre this past June as they awarded their graduates their graduation certificates for finishing the program, and I remember one key individual, as well, specifically, who was very proud, who won a scholarship.

And she was awarded the scholarship because, in addition to taking the adult learning course as well throughout the year, she also worked as a tutor to help

her peers learn, and she also happened to get the highest marks in her entire class.

And this is a woman who is also a parent and a volunteer in the community, and has a ton of other responsibilities. But the priority for her in her life on education was remarkable. And it's a signal as to not just the importance that I know our caucus and our team place on education, but that real community members place on education.

And that's exactly what we do as a government, is we listen to community members, listen to community members who tell us education is important. Who tell us that they need supports in education. Who tell us that after seven years of cuts by the former government to education, that they need a change, that they need a change of path, that they need to be—a set education, set adult literacy on a path that's going to be successful for themselves, their families and our community.

And I'm so proud to be standing here alongside my colleagues and in particular the members who have done so much work in education, so much work in adult literacy, to listen to people, to listen to Manitobans, to ensure that we are setting ourselves on the path for success for today, for success for tomorrow.

And so as—I'll make a few more comments before I close, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that as the Minister of Immigration has pointed out that there are, you know, very important impacts to immigrants who come here, and namely the need for family supports, for community supports and for jobs and economic supports that really fit their skills.

And as I mentioned, I talked about the need for—that literacy plays in ensuring economic supports and the need that literacy plays in your role, in your place, in your community, in allowing you to feel fully involved and fully engaged in that community, whether it's here or whether it's in rural Manitoba, or whether it's in northern Manitoba.

Also, it allows you to be successful within your own family. And I know there are many members in this Chamber who have said, through their inaugural speeches, that they are the first member in their family to go to post-secondary university or post-secondary education.

And that's a signal. That's a strong signal that if I know a family member or I know a parent, take on the challenge of getting themselves educated as an adult, it sets a new standard for their kids, and gives

their children and the next generation the confidence, the tools they need, and by proxy, the experience to actually accomplish such a large goal of getting post-secondary education, whether it is adult literacy or adult learning programs, whether it is going to a college or getting through an apprenticeship program, or whether that's going to one of our fine and many universities that we have across this great province.

And whatever path you're taking in terms of your learning and your education and your literacy skills as you grow as—into adulthood, it plays a key role on impacts into your family.

And I can say that first-hand. You know, as a kid growing up myself, I, you know, was going to school, and I watched my mom, who, from my younger years, from, you know, kindergarten to—sorry, from birth up until grade—kindergarten, grade 1, was at home. You know, spent most of the time at home taking care of us; I was the youngest of four.

But then I saw my mom go back to school. I saw her go back to university and work hard, and I saw my mom after, you know, helping us out with supper, and helping us out with our homework, I saw her sit at the dining room table, open up a textbook and do work, using her literacy skills that she had developed to educate herself. And the power of that, of seeing someone who's already done so much work throughout the day, go and put in extra work to get—to advance and grow in her educational needs just shows the power that it is to adult—to invest in education, in literacy and learning, for adults.

And as this bill, Bill 5, does just those very things, it also means that it allows families to be successful and inspire them and allow them to grow in a way that is going to be fostering more healthy and more beneficial and—communities that are going to make our province better into the future.

And I want to also point out, Honourable Deputy Speaker, an important aspect of this bill, which is—which we should not miss in highlighting. It's the fact that the component of this strategy is the Manitoba Adult Literacy Program, which does support adults' literacy programs.

And as those programs get administered throughout our province, and I know that the one I spoke of in St. Vital, the St. Vital learning centre, is powered by MITT, that's the Manitoba institute for trades and technologies, who, you know, foster and collaborate with adult learning centres right across the city and the province. They help to engage those groups in being—

delivering successful adult learning programs, and as they do that work, they uplift many lives across our province.

And so we're very happy that our strategy, and through this bill, is going to reward, and hopefully build on the work of those terrific community partners.

And so, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I think I'll just wrap up my comments by saying that the last part of this bill is important to remember is that it's—it is going to allow us to report and actually be held accountable to delivering on some of these strategies.

Now, I think that accountability, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is something really that this—the former government, you know, chose to—found ways—found actually unique and creative ways to avoid. They found unique and creative ways to avoid accountability.

Now, you know, for those folks who don't—who might be unaware, Honourable Deputy Speaker, a bill was repealed by the former government. The literacy act was repealed by the former PC government. And they didn't just come out and say, you know, we decided to take a different approach of education, so we've decided to repeal the adult literacy act—no. They tried to actually hide it and slip it into a former bill called the red tape reduction act. They tried to be sneaky with it. They tried to slip it in the back pages of red tape reduction act to hide the fact they were cutting the adult literacy act, that they were repealing it and sneaking it in.

You know, it's kind of like how they tried to raise the hydro rates in the dead of night at wintertime. They tried to be sneaky about it. The same thing with this adult literacy; they tried to be sneaky with it, and that does a disservice to the adults who are seeking literacy and seeking to engage and enhance their language skills.

And so, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I think that we're taking a distinctively different approach, an approach that is transparent with Manitobans, with our need to grow education in Manitoba, with that need to ensure that we give opportunities for people from all walks of life, whether you need it to attend adult literacy programs, because perhaps you are new to the country, because you needed additional support after the K-to-12 system for a variety of reasons.

We want, as a government, to work with you, to listen to you, and to assure that we are setting you up for the best success into your future so that together

we can build the best Manitoba, a Manitoba that works for all of us.

Thank you very much.

* (15:30)

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I want to thank the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable) for bringing forward this important bill.

One of the very first things we did, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is that we met with sector partners before the House was beginning to sit, early in October. And the partners were telling us loud and clear that they needed a bill like this that builds in some very important measures around adult literacy and adult learning centres, adult learning placements and all of the supports for adult learners, because we know how important this particular sector is to the success of our economy.

I want to thank the Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources (Mr. Moses) for those very fine words regarding the importance of this sector. He comes to this with a very unique perspective, Honourable Deputy Speaker, because, as the Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade and Natural Resources, he's keenly aware of the necessary skills that a new economy requires. And certainly, an economy that works for the people of Manitoba has to have a functioning adult learning component.

It is important because—because—there is potential right now in the economy and getting jobs that can pay a living wage for families. I can tell you, as the member for Transcona, we have many people that are taking advantage of adult learning centres, but we can be doing more. And certainly the sector partners that met with us, that met with Minister Cable and myself, were really imploring us to do more, because they called it, Honourable Deputy Speaker, something known as untapped potential. I think we have to remember what that means. What that means is the ability for people to fully participate in the economy.

We know that sometimes people on their education journeys have little hiccups along the way and that the responsibility of a government is to provide the supports necessary for those people to get back into an education setting that meets them where their starting points are.

We know that people that are young families, people that require early learning and child care, that

the hub model for adult learning will be one that will get to this act and make this act really effective. Because what it does is that it requires the minister to develop and implement and evaluate an adult literacy strategy in collaborations with others involved in the sector.

Now, how do we define the others involved in the sector? Well, what we have to do is look at what the people that require this service are telling us. What they're telling us is a hub model is perhaps the most effective way to reduce the barriers that they face as people accessing extra or their-improvement of their educational outcomes. I can tell you right now, adult literacy and numeracy, it's not only important because of the economic possibilities that it provides them, but it's also really important as a life skill.

In a sense of this, Honourable Deputy Speaker, we see a rising occurrence of online scams, a rising occurrence of a lack of media literacy and how we understand the news feeds that are being fed to us when we click on certain things on our smart phones and computers. Part of an effective adult literacy program will include these measures that the minister has brought forward and measure how we define even the concept of literacy and numeracy, now, in the digital age.

It's something that schools are certainly responding to quite quickly right now with new media literacy units. I think the same has to be done in adult learning centres, especially because with seeing a rise of scams that are taking people—and people that are actually quite literate themselves, but are not literate in that media literacy piece—seniors, who can take advantage of an adult literacy program that can bring them up to speed in how to deal with all the information that is coming at us right now in Manitoba and throughout our country.

There is a lot of misinformation that certainly inundates us, and I see this act providing an avenue for adult learning centres to get into that sector and ensure that people are prepared to deal with all the information that's coming at them and how to dissect it to the point where they're not being taken advantage of. We know of many stories already—they've been well reported throughout the media—of people being taken advantage of because they don't understand what they're clicking on, and that's a piece that can also be reflected in this bill.

The other important part here is that this act will make it easier for Manitobans to enrol in an adult education system or an adult literacy and numeracy

program; it's very important that we do that. Right now there are a number of barriers that are present—that are preventing people from accessing these necessary education programs.

Again, as I mentioned earlier, sector partners have a wraparound approach, meaning that they have other pieces that will allow people to have their kids in a child-care centre or maybe they need access to social work or perhaps they need access to how to gain home places to live, this kind of thing. The very successful programs have all of these wraparound services.

This act also establishes and sets funding eligibility parameters for adult literacy and numeracy programming in Manitoba. I can tell you, in northeast Winnipeg, the River East Transcona School Division, through their McLeod Adult Learning Centre, provides many opportunities for adult learners to register, with very few barriers.

The one—some of the interesting things that they do is that not only are their courses offered during the traditional times of mornings, afternoons, but they're also offered in evenings; they're offered on weekends. And this makes it accessible for people to gain the skills that they need. They're either—they're certainly done in-person. There would be—it'd be great if we had other ways to deliver some of this, either through an online component or done in a seminar system where we can get people sitting around a table and working on their skills.

The other piece that this allows, especially at McLeod Adult Learning Centre, is that they allow people to finally finish their high school diplomas so that they can move on to what my colleague, the Minister for Investment, Economic Development, Trade and Natural Resources said: providing the extra supports so that they can get into a post-secondary system to allow them to become more able to access higher paying jobs so that they can raise their families in a way that is certainly honouring not only their education piece but also honouring their—the education that they receive at these centres. It's something that can't be—it can't be overemphasized, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

This bill will also force us—not force, I hate using that word, force. What it does is that it asks us to ensure that different partners are included in this creation of an adult learning program that everyone can be proud of here in Manitoba and one that we can lead the country in.

We have a unique opportunity right now in front of us where we can take what's in this act and put it into action, in something that ensures adult literacy programs that are effective and provide better outcomes through the reporting phase of this particular bill. That part is going to be important.

As we know that whenever we bring up programs such as this is that the reporting piece is very important because it allows us to collect necessary data so that we can, Honourable Deputy Speaker, create something that is reflective of the need of those particular learners, and through a collection of this important data, we can then provide programming that meets their requirements.

So this act will work to ensure adult learners are on par with the prerequisite to get into some of that necessary post-secondary training that my colleagues have mentioned earlier.

The other piece that we want to ensure is that with this now change in government that we also institute some things that are really important to community building.

* (15:40)

I can tell you, when a person is part of a community, they feel really connected to something that's bigger than themselves, and the best way to do that is through an education system that's responsive to their needs. That's the piece that we're going to ensure that is included in—when we create this system that is responsive to the needs of the people that are actually in it.

There is a lack of access right now for people who want to pursue adult ed, especially outside of the city of Winnipeg. And we believe that that is something that has to be tackled, that this bill will put into place.

Right now, what we have is we have a really good system through the K-to-12 system that already has a lot of the infrastructure in place, Honourable Deputy Speaker, to provide some real guidance in creating this adult literacy plan that we talk about in Bill 5.

We would love to see something very effective that, like we said—like I said earlier, is outside of the city of Winnipeg as well. And how we do that will depend on what the people are telling us they need to make a successful program really work for their needs.

Right now, we have 1,250 adults in Manitoba that are participating in an adult literacy program. What happened is, is that that number, while the demand is

actually higher than what the people are actually in right now. There is tremendous demand for adult literacy programs right now in this province that need to be met. And one of the ways that we're looking at meeting that demand is partnering with school divisions.

I know when we met with Jim Silver and Fran Taylor, there was a model that many school divisions in the urban area here in Winnipeg are implementing that meets people where they are and gets them into programs so that they can improve their literacy and numeracy skills, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

While the number is still kind of flat, what we have to do is we have to find a way to get more people into these programs with fewer barriers. I can tell you the one in River East Transcona doesn't charge students when they're 18 years and older and getting credit towards their high school diploma.

Those are some of the things that we need to do so that people aren't facing that financial burden of getting their high school diploma. That's a piece that'll be important when we evaluate this programming through the mandated reporting that's in it.

One of the biggest concerns, of course, that we have, and I think every member in this House has, is that out 1.4 million people, almost 200,000 Manitobans are functionally illiterate, which means they can't fully participate—and we talk about it in the economy—but they can't fully participate, also, in being a citizen that can be that necessary role model for their family. That's a piece, too, that's also important.

This is—these are numbers that we have to tackle, that we have to get to. And I know that every member in this House is interested in ensuring that we get these resources to people that need them the most. When we support adults to improve their reading and writing skills, we're helping them build a better life here in Manitoba. That's really important, because when you feel that you can participate, your own self-image also improves. And there's something to be said for that, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

We see that all the time when we're talking to students, when we're talking to people in any kind of learning study, if they don't see themselves as effective learners, they're not going to be successful. And the best people to help them with that are caring adults that are in the system, ready to go to meet them where their starting points are. And that's what's really important here too.

This bill will lead to higher literacy skills and reduce poverty, improve the health and well-being of individuals. We know the strain that many people feel when they're unable to navigate systems to access health care, to access any kind of supports.

For when you're functionally illiterate, that means that you have a hard time, and then also have a hard time asking your friends to help you do this stuff. Of course your friends will help you, but you want to be a person that can do that on your own.

And so, with this act, Honourable Deputy Speaker, we're going to be able to put some of these pieces in place where we can create a system that is accessible to Manitobans throughout the province.

We're committed to improving literacy and numeracy to get the support to people, and in being transparent in this progress. We're going to ask for reports that can guide us in then developing the program even further, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

The first step we'll be doing is we'll work together with community partners and Manitobans to develop a strategy and improve not just—I mean, I know we talk about adult literacy and numeracy, but also talk about improving their own self-worth and feeling really good at, of—or, seeing themselves as learners. Capable people in an economy that requires educated people to fully participate in.

The best way towards these really good family-supporting jobs is, of course, increasing somebody's literacy and numeracy skills. And we'll do this with this particular bill.

The other part that's important is that it's really important that we create something that we can really proud of here in Manitoba. We have many, many people throughout the adult learning environment and milieu in Manitoba that are doing great work. But what they're telling us, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is that we have to create a more unified and transparent adult education system.

Because what's occurring right now is, like I said, we have a tremendous amount of programming that's out there, but it's not co-ordinated, and they're not able to learn from each other as to what's working in, say, a rural setting or what's working in a northern setting or what's working in an urban setting. We need to bring those partners together so that we can create something that's a little more consistent in services, in expectations of the learners. And in the current structure, we have to ensure that the centres aren't recreating their own wheel every time.

What we're seeing is—what's really good about having school divisions is that there's a real unification and co-ordination. School divisions right now, Honourable Deputy Speaker, have a unifying body in MSBA that represents their interests. It'd be great if the adult learning community also had something that unifies them like that, to bring them together so that they can speak as one voice. So when they say they want a more unified and transparent adult ed system, that's what they need. It'd be great if they were able to—instead of have, you know, volunteer people, essentially, come to us and meet with us—it'd be great if they had a unified voice and someone that represents them at the table.

I know we've said this many times, I know many of my colleagues here on this side of the House and, I do believe in all parts of the House, are—understand that adult ed is truly a buried treasure. It's one that's untapped and one that's ready to be—I guess, I don't want to use the word exploited, because that sounds inappropriate—but I will say, one that's ready to be utilized for the benefit of that person. And that's what's really important here.

We need to build upon the solid base that now exists with a lot of these volunteer organizations, and a lot of organizations that have come to us to give us feedback in how to create something that could be—something that we can 'pre' proud of nationally here in this province.

Many adult learners do well in a mature setting. Many adults learners don't do well in that really structured high-school setting that, for some, isn't the best place for them to be. So that's what's the other piece that'll inform our decision making is, what can these settings look like so that we can provide something that is more responsive to their particular needs.

The other important part here to remember is that adult literacy is an important part of reconciliation. We do talk about that a lot here in this House, and I know every MLA in this House is really focused on the reconciliation aspect that we've been given here as a government mandate to ensure that we follow through on.

And the best way to do that is, of course, that—through adult ed. And it's an important part because recent data shows that Indigenous adults participate in adult education two and a half times more than other sectors. There is demand there, absolute demand that needs to be fulfilled and needs to be provided for. And that's a part that's important here, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

It's also important to know that Indigenous peoples are more likely to have reduced access to adult ed due to a lack of rural and northern opportunities.

* (15:50)

So, what we have right now in front of us, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is an opportunity to create space and programming that is also accessible outside the city of Winnipeg, a key aspect of reconciliation that's also addressing the systemic poverty and worse education outcomes such as illiteracy that many Indigenous peoples have had to endure throughout history here in Manitoba. Adult ed programs that can respond to that, that can meet them at their starting points, would be one way of getting us on this permanent path of reconciliation, which is really important.

The other piece that I do want to talk about, of course, is poverty and crime. And part of this act here will show—and we know this. We know that typically when you have a higher educational standing, when you are a person that is fully functionally literate and numerate, you are not involved in crime. And this is a piece that will, through this act, Honourable Deputy Speaker, reduce those connections between poverty and crime, which is really, really important.

In wrapping up, I just want to say I want to thank my colleague, the minister for advanced training—Advanced Education and Training, for bringing forward this important bill.

When I began my remarks, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I talked about how we were meeting right away with sector partners, and how they were looking forward to working with members of the Executive Council that understand the importance of adult education programs and in getting something set up here in a province that is responsive to their needs.

You know, the one thing that we notice is that, regardless of all the barriers that have been put in place or they may have faced before, that they're still at the table. They're still wanting to engage. And I do believe that we'll be a government that does provide and finally does come through in untapping these—this potential of adult learning, and it is something that this particular legislation, The Adult Literacy Act, will do for Manitobans that require this particular resource.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Thank you, Honourable Assistant Deputy, for this opportunity to speak on this very, very important bill that our Minister of Advanced Education brought forward.

I didn't know too much about adult education, unlike many of my colleagues on this side of the House that are lifetime educators. But over the past four years, when I was a critic, one of the first things that we butted up against from the previous PC government was the fact that they just cut the adult literacy act and all the types of reporting mechanisms that went along with that act.

I didn't really know too much about what that act was about until the fact that they did that. And we got to see, over the course of, you know, the years of cuts that they inflicted on Manitobans, adult education was part of that, I'm not sure if I'm allowed to say it, but slaughter.

As the MLA for Notre Dame, this is one of the poorest urban constituencies in all of Canada, where I live and the folks that I represent. And adult education means so much to the people in my constituency. So, when we were seeing wholesale cuts and the lack of any kind of accountability as it related to adult education, this really, really affects my constituents, my neighbours and the families that are around me.

One of the first things that I did as the MLA for Notre Dame was to deal with an issue in my constituency called lead contamination in soil.

So, basically, there is—because this area that I represent has a lot of railroad tracks, there is a lot of busy streets there, and there was lead—and there was a—historical sources of lead contamination through smelting plants that were in my constituency.

So one of the first things that I did when I got elected was to reach out to the Department of Soil Science at the University of Manitoba to help our community with some information about how we could work to mitigate the effects of lead contamination in soil.

So what some of that meant was about the—gardening in the soil, we're not supposed to do that. We're supposed to do container gardening. People are supposed to wash their hands after they're outside, you know, because that's how you mitigate the effects of lead contamination.

One of the first things that I did as the MLA was to reach out to the different schools so that we could

disseminate this information with the help of the soil sciences department at the University of Manitoba, with the help of Professor Francis Zvomuya, who is a world expert in mitigating the effects of contamination—contaminated soil. I went to one of the schools in my constituency and what we were told—to try to set up, like, a parents' evening night, about how we could do this. Because the effects on lead contamination on children, especially under age 11, are very, very, very serious. So, you know, we were going around to different schools to set up these parent information nights.

And in one of the schools that we went to, I had, you know, my piece of paper; we were going to be saying, you know, this is the topic, the agenda for that meeting. And what ended up happening was the acting principal at that school told me, we're sorry, but we can't send this note home to parents, because our parents can't read. That's how bad the levels of literacy were, and are, in my constituency.

So I was actually shocked when that happened, and I didn't know what to do at first. So over the course of the next months I learned about the work of Jim Silver on this very topic of adult education. And I reached out to him and I told him what happened to me; he said he wasn't surprised. And I asked him to help. I asked him to help with maybe some research about the state of adult education in our province, and I asked him to help come up with what he thought would be a way forward for us.

And, you know, Professor Silver is retired, but he is still very, very well connected and is so passionate about anti-poverty initiatives. And he took on this project, and he started a research project and worked with the Canadian centre of policy alternatives, and he reached out to so many adult educators across the province. And he came up with this report that was extremely well researched. He went to—especially to parts of our province, like northern areas and in rural areas, where he identified—where he and his researchers identified the most need, okay?

And that was the report that he wrote, and it was called *Unearth this Buried Treasure*. And it was about the state of adult education in our province. And we're so grateful of—for the work that Professor Silver has done on this topic, and I know that he will continue to—and also all the other adult educators in our province will be working diligently with our Minister of Advanced Education to come up with a proper roadmap for our province.

* (16:00)

And I know that it's going to include especially our northern and rural communities that have the most demand for this. And not if, but when we are able to implement this, you know, visionary path forward led by our very passionate Advanced Education Minister, this will actually be in addition to all the gains that other—our other MLAs and ministers have put on the record.

Being able to do so with this path is also going to be one of the acts of reconciliation that we can do in this province, because we know that demand for adult education is very great in Indigenous communities across our province.

So, we're just really, really excited to be able to get this going, and we look forward to the results of this initiative that our Adult Education Minister is putting forward.

And I think those are going to be all my remarks for now, and I'll let other MLAs speak on this very important issue.

Thank you, Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker.

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Merci, l'Honorable Députée, Madame la Présidente. C'est un honneur, en tant qu'enseignant chevronné depuis au-delà de 28 ans, que j'ai la chance de parler au sujet de la loi n° 5—la loi sur la littératie chez les adultes.

J'aimerais commencer par remercier l'excellent travail de ma collègue, la ministre de l'Éducation postsecondaire, pour avoir présenté cette loi, qui—je crois—est fondamentale à l'avancement de notre société ici au Manitoba.

C'est évident que la littératie et la numératie sont à la base d'un bon fonctionnement de toute société. J'ai eu la chance au courant de mes années en tant qu'éducateur, et cela pour au-delà de 20 ans au niveau adulte, de travailler avec des éducateurs comme moi-même qui croient férocelement au fait que, si on veut que notre économie avance, si on veut que notre société avance, nous devons le faire avec un appui important au niveau de la littératie pour adultes.

Au courant de mes années, j'ai eu la chance de travailler avec plusieurs éducateurs qui ont formé un peu mon impression sur la littératie et la numératie chez les adultes, mais j'aimerais partager avec vous, Madame l'Honorable Députée Présidente, l'histoire de mon grand-père, Victor Beaudry.

Mon grand-père, Victor Beaudry, a grandi dans les années 1930 dans la région de Vassar, South Junction. Pendant les années 1930, évidemment, c'était la Grande Dépression, et la littératie et la numératie chez les adultes n'étaient pas une priorité.

Néanmoins, mon grand-père Beaudry a quand même eu la chance de finir sa 8^e année. Sa 8^e année, Madame l'Honorable Députée Présidente. Et ce qu'il a été capable de faire avec sa 8^e année, c'est de servir dans les Forces armées canadiennes en tant que sergent, aller travailler pour la Ville de Winnipeg sur les petits chars, sur les autobus, a élevé une famille.

Et la question se pose, Madame l'Honorable Députée Présidente : qu'est-ce que mon grand-père aurait été capable d'accomplir avec une 12^e année ? Est-ce que mon grand-père aurait été capable d'enseigner au niveau adulte ? Est-ce que mon grand-père aurait été capable de finir un diplôme postsecondaire ?

Néanmoins, ce que mon grand-père a été capable d'accomplir, c'est d'élever une famille, et une des éducatrices qui a eu un grand impact sur moi et sur ma vision sur la littératie chez les adultes, où j'ai eu la chance d'enseigner pendant au-delà de 20 ans, c'était une grande pédagogue par le nom de Lucienne Beaudry.

Lucienne Beaudry était ma mère. Et Lucienne, au courant de ses années, a été capable d'avoir un grand impact chez l'éducation chez les jeunes adultes dans la francophonie, et plutôt non seulement au Collège secondaire de Saint-Boniface, mais au Collège Louis-Riel.

Et Lucienne Loisselle, née Beaudry, avait mis sur pied un centre d'excellence pour jeunes adultes—pour leur apprendre comment apprendre. Et au courant de mes années, j'ai été capable de voir l'impact fondamental que l'éducation chez les adultes peut avoir, non seulement dans la communauté francophone, métisse, mais aussi chez les immigrants.

Cette loi—la loi 5 sur la littératie chez les adultes—est très importante quand on parle d'immigration francophone. Il ne faut pas oublier, Madame l'Honorable Députée Présidente, qu'ici au Manitoba, nous avons une pénurie de main-d'œuvre. Alors quand les immigrants arrivent ici au Manitoba, plusieurs en tant qu'adultes, ils ont malheureusement plusieurs défis devant eux, et avant d'aller en éducation postsecondaire, ils doivent finir leur 12^e année.

Et c'est important au niveau d'adulte, et je crois que cette loi d'ailleurs adresse le fait que, chez nos

adultes—surtout chez nos immigrants—on doit avoir un système robuste, un système de littératie pour adultes qui donne la chance aux immigrants—qu'ils soient francophones ou non—d'avoir la chance de finir leur diplôme en 12^e année.

Alors, personnellement, j'ai vu, dans la francophonie manitobaine, beaucoup de nouveaux arrivants arriver du Gabon, du Burkina Faso, du Congo, du Mali, de l'Algérie, et cetera, et finir—grâce à notre système d'éducation pour adultes—finir leur 12^e année.

Et encore une fois, la question se pose : où seraient ces immigrants s'ils n'avaient pas accès à un centre d'adultes pour finir leur diplôme en 12^e année ?

Je pense à un ancien collègue à moi, Alain Bachimbé, qui est arrivé du Congo il y a 10 ans. Il était un électricien au Congo. Il est arrivé au Manitoba, il a eu la chance de finir son diplôme adulte 12^e année, pour ensuite aller au postsecondaire, finir un bac en éducation, et je suis heureux de partager avec vous qu'Alain Bachimbé est maintenant un enseignant dans nos écoles où nous avons aussi une pénurie d'enseignants.

Alors cette loi—la loi, la loi sur la littératie chez les adultes—est très importante pour servir de débouchés et permettre à nos immigrants, à nos jeunes francophones adultes, métis, et cetera, à avoir la chance de finir leur diplôme de 12^e année, pour être capable d'avancer, soit à un bon emploi, à un niveau postsecondaire, de façon à être capable de mieux appuyer leur famille.

Et je crois que c'est fondamental à notre travail en tant que gouvernement de permettre à nos immigrants d'avoir la chance de finir leur 12^e année.

Translation

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker. It is an honour, as a veteran teacher of over 28 years, to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act.

I would like to begin by thanking my colleague, the Minister of Advanced Education and Training, for introducing this legislation, which I believe is fundamental to the advancement of our society here in Manitoba.

Literacy and numeracy are evidently a foundation for a well-functioning society. In my years as an educator, at the adult level for over 20 years, I have been fortunate to work with educators who, like me, fiercely believe that, if we want our economy to move

forward, if we want our society to move forward, we must do so with significant adult literacy support.

Over the years, I have been fortunate to work with many educators who have shaped my impression of adult literacy and numeracy, but I would like to share with you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, the story of my grandfather, Victor Beaudry.

My grandfather, Victor Beaudry, grew up in the 1930s in the Vassar, South Junction, area. The 1930s were, of course, the era of the Great Depression, and adult literacy and numeracy were not a priority.

Nevertheless, my grandfather Beaudry was lucky enough to finish grade 8. Grade 8, Honourable Deputy Speaker. And with his grade 8 education, he was able to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces as a sergeant, to work for the City of Winnipeg on small tanks and buses, and to raise a family.

The question is, Honourable Deputy Speaker: what would my grandfather have been able to accomplish with a grade 12 education? Would my grandfather have been able to teach at the adult level? Would he have been able to finish a post-secondary degree?

Nevertheless, what my grandfather was able to accomplish was to raise a family. And one of the educators who had a great impact on me and my vision of adult literacy—an area in which I was fortunate enough to teach for over 20 years—was a great pedagogue by the name of Lucienne Beaudry.

Lucienne Beaudry was my mother. Over the years, Lucienne had a great impact on the education of young adults in the French-speaking community, first at the Collège secondaire de Saint-Boniface high school, and then at Collège Louis-Riel.

Lucienne Loiselle, née Beaudry, had set up a centre of excellence for young adults, to teach them how to learn. Over the years, I was able to see the fundamental impact that adult education can have, not only in the Francophone and Métis communities, but also among immigrants.

This act—Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act—is very important when it comes to Francophone immigration. Honourable Deputy Speaker, we must not forget that, here in Manitoba, we have a labour shortage. When immigrants arrive here in Manitoba, many as adults, they unfortunately face many challenges, and before they can go on to post-secondary education, they must finish grade 12.

It is important at the adult level, and I believe this legislation addresses the fact that, for our adults—

especially immigrant adults—we need to have a robust system, an adult literacy system that gives immigrants, whether they are francophone or not, the chance to get a grade 12 diploma.

Personally, I have seen a lot of newcomers to the francophone community arrive from Gabon, Burkina Faso, Congo, Mali, Algeria, et cetera, and finish grade 12, thanks to our adult education system.

And once again, the question arises: where would these immigrants be if they did not have access to an adult centre where they can finish their grade 12?

I think of a former colleague of mine, Alain Bachimbé, who arrived from the Congo 10 years ago. He was an electrician in the Congo. He came to Manitoba, he was lucky enough to finish his grade 12 as an adult, and then go on to post-secondary to finish a Bachelor of Education. I am happy to share with you that Alain Bachimbé is now a teacher in our schools, where we also have a shortage of teachers.

So this act—The Adult Literacy Act—is very important to provide opportunities and allow our immigrants, our young Francophone, Métis, et cetera, adults, to have the chance to finish their grade 12, to be able to move on, either to a good job or to post-secondary, so as to be able to better support their families.

And I think it is fundamental to our work as a government to give immigrants a chance to finish grade 12.

English

Another thing I would like to share with you, Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, is a quote that I've always been able to live by as a teacher who has worked for 20 years in adult literacy, and that quote is simple, it's: education is the great equalizer.

And when we think about those words, education is the great equalizer, what do we mean by that? So for over 20 years, I had the chance to work with young adults in the inner city that faced multiple barriers to education, sometimes street-related barriers to education and, in certain cases, gang and gang-affected barriers to education.

And it's always been my belief that everybody has the right to a proper education, everybody has the right to an equal education, and everyone has the right to finish their grade 12 and to move on if they want to post-secondary, or have access to a good-paying job.

So for 16 years, I had the opportunity to work in a program—an adult ed program—called YouthBuild. And in fact, there was a program here in Winnipeg, there was one in Thompson, there was one at the Agassiz Youth Centre. In fact, there were actually two here in Winnipeg.

And I witnessed first-hand the formative change that adult education can have with those groups in our society that are seeking a better life. And once again, coming back to education is the great equalizer, I had the chance to work with new immigrants; I had the chance to work with Indigenous youth; I had the chance to work with youth from all over Manitoba between the ages of 19 and 29 years of age seeking to finish their mature grade 12 diploma.

*(16:10)

In one instance, I remember working with a young man from Iraqi—from Iraq, sorry—who walked across a minefield in the middle of the night to eventually find his way to Manitoba, and finishing his grade 12 as a mature adult helped him to go into the electrical trades.

With many of the young Indigenous youth that I worked with, I watched them be able to finish their mature grade 12 to go into carpentry, electrical, plumbing, not only here in southern Manitoba but to bring back that expertise to their community in northern Manitoba.

So education is the great equalizer, and it seems to me, deputy—Honourable Deputy Assistant Speaker, that our goal as a government, our goal as a society, is to help everyone reach an equal status.

Another thing that comes to mind in regards to equality is the role that education for adults has in our economy. I think all Manitobans want our economy to be a striving economy, and in order to reach a striving economy or to have a robust and striving economy, there are some key metrics that I think this act speaks to.

When we have young adults facing homelessness, poverty, food security issues, that doesn't put them in a position to reach the dream of being able to provide for their family, provide for their community, provide for their children. So having a robust adult literacy system, programs, et cetera, helps newcomers, Indigenous youth, young men and women get to where they want to be in society.

I think lately we've been speaking a lot about Louis Riel and his dream, about having a society

which includes everyone, where no one is left behind. And I think that this law on adult literacy, Bill 5, speaks to the fact that every young adult or any adult in Manitoba should have the chance to finish their grade 12, move on to a better paying job, move on to post-secondary education.

Coming back to my grandfather, Victor Beaudry, from Vassar-South Junction, he never finished more than his grade 8, and I always wonder what my grandfather could have accomplished had he finished his grade 12. But that was the dream that he kept for his children.

And my mother, Lucienne Loiselle née Beaudry, taught for 40 years, and taught at all levels, just like myself. I followed in her footsteps.

And it's important to recognize that when everybody has a chance to finish their mature grade 12 through what I believe should be a robust adult education system, then everyone has the chance to achieve that dream that should be accessible to all Manitobans, whether they be from northern Manitoba, southern Manitoba, urban regions. Everyone has—should have—the chance to do well in a proper—prosperous Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Assistant Speaker. Merci. Miigwech.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): It's a privilege and an honour to rise and put a few brief comments about this very important topic. I've been hearing my colleagues, all afternoon, talk about this important issue and I don't want to repeat a lot of their wise words and their insights. And it was a pleasure to be in the room to hear it.

But what's really interesting, what's really telling, is what's not being said. I—all afternoon, our colleagues on the opposition benches have had nothing to say; nothing to say on one of the most important subject areas that we've—dealing with here since we've returned back to this Legislature.

This is foundational. This is about the dignity of our fellow Manitobans to be able to fully participate in our society and have the tools to not only function in our economy, but also in our larger community in our democracy.

Not everybody—unlike our opposition friends—live a privileged life. Not everybody gets the kind of opportunities that they do and often have a circular path towards success. And, oftentimes, they need a little help, and they need these type of programs to

give them those opportunities to make them and their family successful.

And, you know, my friends on the opposition bench may think, well, you know, doesn't affect me, so what do I care.

Well, we should all care, because not only do we want all Manitobans—succeed, and this is, you know, the whole focus of this new government is that we are united as Manitobans. We're as—only as strong as our weakest member and that we rise and fall together as a province. And that means that those who may be struggling, those that may need—may be vulnerable, those that may need assistance, we have a duty, as a province, to be there for them, and this legislation is a foundational part of that response.

And I've been doing a lot of work lately on issues with Ukrainian newcomers and refugees from the war, and it ties in very much to what's being talked about today and this Adult Literacy Act. And I'll get into it a little bit more, but I think, for the purposes of the record, maybe for some of the newer opposition MLAs, they may not understand the history here.

We had an adult literacy act in Manitoba for years from previous NDP governments, and in 2021, the previous PC government repealed it. They repealed it, and instead of trying to justify, on some policy grounds, about why Manitoba didn't need an adult literacy act, they basically said that it was red tape.

Can you imagine the tools that people need to succeed, taking it away from people, and saying, well, it's red tape.

Well, that's what they did. And, of course, we're concerned, and we were then, and we are now, that the reason they repealed this important act, because they didn't want to report to the public, to the Manitobans, on their absolute lack of progress on improving adult literacy rates.

So, they didn't want an act because the data was just so incredibly bad. It's clear that the PCs didn't treat adult literacy like a priority. There were 741 fewer adults in Manitoba enrolled in literacy and numeracy programs last year compared to when they originally took office in 2016.

And just to give you some comparison, in 2016-2017 year, there was 1,991 Manitobans enrolled in adult literacy programs. By last year, that had fallen to 1,250 people. That's 741 Manitobans that were not given the skills that they needed to succeed. That is 741 Manitoba families that was being held back

from being successful in our province from this former PC government.

So, Manitobans deserve better, and they're getting better. Our capable minister is bringing this legislation forward to make sure that every adult who needs literacy and numeracy education gets the programming they need and gets those good, family-supporting jobs.

* (16:20)

And, of course, there is much work to be done, given seven years of mean-spirited cuts. There is a lack of access for people who want to pursue adult education, especially in rural and northern locations. And, of course, this is also clear when we're talking about newcomers and their lack of access to adult literacy programming.

And just to give some sense about how little the previous government invested in people and in this program, in the early 2010s, the government was spending about \$19.2 million for adult learning centres and adult literacy programs. When the former PC government had taken over, they were still spending \$19.9 million. So after, you know, more than 10 years with funding basically frozen, again we've, in fairness to my friends on the opposition benches, they do seem to have some issues with math, and we've seen that with the budget and that's all sort of coming out now.

So I shouldn't assume that they understand how inflation works, because they certainly had no programs to alleviate the pain of Manitobans facing inflation and they certainly didn't calculate inflation in their economic forecasts, so, unfortunately, it appears to be a blind spot for my friends. But to, you know, cut to the chase, after 10 years with frozen funding—*[interjection]* That was a cut. That was a cut.

So now, while the number of adults in education dropped under this former government, it wasn't a lack of demand. In fact, adult educators have found themselves swamped with people wanting to join, but they have to turn people away. Can you imagine? Something critical, they need these tools. They're reaching out for help. They find an agency that has the skill and the staff and the ability to help them, and under the former PC government, they got a no. Go elsewhere.

And, again, it just doesn't hurt that person. It doesn't just hurt their family. It doesn't just entrench, you know, generational poverty. It ends up costing Manitobans, right? We lose the talents of that

individual. If you give them the skills and the training and the opportunity, they will shine. And they will contribute to Manitoba, and they will pull their families out of poverty, and you will see the next generation do better, and the next, and the next, and the next, and the history of poverty in that family will be of a distant memory.

So it's self-defeating. When we invest in Manitobans, we all succeed. We all benefit.

So now, I'll return to the Ukrainian newcomer situation in Manitoba, because it is directly tied to these adult literacy programs. So, as everyone knows here, there was an invasion almost two years ago, in February of 2022. And, as a result, Manitoba had an unprecedented influx of Ukrainian newcomers fleeing the war.

The latest count is somewhere around 25,000 newcomers have come to Manitoba. That is unprecedented. That's like World War II numbers of immigration in an 18-month period. And they're attracted to Manitoba for lots of reasons. We have a very large Ukrainian population here who can address their needs in heritage language and have some, you know, cultural competency and family ties, and have taken them in and supported them.

We also have a cheaper cost of living here than other centres, and that's been attracting them to come to Manitoba. And what I've been told—and I think we can all be proud of this—I think we are the third most desired location for Ukrainian newcomers coming to Canada. I think the Edmonton area and the Greater Toronto Area are the only two other locations that have attracted a higher percentage.

So we have about 3 per cent of our population of Canada, we've attracted 17 per cent of the newcomers who have come to Canada. And they're projecting that another 7,000 are coming to Manitoba before March of 2024. That's incredible—32,000 newcomers coming to the province of Manitoba within two years, on top of the normal 10,000 or so newcomers that we—10,000 to 20,000 newcomers we get every year.

So that's the good part. The challenging part is that, because this is an unusual circumstance, they're not going through normal immigration channels, whereas if you would normally come to Manitoba, you would have to have a certain level of English proficiency to even be accepted to come to the province. So, many of these newcomers—and we welcome them all—but many are fleeing a war, and they may not have any, or little, English proficiency.

And unlike other, sort of, newcomers who are coming to Manitoba, they're not coming as full family units. What we're seeing is 30 per cent of the newcomers are children. They are mostly single-female-led households. The male partner in these family units are back in Ukraine, part of the war effort, and, in fact, many of them are not even legally allowed to leave Ukraine right now, because they are needed to fight the war. So you have single-parent households with lots of children here with the parent being unable to speak functional English and now has to financially support and provide for their family.

And so I think everybody in the Chamber can see where this is going. And so one of the biggest barriers for us successfully integrating these 32,000 Ukrainians into Manitoba is language, is learning English. And there are some programs set up for adult literacy, but there needs to be more.

It takes six or seven months to get, sort of, tested to see where your English level is at and, once you do that, then you can enter into a federal-government-paid program where you can start taking English language training. That is an incredible amount of time to go by when you need language skills today.

So, by having an act like this, by putting resources into this type of area, this government is being forward-thinking. And not only is it going to pull a lot of families out of poverty; it will grow the Manitoba economy, because if you don't have the skills, you won't be able to participate fully in Manitoba's economy.

And what the other profile of all these newcomers is that they are incredibly highly educated. We have doctors, nurses, lawyers, professors, businesspeople. There is a significant overpopulation of university-educated professionals who have come to Manitoba through this wave.

The Speaker in the Chair

We are short medical professionals in Manitoba. We are short doctors and nurses and other health-care providers, and we have this gift—and it is a gift—this pool of newcomers who can do the job but for their skills in English.

So, by having a robust adult literacy program, we will be able to integrate them quicker into Manitoba society, and they will be able to not only staff, sort of, low-skill jobs; they will actually be able to staff high-skill jobs that are in demand where we have gaps in our workforce.

* (16:30)

And so adult literacy doesn't cost Manitoba; it pays Manitoba. It is an investment for our province, and the more money we put into it, the more money we will see come out of it. And it will end up paying for itself many times over, and it is a tool for economic development here in Manitoba.

And I would hope that this new version of the PC party would begin to start valuing education—all forms of education. I mean, we had a government previously that cut public schools for seven straight years. I mean, who does that, right?

We had them cut funding to post-secondary education, which is a huge driver for immigration in Manitoba because people come to Manitoba to come to our excellent post-secondary, you know, schools and education, but they're not going to come here if they are severely underfunded.

So, thankfully, the wisdom of Manitobans in this most recent election, they've chose a brighter future; they've chosen a Manitoba that views inclusion and diversity as a good thing, and a government that isn't going to chase people away, will, in fact, are going to welcome them with open arms and give them the tools and the skills that they need to not only be welcome here, but to be successful here and to build a life here and have the opportunity to succeed. And this legislation is very much a part of that.

So, and again, you know, I think there's still doubters on the opposition bench. I don't think I've convinced them all. There's the member from Riding Mountain; he looks like he's wavering, he could go either way. So I'm going to give him some facts, right, because I think I can get him. I think I got 12 minutes and 17 seconds. I think I can get the member from Riding Mountain to get on board.

So, there was a study from the mid-2010 in Manitoba that demonstrated that almost 200,000 Manitobans over the age of 18 had literacy levels that were so low that they had extreme difficulty functioning in society.

So, adult education is important, giving people the tools that they need to lift themselves out of poverty, and investing in adult education—see, now, I have the attention for the member from Riding Mountain. He's all ears—he's all ears, so—*[interjection]*—yes, he's open to being convinced. That's what I like about him. So let me try.

So investing in adult education just makes sense. It helps reduce poverty and allows Manitobans to pursue opportunities they otherwise might not have. And when Manitobans improve their literacy skills, that can allow them to get better paying jobs and, in turn, that can help Manitobans stop collecting employment insurance which saves money. And we all know the member from Riding Mountain likes to save money. Well, he's giving me the thumbs up, so we're almost there.

So these savings can then be invested further into adult literacy programs or other key areas, such as health care, education, economic development and much more.

Now, adult education is important also to further reconciliation, and using the words of Justice Murray Sinclair, education got us into this mess and education will get us out of it.

So, sadly, the legacy in Canada is education has been used as a weapon. You know, obviously, the most famous or serious or troubling case was how it was used against the Indigenous community in the form of residential schools and how many of the problems that we struggle with as Manitobans, as Canadians, can trace back their origins to that policy.

But education has also been used as a weapon against other communities, including my own. When Ukrainian newcomers came to Canada, they were forbidden to speak their own language in a public school, and if Ukrainian students spoke Ukrainian in a Manitoba public school, they would get strapped or have their mouth washed out with soap, or they basically would be abused by their teacher.

In fact, it got worse. One of the things that Manitoba did early in its history was actually did allow for the teaching of Ukrainian in Manitoba public schools until the Manitoba Liberal Party got elected in 1916, and they ran on a platform to get rid of Ukrainian in Manitoba public schools.

And this was a time when they would burn Ukrainian school books on the grounds—these very grounds of this Legislature—because the hatred towards Ukrainians were so great, And, sadly, for all of us in this Chamber, Manitoba Liberals did win that 1916 election and they did keep their hateful promise and they banned the teaching of Ukrainian in Manitoba public schools, and it was not legal to teach Ukrainian in Manitoba public schools until the late 1960s.

So, again, something that we would all find abhorrent today is something, again, we can't take for granted. So education should never, ever be used as a tool of oppression or a tool of violence and, in fact, it has been in our past and for—as all legislatures, to make things right with all Manitobans, it's our opportunity now to use that same education as a tool of liberation and a tool of enlightenment and a tool of opportunity for Manitobans.

So, with those very brief comments—

Some Honourable Members: More.

Mr. Wasyliw: Thank you.

Then with that—oh—Honourable Speaker, I will conclude my remarks.

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière): I have the pleasure to get up and speak to Bill 5. Before I came here, as some of you, most of you, have probably heard, I was an educator. I worked with Seven Oaks School Division in their program called Wayfinders.

So I—so when I started there, maybe I was bright eyed and bushy tailed. I was working to increase graduation rates, and I slowly learned how complicated young people's lives are and the different systems that they interact with, the different systems their families interact with and the barriers that so many people face to education.

One of the groups that I really want to talk about, that I don't think we've actually talked about yet, are kids in care. So many kids in care face barriers to the education system. I've heard the figure that for every placement change a young person faces, they ultimately lose a year of school.

So when you think about it, high school student changes homes, changes school divisions in November. They're getting placed into new schools, new communities, trying to get a sense of where they're at academically and then they're redoing math again because the teachers don't have access to the proper supports to ensure that students are able to move along within the education system.

So kids in care graduate at a rate about one in every three. So adult education and adult literacy is a super-important piece of addressing our broken childwelfare system and ensuring that people who age and experience the child-welfare system when they age out, there are academic and educational supports in place to ensure that they can find success in their academics but also in life, in employment, in raising their families.

So my work in Wayfinders, I had the opportunity to actually cohabitate with an adult learning centre as well as immigrant services. So we had this building that had young people engaging in academics, in education, learning in an after-school setting where maybe their parents were accessing English language classes in the evening. Maybe they were doing training programs. And then students who maybe took that extra year to graduate could finish off at the adult learning centre, so they could still have those important relationships in place to help them—to help ensure that they felt connected to their learning, felt connected to the education system so that they could continue learning into their adulthood.

* (16:40)

And I think that's one of the big lessons I learned in my work at Wayfinders, is that success looks different for everyone, and that four-year high-school experience is not as common as many of us like to think. And there's nothing wrong with that.

There's nothing wrong with taking an extra year or two and having a five- or six-year high-school experience, or taking a break and then coming back when it actually works for you. Because like I was saying, people's lives are complicated, whether it's dealing with immigration, whether it's navigating the child welfare system, whether it's just a change in community.

It's difficult for young people to stay, in quotes, on track with their education. So there's just so many supports and pieces to ensuring that people have academic success, and adult literacy is such an important and vital piece of that.

So Bill 5 is a wonderful bill. It ensures that there's going to be access to literacy, and I think we have to think about literacy in an expansive way. Because there is the reading, there is the writing. But then there's also the, like, critical-thinking piece of it, which I know some educators would just say that's called thinking. It's not critical thinking, it's just thinking.

But there's a piece to that that's actually learned through literacy, and so when we're thinking about thinking, it impacts every aspect of our lives, and in this age of misinformation it's even more important for young people, for young adults, for people of all ages to be able to critically consider what's being put in front of them and make sense of the world.

And, really, that's what education's all about. It's about making sense of the world and making choices.

And so ensuring people have the skills necessary to make those choices in an informed way is an important role we can play in ensuring that they have those supports.

And so one of the groups that I worked a lot with in my time with Seven Oaks were newcomers and refugees to Canada. And I actually spent a—quite a bit of time during my master's program speaking to the tensions that exist, and the expectations on youth who are coming to Canada at kind of an older teen age, and the expectations on education, but also in contributing to their family, and the lack of supports in place for people in that age bracket, where they're trying to learn English, possibly, or they also have to contribute to their family's finances. Or there's also child-care expectations.

And so all of these pieces lead to school and education and literacy being a priority, but one among many. And so expecting, say, a student coming from Iraq, Ukraine, Afghanistan, to really pick up our education system and find success in—at the age of 17, 18, is really an unrealistic expectation we're putting out there.

And so ensuring that there's those adult opportunities for learning is vital for people from that community, or, from those communities in—with those experiences.

And on the campaign trail, I'm sure I'm not unique in this: you would door knock. You would knock on doors. You would try and connect with your community. And you never knew what was on the other side of the door. People were coming with all kinds of experiences, and many people, at least in my community, didn't necessarily speak English.

And so you're there trying to build a bridge with folks, and sometimes it would be a younger person who was brought into the conversation to help translate. And that is such a skill set that young people have when they're helping interpret for their family. But it's also a burden for young people, and an expectation that their family puts on them, because they need to be able to build that bridge between the home, the family and the rest of the community.

So whenever possible, when I could build that bridge, when I could present some information in a different language, the relief and the joy that I would see on people's faces that I was willing and able to build that bridge through offering of materials in different languages, it just underlined for me how much work English speakers need to take on as

individuals. But us in government, we have an opportunity here with Bill 5 to really lean into literacy for adults and ensuring everyone has access to literacy, whether it's English speakers or non-English speakers.

Because being able to navigate the world, as I said earlier, making choices—making informed choices—is important. And we, as a government, have an opportunity here to ensure people have access to making those informed choices.

And so I mentioned—you know what, I did not mention. All the educators in the room will know the words Circle of Courage and the important tool and framework Circle of Courage plays in our work with young people, but just also in education, generally. So the Circle of Courage number—not No. 1, but one of the quadrants—is belonging. And belonging is really difficult if there isn't that general sense of literacy and being able to engage in the documents in front of you, with the material in front of you, being able to engage in a meaningful way with the people around you.

So, belonging is great, but as my member—or, as my friend from Seine River is reminding me, mastery is also a part of the Circle of Courage. So, mastery could not speak more to the idea of adult literacy, other than the other quadrant, independence. So, mastery, independence, both incredibly important in—when we're thinking about literacy and ensuring that people are able to master their environment, have the skills in place to ensure that they have the skills to navigate and contribute to their communities.

But then also feel that sense of independence that an inability to feel literate, to feel like you have a handle on your situation, is really, really difficult—and something, fortunately, I've rarely experienced, but I know this is commonplace for many folks. So that idea of needing to have the skills, have the supports, have the programs available to ensure that we feel competent, masterful and, with that mastery, be in a spot of independence, is important and we should all have that opportunity.

And the last quadrant of the Circle of Courage, arguably my favourite, is generosity. And you're in a better spot to contribute to your community, to volunteer, to make impact in your neighbourhood when you have a full sense of your capabilities. And, like, literacy is a foundational piece of feeling competent, ensuring that you can navigate the world and make those informed choices.

Choices are so important, and, like my friend from Seine River just said, limited. One thing I've

learned over the past few years is we can sometimes move into situations and have an expectation that everyone had the same set of choices in front of them. And that's something I've had to take a step back from and realize that people grow up in different contexts, have different perspectives, and the choices that I see as obvious aren't as obvious and present for everyone.

And so I think, getting back to what the Minister of Education was saying, about how literacy is actually part of addressing poverty and crime, is an important piece for us not to forget. That ensuring that people have access to different choices, education, opportunities for success, will lead to changes in people's choices, habits and opportunities, and create safer communities that I think we all want to be a part of.

* (16:50)

And so sharing that space with the adult learning centre, I met so many qualified, wonderful educators. Fran Taylor and Jim Silver, their names have been mentioned quite a bit. Fran Taylor, actually, was the director of the education centre that I was connected to. And the team of adult educators in place to support learners that were coming back to the education system at a mature stage was second to none. And it really addressed some of that redoing of classwork; of course, work that I was talking about for kids in care who were maybe changing placements earlier in life.

Educators working with adults are in a spot to really value the lived experience and the experience that people have within the education system, but then also in other aspects of their life. So they're meeting learners at a point of really meeting them where they're at.

And so they are the most wonderful, and I just will have to thank Fran and Jim Silver, who actually was the head of the department I graduated from, so I have a soft spot for Jim Silver and all of the work he does in poverty, in education, but also specifically in adult education.

And so sharing a space with that adult learning centre, I got to be a part of some of their graduation celebrations. And so I had students that were maybe on a six, seven, eight-year graduation plan, participating, volunteering at graduation celebrations and seeing the level of love and commitment and joy that existed, not only within the adult learning community, but then also the families that joined the celebration, the young ones, the parents who'd been supporting

their kids getting to the finish line of their high school graduation.

And so I was always—I always attended a lot of convocations. Convocation season is a marathon for educators, sometimes. But the adult learning centre grad is always the most fun, joyful, and celebratory, because it's really marking adults' perseverance at coming back to school, and I think that's a really important thing.

When we talk about the Circle of Courage, coming back to school and acknowledging that there's still things to learn and that we should embrace, and I think our government embraces the idea of lifelong learning and ensuring people have access to learning at all ages of life, whether it's adult literacy that we're talking about right now, or child care, which is an early childhood education, because I think those two are intertwined. Ensuring access to both is important for families.

And so I just want to finish off with the one graduation I will never forget from the adult learning centre, was when we celebrated—I'm not going to give away her age—she was older, but she was a residential school survivor, and she had come in and out of the adult education program many times over, I'd say, about a decade. And then we were all there to celebrate her and celebrate her accomplishments, celebrate her perseverance in recognizing the value of education, embracing the idea of learning, and also being there to celebrate her at this moment of her life.

And so I just want to say thank you and I appreciate supporting Bill 5.

And I think I'll talk a little bit more about—*[interjection]*—thank you, thank you, Minister. Okay, so I think I'm going to talk a little bit more about literacy, and the real joy I see in supporting people continuing in their learning journey, whether it's—like, when I started with students at the age of 13, grade 9, or seeing them 20, 21 connecting with me even as they're going to university.

I'll share one story of a young man who's really close to my heart who never finished high school but he's looking to re-engage, and it was because of the relationships that he formed with the school system, with the educators, and the trust that was embedded in those relationships, he, being in Toronto, wanted to figure out a way to engage with the school over here in Manitoba. And so I think I can't underline enough how adult literacy and adult education is really that. It's education, it's learning, it's literacy, but it's also

relationships, and it's also helping people navigate life.

And as much as I said youth have complicated lives, I was on the phone with an adult educator—or, a director of an adult education program just last week helping her student navigate not having enough money for rent. So as much as youth lives are complicated, we see that adult educators are just as engaged as, say, elementary or high school educators in helping their students find success, whether it's that—those core academics, that literacy, or life, whether it's rent, whether it's housing, whether it's child care.

Like I said, child care and access to adult education is so intertwined, and I actually often saw my students who were going through adult education engaging in trades, like early—like ECE, and like being interested in furthering their education because they were doing their high school credits at a more mature state of their life, and so they were in a spot to really consider what's next where. I don't know about others in the room; at 17, I was not prepared to make those types of decisions. So actually having the opportunity to keep engaged in education at a later point in life is really important and opens up doors for everyone, and that's why I'm so excited for Bill 5.

Thank you so much.

The Speaker: The member from—one second—Spruce Woods.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I just wanted to put a few words on the record about this bill. I—first

we'd like to thank the Minister for Advanced Education and the member for Southdale (MLA Cable) for bringing this forward. It certainly is a very important topic and one that warrants lengthy discussion, shall we say, in this Chamber.

Just before I get into my comments I would note yesterday the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine), in her lengthy comments on this bill, complimented all the educators in the Chamber here, but the member for St. Johns missed one, and it happens to be the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko). So I just wanted to make sure that that was on the record, that the member for Lac du Bonnet had a long career in education and a very successful career as minister of Advanced Education and then minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, and we thank him for his work on those significant topics.

In respect to bill—the bill, we see that there's a number of holes and a number of questions that we're just wondering whether it is intentionally left by the government or whether this was just a bit rushed to try and get something on their legislative agenda for this fall session. And one of the questions we have is—it's talking about funding; it's mentioned a number of times—

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is next before the House, the honourable member for Spruce Woods will have 28 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Manitoba Critical Mineral Strategy	
		Wharton	370
		Moses	371
Bill 6—The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act		School Construction Projects	
Fontaine	363	Ewasko	371
		Naylor	372
		Altomare	372
Committee Reports		Provincial Financial Forecast	
Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development		Cook	372
Second Report		Sala	373
Cross	363	Selkirk Region Bridge Replacement	
		Perchotte	373
		Naylor	373
Tabling of Reports		Home-Care Services	
Fontaine	364	Lamoureux	374
Lindsey	364	Kinew	374
Ministerial Statements		Personal-Care Home Residents	
International Volunteer Day		Lamoureux	374
Fontaine	364	Asagwara	374
Stone	364	Seniors Hearing Aid Program	
Lamoureux	365	Lamoureux	375
		Asagwara	375
Members' Statements		Collection of the Carbon Tax	
John Morrisette		Moroz	375
Smith	366	Sala	375
Coleen Voth and Colleen Mourant		Fire Along Highway 311	
Hiebert	366	Narth	375
		Naylor	376
John Hindle		Highway 201	
Moses	367	Narth	376
		Naylor	376
The Bridge		Highway and Road Upgrades	
Goertzen	368	Narth	376
		Naylor	376
West Broadway Shooting		Education Property Tax Rebate	
Naylor	368	Guenter	376
		Sala	376
		Kinew	377
Oral Questions		Petitions	
Carbon Tax on Home Heating Bills		Personal Health Information	
Stefanson	369	Schuler	377
Kinew	369		
Provincial Financial Forecast			
Nesbitt	370		
Kinew	370		

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Debate on Second Readings

Bill 5—The Adult Literacy Act

Fontaine	378
Moyes	378
Moses	381
Altomare	386
Marcelino	390
Loiselle	391
Wasyliw	394
Blashko	398
Jackson	401

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