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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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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

Thursday, December 7, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Orders of the day. Please be seated.

Orders of the day, government business—

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: And I would indicate that the 90 minutes' prior notification has been given.

International Human Rights Day

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): December 10th is International Human Rights Day, which is a day to reaffirm each person's fundamental rights, including the right to equality, life, liberty and security. Observed internationally, this year's commemorative day will mark the 75th anniversary of the UN General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In recognition of this important anniversary, this year's theme is Freedom, Equality, and Justice for All.

Justice for all calls to attention how the concept of rights has historically excluded many diverse groups whose rights as ethnic, national, racial and gender-diverse folks were neglected or whose disability or sexual orientation were suppressed. We acknowledge that without constant collaboration and hard work from front-line pioneers, community resource organizations, advocacy groups and NGOs, human rights would not have had the international, foundational and far-reaching power that it does today.

As a government, we are proud of our commitment to advancing human rights so that Manitoba becomes an even more welcoming and safe place for everyone to call home. We will continue working with communities in Manitoba to inform us on how to best uphold the inherent human rights all Manitobans have, regardless of race, age, gender, religion, ability and sexual orientation.

I encourage all members in this House and all Manitobans to consider the importance of human

rights in our country, our great province and our constituencies.

As well, I would also encourage all Manitobans to take advantage of free admission and in-gallery programming at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights this Sunday.

Thank you.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Today I rise to celebrate the United Nations Human Rights Day, which takes place annually on December 10.

This year is particularly special because the Universal Declaration of Human Rights celebrates its 75th anniversary. The declaration of human rights is one of the world's most groundbreaking pledges, which enshrines the inalienable rights that everybody is entitled to as a human being, regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations assembly in Paris on December 10th of 1948 and set out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected. The declaration is also the most translated document in the entire world, as it is available in more than 500 languages.

Each year, the United Nations sets a theme that everyone around the world can rally behind. This year's theme is Freedom, Equality and Justice for All. Manitoba has already taken steps that showcases our support for the commitment to this theme.

In December of 2013, the Manitoba government passed the accessibility act, a landmark piece of legislation that provides a proactive process to remove barriers affecting persons with disabilities and many other citizens. Manitobans hope to achieve even more progress in accessibility and overall inclusion for everybody in the near future.

Furthermore, enshrined in our 1982 constitution is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which was modelled after the UN declaration of human rights. Within the country, Manitobans lead by example as we have our very own—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

The Speaker: Does the member have leave to finish his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Narth: The 1982 constitution in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms models after the UN declaration of human rights. Within the country, Manitobans lead by example as we have our own—very own Human Rights Code. It protects individuals and groups in Manitoba from discrimination in areas such as employment, housing and services available for the public, and is administered by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

I know that there are still many people globally that face oppression from their own government and are discriminated against by their fellow citizens, which is why I'm truly grateful to live in such a wonderful country and province, which stands up for human rights and the democratic process. I thank the minister opposite for bringing forth such an important topic of discussion into the House today and I encourage all Manitobans to celebrate this great province and country that we live in.

I can only hope that one day all countries will be free, as well, and that they, too, will sign onto the UN's declaration.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

The Speaker: Does the honourable member from Tyndall Park have leave to respond? *[Agreed]*

MLA Lamoureux: On December 10, people all over the world stand up for equity, justice and human dignity by recognizing Human Rights Day.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948, in the aftermath of the Second World War and the atrocities committed during that time, and ongoing colonialism in many countries.

Article 1 states all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Honourable Speaker, days like Human Rights Day remind us of many individuals in our everyday lives whose rights and existence seem continually up to debate in our laws, policies and the court of public opinion. Further, there are those who weaponize their freedom of speech against Indigenous

people, 2SLGBTQ+ people, women, religions, immigrants, those who live in poverty and/or are experiencing homelessness.

Honourable Speaker, these are rights such as equal protection under the law, no attack on individual honour and reputation, the right to work, the right to equal pay, a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services and social protection for children. All of these fall under our jurisdiction as legislators in Manitoba, and are often debated in this very House.

I believe a key to understanding all of these, and all human rights, is through education. I want to commend Manitoba educators for their role they have to play.

And we must do our part too. We need to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all of those in our world. A common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for every person.

So today, in advance of Human Rights Day on December 10, I encourage people to read the UN declaration, and I thank the minister for bringing forward the statement.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we move on to members' statements, I'd like to do some introductions.

Joining us in the loge to my right is the former member for Wolseley, Jean Friesen. She was also the former deputy premier, and she is here as the guest of the honourable member from Kildonan-River East.

* (13:40)

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you.

Further, we have seated in the public gallery, from Calvin Christian Collegiate, 48 grade 9 students under the direction of Brittany Ziolkoski. The group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Transcona, the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Altomare).

Further, we have in the public gallery several members from the Winnipeg Child and Family Services, and they are here as guests of the honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine).

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Capstone Program

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to rise to lift up high school students from the prestigious Advanced Placement Capstone program at Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute, located in my constituency.

AP Capstone is a two-year program that consists of two courses: AP Seminar and AP Research. The Capstone program puts kids in the driver's seat. During the program, they author 5,000-word academic papers and conduct original research.

In the gallery, we have Rashmigaa, who is analyzing micronutrient uptake in crops based on the kind of soil management used.

There's Isis, who is analyzing charts of elderly Manitoba patients with leukemia to determine the ongoing effectiveness of treatment outside of clinical trials.

Kathleen is exploring how dichromatic vision in dogs at the Winnipeg Humane Society affects their behaviour and adoption rates.

L.J. aspires to become an early childhood educator and is exploring subsets of play-based learning in nursery classrooms in Winnipeg.

Angel is analyzing spore production on wetland soil, and Jimmy is studying antibacterial and antifungal properties.

Agatha is extracting dyes from Indigenous plants to use in her art.

And Timmy aspires to be a dentist and is using ion chromatography to measure how filtration systems remove fluoride from our drinking water.

The list of projects this year are impressive and go on and on. I can't mention them all.

Last year at grad, I met Quynh, an international student whose Capstone project involved air-quality assessments over her summer holidays. She won the prestigious Pearson scholarship worth \$325,000.

Honourable Speaker, I invite everyone to join me in congratulating these students and their teacher, Benjamin Paul, and all participants of DMCI's Capstone program for their incredible achievements.

Thank you.

Linden Woods Holiday Celebrations

MLA Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Honourable Speaker, things are normally quite serious in the House, but as you can see by my attire, today's member statement is all about the festive season and all the fun and joy that brings.

Before we get started, on your desk you will see a candy cane. I found some from last year that you will see are still in their packaging. As you can see, they are all in mint condition. Just joking, I bought them fresh, but you can't eat them in the House.

Honourable Speaker, welcome to Linden Woods in the amazing riding of Fort Whyte, where the spirit of the holiday season comes alive in a magnificent display of lights and community.

Every year, this wonderful neighbourhood transform into a beacon of joy, drawing visitors from all across the city to experience the magic of holiday season in Fort Whyte.

Streets take on new names, such as Polar Bear Lane; penguin park; Nutcracker Lane; Candy Cane Lane; my favourite, North Pole bay; Gingerbread way; Reindeer run; Snowflake and Snowmen lane, amongst many other houses that are done up to the nines.

It's not just about the twinkling bulbs and dazzling decorations, it's about the spirit of togetherness that radiates from every corner in Linden Woods and Fort Whyte.

The hard work and dedication of our neighbours makes this spectacle possible. Countless hours are spent stringing lights, 'overing'-displays, adding music and those extra little touches that make our streets glow with festive charm.

It's a testament to the power of community, reminding us that, when we come together, we can create something truly magical.

So to every individual who contributed their time, creativity and enthusiasm, thank you so much.

To all those that celebrate holidays with their own faiths and family this month in their own special way, I wish you and your families a safe and happy holiday season.

Merry Christmas. Happy Hanukkah. Happy Kwanza. Happy Yule day. And last, but not least, happy Boxing Day. And if I missed anything else, I apologize.

To everyone else listening at home and to everyone in the House, happy—have a great holiday season and a happy New Year.

River Heights Hanukkah Celebrations

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): Honourable Speaker, I rise to highlight that, at sundown, the very vibrant Jewish community of Manitoba, many of whom call my constituency of River Heights home, will begin Hanukkah celebrations.

Hanukkah is one of the most widely observed of all Jewish holidays, offering eight days of light, joy and celebrations of family and, during which, Jewish families proudly display their lights in their windows. Also referred to as the festival of lights, Hanukkah offers—Hanukkah occurs during some of the coldest and darkest stretches of the year.

Importantly, it is an opportunity for members of the community to embrace their Jewish identity and traditions, and to feel a kinship with family, neighbours and friends; although the appeal of the latkes and sufganiyot—jelly donuts, for the uninitiated—can't be overstated.

Tonight, families will light the first candle on the menorah, with an additional candle being lit each night of the Hanukkah celebrations. While the festival light comes literally from the candles themselves, it also comes metaphorically from the emphasis on charitable works and a commitment to tikkun olam, a Jewish concept which refers to action to repair and improve the world.

In this time of uncertainty, with the alarming rise in anti-Semitism here in Manitoba and around the world, the holiday helps remind us of our obligations to each other and to the community as a whole. As our Jewish neighbours rededicate themselves to keeping alive the flame of faith and culture, let us all play our part in making our community more loving and understanding for all those who share it.

Now more than ever, every Hanukkah candle that is kindled illuminates the most important message of the season: that one must always find the light in the darkness, and together we must work to keep that light burning—

The Speaker: Order, please. *[interjection]* Order, please.

Tuxedo Hanukkah and Holiday Celebrations

Ms. Heather Stefanson (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to

have the opportunity to rise in the House today to bring seasons' greetings to my fellow MLAs and to all of our constituents.

Manitoba is well known for its myriad of cultures, and at this time of a year, we see the joy that comes from all the different celebrations taking place across this beautiful province of ours.

Tonight begins the celebration of Hanukkah. Hanukkah carries a universal message of the triumph of light over darkness and of freedom over oppression. I am looking forward to attending the menorah-lighting ceremony at the Jewish learning centre this weekend. Each year, this inspirational event brings the joy and awareness of the meaning of Hanukkah to the community. We know this will be a difficult Hanukkah this year, and our hearts and prayers go out to the entire Jewish community.

There are so many holiday events taking place over the next few weeks to highlight, but I'd like to take this opportunity to mention two notables directly within the Tuxedo constituency.

Assiniboine Park's celebration at the Leaf is open until January 7. This is a venue where families can enjoy festive displays that celebrate the rich tapestry of traditions, customs and festivities from around the world.

Another showstopper is Zoo Lights, open until January 7, featuring a winter wonderland of stunning light displays, tasty treats, endless happiness and good cheer.

I would like to encourage everyone to help bring joy to those less fortunate by donating to and/or volunteering for any of the numerous charitable organizations which work tirelessly to ensure that everyone has a wonderful holiday season. Every act of kindness goes a long way.

From my house to yours, I wish you a very merry Christmas and happy holidays and the happy—and all the peace and happiness this holiday season.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

* (13:50)

Lack of Affordable Housing

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Manitobans are struggling to obtain affordable housing. I've heard from young couples in Fort Garry who can no longer afford a down payment on their first home due to increases in average home prices. I've heard from seniors who do not have the financial means

to afford a new home that allows them to age in place. International students are struggling to find affordable student housing, at times resulting in having to choose unsafe living conditions. People living with disabilities struggle to find appropriate and accessible housing opportunities in our province.

With the second fastest rent increases in the country, the fact of the matter is this: Manitoba is experiencing a housing crisis. People are being put in difficult situations where they're forced to choose between paying this month's rent or mortgage and putting food on the table. They are in a compromising position that force them to take on 'predatory' loans or mortgages with unaffordable interest rates to ensure that they have a roof over their head. Seniors and people living with disabilities are being robbed of their right to live with dignity by not having access to homes that fit their needs.

We need to seize upon this opportunity to increase the economic growth provided to Manitobans by immigrants who choose to pursue education in our province by improving the supply of safe and affordable housing. We have a responsibility to provide Manitobans with their basic necessities, and housing is just that, a basic necessity.

I look forward to this government prioritizing housing needs and creating a strategy to address the growing needs of Manitobans.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Financial Forecast Tax Increase Concerns

Ms. Heather Stefanson (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's time to put some facts on the record about the economic momentum in Manitoba after the NDP government has spent the better part of this week in the session abusing the truth. The Public Accounts and quarterly reports of the Province all show positive economic results delivered by our PC team.

A \$270-million surplus and key economic indicators were very positive in the recent report that came out.

So why does the NDP Premier want Manitobans to think things are so bleak? Is he doing this to try to justify future tax hikes?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, the members opposite should understand that economic growth is created by hard-working Manitobans who go to work each and every day. Our government supports them. They were making life harder.

Key point in evidence in support of this proposition is the fact that they ran up a \$1.6-billion deficit in their last days of office, which again, last days in office were on October 3, not at the end of July.

So, again, a \$1.6-billion deficit is a legacy that we are going to be working really hard to fix, and we encourage the members opposite to support our great plan to fix health care and make life more affordable.

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

Ms. Stefanson: It was our government that brought in affordability measures, like the largest tax break in the history of our province for those Manitobans who need it.

But again, there—all the indicators are showing that Manitoba is moving in the right direction. Weekly earnings were up 4.6 per cent, employment up 2.4 per cent; building permits were up 2.3 per cent; manufacturing was up 10.4 per cent, Honourable Speaker. These are numbers that are in the documents that—the audited documents by the Province of Manitoba.

So why does this Premier want to indicate that things are so bleak in Manitoba? Is he just trying to justify a future tax hike on the backs of hard-working Manitobans?

Mr. Kinew: Well, you know, it's the hard-working Manitobans out there going to work each and every day who are responsible for the good economic indicators that we see. But there was one very bleak element to the forecast up until October 2, and that was the PC government who were running up a \$1.6-billion deficit.

The good news is, our team has a plan to fix it. We are going to invest in health care and lower costs for your family along the way. But one economic indicator related to the \$1.6-billion deficit that they should keep in mind: Their caucus is down more than 50 per cent.

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order.

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

Ms. Stefanson: NDP junk math continues by the Leader of the Opposition.

We had the largest tax breaks in the history of our province to make life more affordable for Manitobans. That's what we did for Manitobans. And we also left this government with a \$270-million surplus. Those are the facts.

And when you look at key economic indicators, key economic indicators indicated in the second-quarter report: manufacturing was up over 10 per cent; farm cash receipts were up 11 per cent; exports were up 10 per cent; new vehicle sales were up 5 per cent.

So why is the Premier of Manitoba—why does he want to tell Manitobans that things are so bleak? Why is he fear mongering at this—on the eve of Christmas and holiday season? Is he just trying to justify—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: A \$1.6-billion deficit left to us by the PC administration is a serious problem. And next week, our team is going to be inviting journalists into a technical briefing, where they'll be able to ask any question that they want in order to confirm the fact that the PCs did leave us with a \$1.6-billion deficit.

Now, on another note, I do want to point out that it seems as though this may be one of the last times that we hear from the member for Tuxedo here in the Chamber, so I just want to take this opportunity to thank her for her service and, of course, to wish her well in whatever comes next.

Affordability Measures Carbon Tax vs. Fuel Tax

MLA Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Honourable Speaker, it simply amazes me that this NDP government will simply not answer any questions during question period.

If the NDP claim that affordability is one of their top priorities, can the Premier stand up and tell Manitobans why he and his team did not support the resolution this morning to remove the carbon tax on heating homes, when he said he would and when it is proven that removing the carbon tax will save Manitobans more money than the gas tax pause will?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): We didn't support the motion because what they're recommending is illegal.

MLA Khan: So I guess the Premier hasn't looked to what—see what Saskatchewan is doing next door. I guess they're breaking the law as well.

Actually, no, they're not. They're taking leadership. This Premier wants to talk about how great his gas tax pause is; well, let's do some math. The gas tax pause will cost the Province of Manitoba \$370 million and only save the average Manitoban \$125. But removing the carbon tax will save \$275.

Does the Premier think that sending money to his buddies in Ottawa is more important than fighting for affordability right here for Manitobans?

Mr. Kinew: I just want to point out that after campaigning on a fictitious legal opinion, Manitobans now see that the PCs' entire position on this is merely a house of cards.

We've advanced the legal opinion created by the experts here in our province, and it's very clear that what the PCs are recommending is wrong.

Case in point, further errors in their economic approach: a \$1.6-billion deficit.

So I'd ask the member for Fort Whyte: Why did he contribute to that \$1.6-billion deficit and only add to the challenges that our team is now hard at work on repairing?

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

* (14:00)

Carbon Tax vs. Fuel Tax Savings

MLA Khan: So, the simple answer is this Premier lacks leadership and courage to do the right thing for Manitobans; noted.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Sala) and Premier, and his entire team deeply confuse everyone in this province.

We stayed late into the night discussing the bill for the gas tax pause, and they said they won't take any of the amendments. Later the next day, they added in all the amendments to the bill that we had asked for.

So, the only thing not reflected in that bill was propane usage. Why? Because the minister was worried that someone might heat their homes with it? They refuse to support affordability measures for all Manitobans.

Is it going to take three Christmas ghosts, showing up at the minister and Premier's houses, to show them what caring for Manitobans looks like?

Mr. Kinew: I have a document to table from the ghost of Christmas past for the member opposite.

What this document shows is that the \$50-million arts and culture fund that that member went around the province announcing was not included in last year's budget. In fact, the commitments that they sent out the door, it's now up to our team to try and figure out a plan to pay for it.

So, the question remains: How is it that the members opposite want to keep raising, over and over, day in, day out, their No. 1 political liability, which is that they left us with a \$1.6-billion deficit?

Education Property Tax Rebate Tax Relief for Agriculture Industry

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, Manitoba farmers can remember being burned by this NDP before. So, they don't trust this Premier and this NDP government. They were misled and they were the scapegoat, including this very own Minister of Agriculture, who fought against farmers.

Now they want reassurance that their property taxes will not dramatically increase, but they are not getting that assurance. And what they might hear, they know they cannot trust.

Why will this government not commit to long-term tax relief for our Manitoba farmers?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): It's my privilege to stand up, again, on behalf of the agriculture producers of the province of Manitoba.

We as a government are constantly working with the agriculture producers in this province of Manitoba, but obviously the members opposite tend to forget by bringing in a 300 per cent rent increase to Crown lands whilst in government—and they want to talk about affordability.

When we are—talk about being forward on talking about the importance of being truly transparent with the agriculture producers in our province of Manitoba, why is it that they chose not to have transparency in conversations with the Crown land representatives to make their life affordable—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Midland on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, I wonder why the Premier (Mr. Kinew) didn't answer my question.

Maybe it's because his team are not playing from the same playbook. The Minister of Education let slip a plan to keep the education property tax rebate for only one year.

So why are they saying different things to different audiences? Is this another flip-flip, or another broken promise that they just don't want to admit to Manitobans?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Not only did we see a challenge in the beef sector, we also see a number of other challenges.

When we talk about agriculture, it's a very key component, in the Parkland area, as well, throughout the province, but we talk about rural economic development.

And we tend to forget—and let me just remind members opposite: the Justice Minister showed up in Dauphin, Manitoba, made a sudden announcement of the jail closure that took out 80 people's jobs—almost close to \$10 million in the Parkland region and the rural economic development.

I ask the members opposite: Do you feel comfortable of being sincere by making that statement that you were conscientious for the betterment of the rural economic development in our province of Manitoba, and working for everybody else?

The Speaker: The minister's time is expired.

The honourable member for Midland on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: Our farmers are the economic engine that powers our economy, the economic horse, if you will. But one thing horses don't like: when things get in their way.

So, will this government stand out of the way of our farmers and commit to the education property tax rebate until a new fair funding model is in place?

Why does this minister refuse to take this basic, necessary step for our farmers?

Mr. Kostyshyn: It's my privilege to stand here in front and talk to members opposite. My 40 years of being a livestock producer and grain producer in the province of Manitoba was not the most financial reward in life. But it's a fact of life that you get comfortable with and you do it for the betterment.

But also in the fact that as the member opposite is talking about taxation and opportunity, I question them: Why did the previous government choose to close 20 MASC offices throughout the province of Manitoba?

When we talk about the fact of rural economic development and working with the people of our important—and they're the ones also who bring in a large amount of dollars into our province, where we are 9 per cent GDP. The agricultural producers—

The Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Education Property Tax Rebate Exemption for Homes and Farms

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Manitobans are worried, in fact, they're scared, that this Finance Minister and Premier (Mr. Kinew) are going to introduce austerity and cancel the education property tax rebate. Farmers, seniors and small businesses have been paying more than their fair share of education property taxes for decades. And they deserve a break and helping with rising costs and inflation.

Will the Minister of Agriculture stand up for farmers that have been paying 11 per cent of all the education taxes in the province and tell his Finance Minister that he could keep the rebates and phase out this antiquated system of education property tax?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): It's definitely my honour to stand up, as I indicated earlier, to stand up for the benefit of agriculture in the province of Manitoba. So let me be—this last week, we were at the AMM convention and we got a chance to talk to a number of agriculture producers at the event. And I've spent seven years on the AMM board of directors, and I want to talk about the importance of the ICIP project that was a joint partnership, that was with the federal government.

And I wonder if the members opposite could tell us that they take full advantage of the ICIP project about infrastructure and helping out the rural—

The Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

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

MLA Bereza: All of the Minister of Agriculture needs to do is tell the Finance Minister that he needs to stay on the path of eliminating education property tax on family homes and food production. Grocery prices are going through the roof.

Will the Agriculture Minister help keep the cost of food down for families and keep the Finance Minister on track to eliminate the education property tax on homes and food production? Yes or no?

Mr. Kostyshyn: It's quite hilarious to have the member opposite say that we should inform the Finance Minister.

I guess I return the question back to the member opposite from Portage la Prairie: did the Finance Minister tell the Agriculture Minister that we're going to have a \$1.6-billion deficit upcoming, but would you mind considering raising Crown land raises 300 per cent to help us pay back of our overcommitment of what we want to do in the province of Manitoba, and we weren't forward. But let's keep it quiet until October 2 and then we'll find out if whether the people really, in the public spectre, will understand where it's at.

And I think, honestly—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Bereza: Farmers from Manitoba are feeding—are helping to feed the world and Manitoba families. But the Finance Minister seems to be devoted to ending the 10-year phase-out of the education property taxes on farmlands and family homes.

* (14:10)

Will this Agriculture Minister please commit today that his government will keep phasing out this terrible tax on food production and groceries that is making it more expensive for all families?

Will you do it, yes or no?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I would like to compliment the member opposite; 'objioly' he's asking me to inform the Finance Minister about his wishes.

I would like to ask him the question: With a \$1.6-billion deficit, was there much communication between the agri minister—Agriculture Minister and the Finance Minister at that point in time?

Because let me tell you, the health-care situation is suffering, and we are out in the rural community. We've got to make things better for us people in the province of Manitoba. This is the side of the House that's going to turn things around, and I think: stay tuned, because we're going to be a—very successful in the next four years.

Education Property Tax Rebate Government Intention

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): According to a recent Angus Reid poll, the cost of living is the No. 1 issue facing Manitobans right now. The minister pooh-pooed this yesterday, but it's actually a very serious concern for Manitobans.

They need long-term, predictable cost relief. They're not getting that from this NDP government. The education property tax rebate saved the average Manitoba family nearly \$800 this year. That's real cost relief that Manitoba families should be able to count on, because the NDP promised not to touch it.

Will the NDP be breaking their promise to Manitobans and cancelling the education property tax rebates?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): You know, for years, for seven years in a row, Manitobans had a government that was not interested in the affordability challenges that they were facing. Times have changed, Honourable Speaker. Manitobans now elected a government that cares about the challenges that they're experiencing.

We're bringing forward real solutions to help make life more affordable; for example, with our fuel tax holiday, which is going to come in on January 1st so will help to make life much more affordable for Manitobans—an action that the members opposite were never willing to take.

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

Mrs. Cook: Any savings from the gas tax holiday are going to be completely wiped out with the NDP's decision to cancel the tax cuts that were supposed to take effect next year.

Manitoba families are struggling with rising costs today. The cost of groceries is going up, and they get an NDP government that says they're going to crack down on grocery retailers.

The cost of heating—[interjection] Good luck with that. The cost of heating our homes is going up—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: Manitobans ask for fair and equal treatment when it comes to the carbon tax on home heating, and the NDP says, no. Now, Manitobans are just asking the NDP for the bare minimum: to keep their promises.

Will the Minister of Finance reassure Manitoba families that they can count on an education property tax rebate, yes or no?

MLA Sala: You know, there's a lot that the members opposite want Manitobans to forget about. They want Manitobans to forget about their devastating cuts to health care that left Manitobans in hallways and waiting for years for treatment.

They left—they want Manitobans to forget about their cuts to education that left kids without the supports that they need in our schools. And they especially want Manitobans to forget about their failure to do anything about the affordability challenges that they were facing.

Manitobans will not forget their failures. We're working hard to make life better, something the members opposite were never willing to do.

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

Mrs. Cook: Manitobans are also not going to forget about all the promises this NDP government made and then went ahead and broke.

Manitobans are getting a big lump of coal in their stockings this year from the NDP. Like the Grinch skulking about the village of Whoville and raiding the homes of the Whos, the Minister of Finance is trying to figure out how best to raid the pockets of Manitoba taxpayers.

The NDP is asking Manitoba families to tighten their belts and find hundreds of extra dollars next year to hand over to the NDP, all because they realized they can't possibly pay for \$3 billion worth of election promises.

Are the NDP going to cancel the education property tax rebate, yes or no?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, for seven years, Manitobans had a government that just worked to make life more and more expensive. They raised taxes on renters, some of the most vulnerable people in this province. They continued to work to raise hydro prices on Manitobans by bringing forward legislation that was focused exclusively on raising the cost of electricity.

They also increased the cost of Crown land rentals for our farmers by 300 per cent. That's their record. They make life more expensive. We make it more affordable.

2024 Tax Rebates and Credits Government Intention to Keep

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): After calling out the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the Finance Minister yesterday for flip-flopping on their election commitment to keep Progressive Conservative tax cuts, they refused to answer the question in the House and then they quickly called a hasty press event late in the afternoon and confirmed they will be keeping our PC tax cuts for Manitobans. That's effective opposition in action for you, Honourable Speaker.

Now we'd like to ask: How many more NDP flip-flops will we see before Christmas?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Mr. Honourable Speaker, our team, of course, knocked on a lot of doors during the election, and we had a lot of conversations with Manitobans. And in those conversations, we, of course, heard about how important it was that we would fix health care. We also heard how important it was that we fixed education. And another thing that we heard clearly was the importance of fiscal responsibility. And that's why our government is going to bring a fiscally responsible approach to solving the mess that the members opposite created over the seven years they were in government.

We're going to do things right. We're going to fix the books, and we're going to improve health care and affordability.

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

Manitoba Hydro Debt Rate Freeze Inquiry

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I'm glad the Minister of Finance brought up fiscal responsibility. After fear mongering earlier this week on the state of the Province's finances, the NDP haven't made any noise about how they're going to fund their election promises, including the hydro rate freeze.

With \$24 billion in debt at Manitoba Hydro, the Greg Selinger NDP's gift that keeps on giving, how exactly does this government plan to pay for the rate freeze without adding further debt to the Crown corporation, or are they going to flip-flop on that promise too?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): You know, I have a hard time believing that the members opposite want to challenge us on fiscal responsibility after we just revealed that

they left Manitobans with a \$1.6-billion deficit, the biggest non-pandemic deficit in our province's history, one that they hid from Manitobans, even though they knew this before the election in the hopes that they could get re-elected.

Honourable Speaker, we're bringing forward a fiscally responsible approach. We're going to fix the mess they created, and we're going to continue doing the important work of making life more affordable in Manitoba.

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

Fuel Tax Amendment Act Amendments to Bill 3

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Well, after initially rejecting our calls to amend their poorly written gas tax bill, which originally excluded farmers amongst many others, the NDP flip-flopped and ended up accepting almost all of our amendments to the bill. That's effective opposition and action for you, Mr. Speaker.

The question now is: Will they keep their word once we're out of session and not in this place to hold them to account? How many more times is this government going to flip-flop on their own commitments? With Christmas on the horizon, are we heading into 12 days of flip-flops?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): You know, I just want to take this opportunity just to recognize that we on this side of the House really recognize the real affordability challenges that Manitobans are facing. The members opposite didn't recognize those challenges for seven years; that's their record. Manitobans know that they were being ignored by this previous government. They did not care about the challenges that Manitobans were facing. Manitobans have elected a government that cares, that cares about their challenges.

We're here to fix the mess they created, and we will work very hard to make life better and more affordable for Manitobans.

Workplace Replacement Workers Request for Legislation to Ban

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): On November 9, I called on this government to introduce anti-scab legislation. They have had three weeks and have been completely silent on protecting workers' rights. Collective bargaining is a codified right for

workers in Manitoba and across Canada, and it is the foundational element for workplace relations.

Does this Premier support anti-scab legislation?

* (14:20)

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, the question of whether replacement workers should be allowed in the province of Manitoba is an important public policy question.

I've been clear on this issue. On the face of it, I do not believe that somebody should be able to take your job when you go out to exercise your legal right to strike for better working conditions or for better pay.

At the same time, I recognize that there's a diversity of opinions in this province on this important question, and I want to ensure that there's the necessary time so that Manitobans can weigh in and offer their perspectives on this.

We're going to take the time to consult and get this question right.

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

Manitoba Lotteries Possible Strike Action Inquiry into Ban on Replacement Workers

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): The NDP should be ashamed right now.

In 1978, the Manitoba Federation of Labour first brought forward its anti-scab campaign. Right now, members of Unifor Local 144 working at Manitoba lotteries have voted overwhelmingly for strike action if a contract cannot be reached by the end of the month.

Will this government commit today to not bring in replacement workers if a strike happens at MLL?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): On this side of the House, this NDP government has the DNA of building up and supporting workers across Manitoba. It's in our DNA; 1960, right? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: It is in our DNA to support workers in Manitoba. It is in our DNA to make sure that workers' health and their rights are going to be protected across Manitoba.

This is how we actually formed our party, and we are proud to stand with workers every single day of the week because this Manitoba was built by workers.

The Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

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

Workplace Replacement Workers Request for Legislation to Ban

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, the hypocrisy that is coming from this government right now.

The federal NDP are supporting anti-scab legislation. The provincial governments of BC and Quebec have implemented anti-scab legislation.

Apparently, this Premier (Mr. Kinew) campaigned on anti-scab legislation according to the NDP MP Daniel Blaikie, which I table now.

So why is this government backing down and choosing not to implement anti-scab legislation here in Manitoba?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): It's been really hard for the last seven years for workers across Manitoba.

We were seeing a landscape with the—with one of the lowest minimum wages here across Canada. We saw members opposite wage very, very costly court cases, wasting taxpayers' money because of things that they were doing.

We were seeing members opposite pit workers against workers from unfair legislation. We were seeing this PC—former PC government refusing to negotiate for a fair collective bargaining. And we saw strikes upon strikes upon strikes.

It's a new day in Manitoba. It's a new day for workers. We're going to build up Manitoba and we're going to be protecting workers' rights here all across Manitoba.

Thank you.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order.

* * *

The Speaker: The honourable member for La Vérendrye.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): As I represent one of the fastest growing regions in Manitoba, with one of the youngest populations—

The Speaker: Order, please. Please stop the clock.

Okay, I'd just like to point out that in the rotation it was the NDP's turn to stand up and ask a question, but I would remind members to please be vigilant to make sure they stand up when it's their turn.

So, having said that, I will recognize the member for Fort Richmond.

Health-Care Investments Government Initiatives

MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond): Honourable Speaker, since this government has been elected there has been a significant way-shift in the way we talk about health care in Manitoba.

The former government handed out cuts, created chaos and disrespected front-line workers. It is a new day in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, can the Minister of Health relay some of the major health-care investments that were announced since October 3 and how those announcements will benefit Manitobans?

Thank you.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my wonderful colleague for Fort Richmond for that important question.

Our government, right after being sworn in as a team, sent out an open letter to health-care workers, resetting the relationship that they have with their government. We immediately started investing in capacity across the province, including bringing the first mobile MRI to the northern regional health authority.

We've already reduced bureaucracy and are redirecting resources where it needs to be at the bedside of Manitobans. We are listening to front-line health-care workers and starting our tour to expand our outreach tomorrow, first thing in the morning. We're going to meet them exactly where they're at.

And, Honourable Speaker, we've only just started. We've only just started. It's a new day in Manitoba. Our government is putting people across the province first—

The Speaker: Honourable minister's time has expired.

New School Construction Projects Government Intention

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): As I represent one of the fastest growing regions in Manitoba with

one of the youngest populations, I need this government to be clear to Manitobans on exactly what is on the NDP chopping block. They need to be honest with Manitoba parents which schools and their daycare spaces are being cut by this NDP government.

Will this NDP minister please confirm for parents, for children in the Seine River School Division: Is their planned high school going to be cut by the NDP?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I am honoured to stand here as the province's and the people's Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

I can tell you on October 3, they voted for a serious government, one that will look at the books judiciously and will certainly follow through on commitments that are important to communities.

I can tell you, we will consult, and we will ensure that community voice is heard, instead of what the alternative was. And what we saw instead from the other side was a campaign of divisiveness.

What we're not going to do is, we're not going to follow their lead. We're going to create our own path, a path that was charted by Manitobans—

The Speaker: Minister's time is expired.

The honourable member for La Verendrye, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Narth: Now that this NDP Premier (Mr. Kinew), along with his Minister of Education, have made it clear that they're going to use NDP math to justify cutting school programs and raising taxes, Manitobans have the right to know what the NDP will be cutting due to ideology.

Will the Minister of Education, once again, please confirm for the constituents of Neepawa and Brandon: Will you be cutting their planned school to make way for your \$3-billion campaign promises?

MLA Altomare: You know, like I said earlier, Honourable Speaker, on October 3, Manitobans elected a serious government, a government that's going to get to work to fix the books that were completely mismanaged by that former government on the other side of the House.

They were rightfully punted to that side of the House, Honourable Speaker, because of their mismanagement and their lack of foresight, making promises and commitments that clearly could not be paid for.

I can tell you, any farmer in this province will tell you that you don't borrow money to pay for your bills.

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

* (14:30)

Mr. Narth: As the minister attempts to educate us on fiscal responsibility, Winnipeg is also a growing community, and the parents and students need more schools and daycare spaces to build capacity for the kids of today and also tomorrow.

Winnipeg parents and the hopeful parents of tomorrow deserve the confidence that growing areas will receive the planned schools and daycare spaces they need. But this NDP government is more concerned about cutting than building.

Will the minister please just confirm for the parents of River East Transcona School Division, Seven Oaks School Division and Pembina Trails School Division: Are their planned new schools the next victim in the NDP cutting line?

MLA Altomare: As I said earlier, Honourable Speaker, on October 3, Manitobans elected a serious government. I can say that the early childhood education sector has been greatly challenged these past couple of years, even though they had a federal partner that was injecting millions—hundreds of millions of dollars into the sector.

And right now, we're dealing with a problem regarding training of early childhood educators, regarding space for early childhood educators. And we know that as of October 3, with a serious government now elected, we're going to get to work and ensure children, families and communities are going to be looked after.

Concern for Number of Child-Care Spaces Request for Government Plan to Address

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Working families across Manitoba have struggled to find child-care placement. Parents want to ensure their children are safe and thriving while they go to work each and every day.

Earlier this year, the PC government introduced \$10-per-day child care and committed to 12,000 child-care spaces, and partnered with the federal government to create ready-to-move child-care centres.

So I ask the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning: What is the government—this government, the NDP government—what is their plan

to ease the worry and stress of parents who are seeking child care for their children?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): What we're not going to do is take fake credit for something they never created, right? Instead, Honourable Speaker, what we're going to do is we're going to work with communities, we're going to work with families to create the space and the lovely learning spaces for early childhood educators and the kids that they look after.

Like I said earlier, Honourable Speaker, they elected a serious government that's ready to get to work. And we got to work, and are remaining at work as of October 3.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

And I have a statement. *[interjection]*

The honourable official—the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Ms. Heather Stefanson (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's regrettable that I have to get up on a point of order today. But the Premier, during question period, threw out false accusations with respect to the arts, culture and sport in community grant fund.

He accused us of not having budgeted for it, and then he tabled a document in this Chamber where—a document that says, the status of specific programs budgeted in ISA: \$51 million has been allocated from other ISA to departments largely for the arts, culture and sport in community grant fund. It's very clear, according to the Premier's own document that he tabled in the House today that it was budgeted for.

He deliberately misled this House. He should apologize to Manitobans. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order. Before anyone else rises to speak on this point of order, I'd just like to remind members to keep their comments relevant to the point of order.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): There's no point of order here, because no rule has been cited. And I think we're seeing an additional proof point as to why we do have a \$1.6-billion deficit, because what this document shows is that the money was never allocated within the department of Sport, Culture and Heritage. Rather, they were relying on contingency

funds, also known as the internal service adjustments, to pay for promises that they were made.

It's improper budgeting, it's an improper practice, and this is the reason why we have a \$1.6-billion deficit after they left office.

The Speaker: I would just like to point out that—*[interjection]* Order.

I'd like to point out that this is not a point of order. It's a dispute on the facts, and that's all it is. So it's not a point of order.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: Now, I have a statement for the House. *[interjection]* Order.

So, as the House is expected to adjourn later today for our winter break, and as Youth Parliament will be using the Chamber later this month, I would encourage all honourable members to remove the contents of their desks today.

I would further encourage members to recycle as much of the material as possible. The blue bins here in the Chamber are designated for the recycling of copies of Hansards only, and these can be re-used by Hansard and the Legislative Library.

Any other material you would like to recycle may be placed in the larger recycling containers in the message rooms located just outside the Chamber.

Thank you.

PETITIONS

Hearing Aids

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make some sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

(2) People who suffer hearing loss, whether due to aging, illness, employment or accident, not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, family or colleagues, they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

(3) Hearing loss can also impact the safety of an individual with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms, call 911, et cetera.

(4) A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released an updated consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor that was indicated was hearing loss. It was calculated that up to 8 per cent of the total number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

(5) Hearing aids are therefore essential to the mental health and well-being of Manitobans, especially to those at significant risk of dementia, Alzheimer's, a disorder of the brain affecting cognition in the ever-growing senior population.

(6) Audiologists are health-care professionals who help patients decide which kind of hearing aid will work best for them, based on the type of hearing loss, patient's age and ability to manage small devices, lifestyle and ability to afford.

(7) The cost of hearing aids can be prohibitive to many Manitobans, depending on their income and circumstances. Hearing aids cost on average \$995 to \$4,000 per ear, and many professionals say that hearing aids only work at their best for five years.

(8) Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health of a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

I'd just ask members to try and keep it down a little bit. The member has the floor, and I can't hear what she's saying. So, please, just tone it down a little.

MLA Lamoureux: Honourable Speaker, would you like me to begin from the beginning?

* (14:40)

The Speaker: I don't think there's any need for that.

MLA Lamoureux: Okay. Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Continuing on.

(8) Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health of a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

(9) Most insurance companies only provide a minimal partial cost of a hearing aid, and many Manitobans, especially retired persons, old-age pensioners and other low-income earners do not have access to health insurance plans.

(10) The Province of Quebec's hearing device program covers all costs related to hearing aids and assisted living-listening devices, including the purchase, repair and replacement.

(11) Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and older and low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

(12) New Brunswick provides coverage for the purchase and maintenance not covered by other agencies or private health insurance plans, as well as assistance for those for whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

(13) Manitobans over the age of 18 are only eligible for support for hearing aids if they are receiving Employment and Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider hearing loss as a medical treatment under Manitoba Health.

(2) To urge the provincial government to promote income-based coverage for hearing aids to all who need them, as hearing has been proven to be essential to Manitobans' cognitive, mental and social health and well-being.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

The Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Would you please call the government motion for debate this afternoon.

The Speaker: It has been announced that we are going to debate the government motion that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn efforts that put the pensions—*[interjection]*

The honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration.

GOVERNMENT MOTION

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn efforts to put the pensions of all Canadians at risk and affirm collective support for the Canada Pension Plan and measures and strategies that strengthen the national pension plan for seniors, retirees and all workers in the province and country.

Je, avec l'appui du ministre de Familles, propose que l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba condamne les efforts qui mettent en péril les pensions des Canadiens et qu'elle déclare qu'elle appuie collectivement le Régime de pension du Canada ainsi que les mesures et stratégies qui renforcent le régime de pension national des aînées, des retraités et des travailleurs de la province et du pays.

Translation

I move, seconded by the Minister of Families, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn efforts that jeopardize Canadians' pensions and affirm its collective support for the Canada Pension Plan and for measures and strategies that strengthen the national pension plan for seniors, retirees and workers in the province and the country.

English

Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]* Sorry.

The Speaker: It has been moved by the Honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), seconded by the Honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn efforts—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

MLA Marcelino: One of our top priorities as this NDP government is to protect Manitoba pensioners. And our government will always stand up for a strong national pension plan.

The Canadian pension plan, or the CPP, is a Canadian jewel. It's a retirement pension that is a partial income replacement when you retire. Qualifying Canadians can start receiving CPP as young as 60, and receive a CPP retirement pension for the rest of their lives.

The Canadian pension plan began in the late 1960s as a nationwide pension plan that takes contributions from workers to provide pensions upon retirement.

Both employers and employees have been required by law to contribute to the CPP, except in Quebec where a separate QPP, or the Québec Pension Plan, was set up at the same time as CPP.

Quebec was never part of the CPP. It opted out right at the beginning.

Canadians contribute with the understanding that when it comes time for them to retire, we can expect a steady stream of income, where the financial risks associated with a pension plan are being managed by the Canadian pension plan investment board, C-C-P-I-B.

The CPPIB has been ranked one of the top-managed pension funds in the entire world. CPP funds are kept separate from government funds, and they have a net average return rate of 10 per cent per year over the last decade.

Honourable Speaker, withdrawing from CPP would be devastating for workers in those withdrawn provinces that contribute all their lives and for the rest of Canadians heading into much deserved retirement.

At issue is the Province of Alberta's plan to possibly withdraw from the CPP. Now, there will be no immediate financial impact on provinces and territories as a result of the release of the Alberta Pension Plan or the APP report. It would be at least by

2028 at the earliest before Alberta could implement its own provincial pension plan; more likely in 2029.

But if Alberta were to withdraw from the CPP, preliminary estimates suggest that it could result in the need for us to increase base CPP contribution rates for the remaining provinces by up to 0.6 percentage points. That's from 9.9 per cent to now to 10.5 per cent.

Now, under 10.5 per cent base CPP contribution rates—these are the annual estimates for 2027—Manitoba workers and Manitoba employees would each pay up to an additional \$215 in CPP contributions. And for those Manitobans that are self-employed, it would be an additional \$430.

In total, Manitoba workers and employers would pay around \$195 million more in CPP contributions, and as an employer, for example, the government of Manitoba, our CPP costs would be approximately \$2.8 million higher.

Now, in addition to these direct financial impacts, Alberta's APP initiative has many other potential impacts worth noting, including: impacts on CPP investments, operations and investment strategy; impacts on all Canadian taxpayers associated with the costs of negotiating a potential Alberta withdrawal from the CPP; impacts on the 2022-2024 tri-annual review of the CPP; and broader economic impacts, such as on consumer spending and business investment or business hiring.

Now, Finance Canada officials have indicated that calculating Alberta's CPP obligations and liabilities would be an enormous task involving several Government of Canada agencies and departments. All Canadian taxpayers would be on the hook for the cost of just that exercise alone, as well as the costs associated with the long and drawn out negotiations involving Alberta, the federal government and other provinces, should Alberta proceed, including legal costs.

We note that Alberta does not need the formal consent of the other provinces to withdraw from the CPP and create its own provincial plan, but it is expected that provincial Finance ministers will be involved in the negotiations.

Manitobans deserve to know if members opposite agree with their counterparts across Canada that CPP should be preserved. If PC leaders will take a stand today, we hope that they will, for working and retired Manitobans who have contributed their entire working lives toward their pensions.

* (14:50)

Now, Honourable Speaker, as the MLA for Notre Dame, I come in contact with many seniors on a daily and weekly basis. And many of these seniors are living on very, very meagre pensions, and the CPP contributions that they contributed to all their lives account for so much of their income. And it is really devastating to really think that something like this program, who so many folks rely on for their basic needs, would be threatened in some way.

And I'm just thinking of folks that I've met, like at Bluebird Lodge. A good friend of mine who's actually—not necessarily volunteered for the party but volunteered for the community; her name is Beverley [phonetic], who has issues with food security. And, you know, there's so many folks like Beverley [phonetic]. There are so many folks like these seniors, especially elderly women, because out of all the people that I've worked with in our community that have been facing poverty, the ones that face the most poverty are actually elderly women.

These are folks who maybe were not able to contribute so much over the years because maybe they were raising children, so they weren't able to save as much money because they weren't working as much or because, you know, because of unfair pay towards women. These women were not paid enough over the course of their years, working years, and now that they're retired, they're—really don't have enough money saved.

And these are the people that we need to protect. And these are the kinds of seniors that we need to ensure have a strong foundation and strong resources and supports in place for them so they can continue to live in dignity that they deserve.

So with these closing remarks, Honourable Speaker, I would just really like to hope that members opposite would please support this motion talking about the importance of CPP to our seniors across Manitoba, and for them to support this motion to show that we are unified here in this Legislature and that we support our seniors across Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I am pleased to rise in the House today to put a few words on the record about the Canada Pension Plan, which is a key pillar of Canada's retirement income system.

In fact, our PC team, in 2016, worked closely with the federal government on enhancements to the CPP

and consulted with Manitobans on proposed changes to modernize it and to ensure that CPP addresses the realities facing Canadians in planning for retirement.

Public consultations at the time ensured that all Manitobans, employees, business owners, retirees and young people had the opportunity to share their ideas for how the CPP modernization could best benefit everyone who contributes to the plan.

Manitoba's proposals to the federal government during the last review of the Canada Pension Plan were to do the following: index the CPP death benefit, undertake a comprehensive review of CPP's survivor and disability benefits and eliminate the clawback of guaranteed income supplements for widowed seniors' CPP survivor benefits.

We were successful in persuading the federal government and our fellow provinces to begin indexing the CPP death benefit and conduct further research and analysis into improving CPP survivor benefits and disability benefits.

The PC team was also successful in getting drop-out and drop-in provisions for those that leave the workforce and then return, to allow them to maintain some of their CPP benefits and not be unduly penalized. This was important for parents that may take leaves when they have their children.

Now, the CPP was originally designed to cover about 25 per cent of Canadians' income required during retirement. The changes made during the last round of CPP review slightly improved what Canadians will receive upon retirement by increasing the amount of contributions made by employees and employers. The CPP now is designed to cover one third of Canadians' retirement income needs.

Canada Pension Plan is very well funded, and the plan is of a size now that benefits could be increased after almost 60 years of contributions by plan members and employers. Honourable Speaker, 2025 will be the 60th anniversary of the Canada Pension Plan.

The fund is professionally managed by the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, and as of March 31, 2021, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board ended the 2021 fiscal year with net assets of \$497.2 billion. It is one of the largest pension funds in the world.

The former PC government made a number of other accomplishments related to pensions that helped protect Manitobans by providing pension options and protecting existing pension plans. As mentioned, we

were successful in making improvements to the CPP, and got indexing of the death benefit and drop-out, drop-in provisions and improvements approved and added to the CPP framework.

The former PC government introduced pooled registered pension plans as an option for employers and companies to adopt for their employees or for those that are self-employed to opt into. We also brought legislation forward to help those Manitobans facing hardship access their pension funds in locked-in retirement accounts when needed.

We amended the pension benefits regulation, the solvency exemption for public-sector pension plans regulation and the solvency exemption for specified non-profit-sector pension plans regulation, to strengthen pension plans and the pension regulatory system. The amendments provided funding relief to pension plans and strengthened the pensions regulatory system, while ensuring a strong pension framework in Manitoba.

The changes established new rules for funding of private-sector defined-benefit pension plans. Specifically, the amendments reduced the solvency deficiency threshold at which special payments must be made to 85 per cent from 100 per cent, while requiring plans be better funded on a going-concern basis by adding a provision for adverse deviation and shortening the amortization period for unfunded liabilities.

This change brought Manitoba in line with what several other jurisdictions in Canada had already done. The amendments also changed how plans' surpluses can be utilized, including surplus funds held within a solvency reserve account, and allow for re-amortization of solvency deficiencies and unfunded liabilities after each plan valuation.

The lower threshold for solvency payments is intended to help lessen the volatility of required payments that must be made by employers in times of market downturns or reduced government bond rates, while the shorter amortization period for unfunded liabilities will ensure workers' pensions continue to be protected.

Now, of course, the motion before us today concerns the actions of the Alberta government, and I think we on this side of the House would agree that Alberta must stay in the Canada Pension Plan. And certainly, while we agree on these items, I am curious as to why this motion has been brought forward when the government could simply call their

provincial counterparts in other provinces or call the federal government to express their views on this matter.

But since we are debating this issue in the House today, I would like to put some background on the record about the Canada Pension Plan. The Canada Pension Plan is an earnings-related public pension plan. The CPP makes a monthly payment to Canadians and their families to partially replace their income after retirement, disability or death. Working Canadians make regular contributions to the CPP in order to be eligible. The CPP covers all Canadian workers except those in Quebec, who are covered by the Québec Pension Plan.

* (15:00)

As I've mentioned, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board manages CPP assets, making it one of the largest pension fund managers in the world.

The CPP was created through fed-prov negotiations in 1965. Its target benefit at the time was to cover 25 per cent of a worker's average lifetime earnings, up to a stated ceiling on earnings covered.

The CPP was originally financed entirely by payroll contributions from employers, employees and the self-employed. Benefits depended on current contributions, but now the CPP earns investment income, along with payroll contributions which are split equally between employers and employees, but self-employed folks pay the full rate.

For 2019, the average monthly CPP pension received by a retiring 65-year-old person was \$679.16. Plan participants can opt to start receiving their pension any time between the ages of 60 and 70, with the annual pension amount adjusted down or up on an actuarially fair basis. The plan also features ancillary benefits for survivors, for disability and for death.

In its time, the CPP has gone through two major reforms. First, in 1997, contribution rates were doubled in order to ensure that the target of covering 25 per cent of a worker's average lifetime earnings was maintained.

As we know, Canada has an aging population. The workforce has declined relative to the number of retirees, and there is concern that current contributions would not be enough to finance retiree benefits. If changes weren't made, the CPP could have eventually run out of money.

As a result, rates were doubled to create a reserve fund designed to increase confidence in the sustainability of the plan and to forestall further contribution rate increases. It was also at this time that the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board was established.

Further reforms took place in 2016. CPP benefits were enhanced to eventually cover 33 per cent of average lifetime earnings, up from the original 25 per cent. At the same time, the ceiling on earnings covered was raised by 14 per cent. These reforms were designed to be phased in slowly between 2019 and 2025. The changes will eventually raise the maximum annual CPP pension to \$20,600.

And, again, I think we, on this side of the House, would agree that Alberta should stay in the Canada Pension Plan. But the Canada Pension Plan is not the only mechanism by which governments can help senior citizens. Certainly, there are a number of substantive improvements, concrete actions that governments can take.

For example, if the NDP government in Manitoba would like to continue helping seniors, they could assure Manitobans that the seniors hearing aid program will continue. They could address affordability concerns, for example, by providing tax relief that they've already committed to, or removing the carbon tax on home heating. These are just some of the measures that the provincial government can take to help seniors.

The former provincial government actually created an entire department to help seniors, which has now, sadly, been folded into the Department of Health. The role of that department was to ensure a cross-departmental lens was applied to all matters of policy affecting seniors.

Since we are here in the Legislature talking about the Canada Pension Plan, I'll continue discussing many important items related to the CPP.

Changes to the CPP made over the years were triggered by various occurrences at the federal government level. Governments had been talking about making changes to CP benefits for years.

The 2016 reforms were made possible by federal political agreement on the need for a long phase-in period for CPP contribution increases to ensure that those employers and employees can plan for these phased increases without material cash-flow disruptions.

The estimated cost or contribution increase required by the 2016 changes is an additional 2 per cent, to be paid on earnings up to the 2016 cap of \$54,900, as well as 8 per cent on earnings between \$54,900 and \$62,500 in 2016 dollars. All such contribution rate increases are to be shared 50/50 between employers and employees.

Well, Honourable Speaker, I believe that I have exhausted my knowledge of the CPP and I have put everything I know about this very important and relevant topic onto the record today.

So with that, I will leave other members to make similarly important and informed comments.

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): To the member opposite, I think we should put their words on the record in French.

Une des choses qu'on doit faire comme notre première priorité, une très grande priorité, c'est un gouvernement qui va protéger les Manitobains.

Le Manitoba va toujours travailler pour un régime de pension pour le Canada, par le Canada.

Nous savions que nous allons avoir de meilleurs résultats quand le monde travaille ensemble. Pour la première fois en sept années, les Manitobains peuvent relier sur un gouvernement qui va travailler pour eux. Nous pouvons seulement travailler sur les choses difficiles dans notre province si on travaille ensemble et avec les autres niveaux du gouvernement.

Ces choses incluent d'assurer que nos Manitobains ont la sécurité pour vivre indépendamment et avec la fierté.

Notre gouvernement, on a beaucoup de problèmes avec ce que l'Alberta essaie de faire avec le régime de pension canadien, qui vont élever les primes pour les Manitobains et baisser ce qu'ils vont recevoir.

Nous vivons dans les temps difficiles, incertains, et avec beaucoup de questions. Les Manitobains ne devraient jamais s'inquiéter que leur régime sera là quand ils vont prendre leur retraite.

Les Manitobains méritent de savoir si les membres opposés vont appuyer ce que mon collègue a mentionné autrement et que le régime de pension canadien va être encore là, si nos chefs vont prendre une position aujourd'hui qu'ils vont travailler pour les Manitobains qui ont pris leur retraite – qui ont contribué leur vie pour bâtir cette province.

Il y a des grandes conséquences si on va décider de sortir de cette pension-là.

Comment est-ce qu'on va donner des soins à nos pensionnés, à nos retraités, et protéger leur vie si on sort ? Les anciens et nos vieux, ils devraient savoir que leur travail a été sécurisé par leurs efforts. Et on veut qu'ils aiment leur retraite, qu'ils donnent des caresses à leurs petits-enfants et passent le temps avec leur famille.

Les pensions vont toujours être pour les personnes qui ont contribué, mais pas utilisé dans les politiques.

Ça pourrait vraiment interrompre la vie des gens-là. C'est un des meilleurs fonds au monde. Pourquoi est-ce qu'on veut le détruire ? Ça a été créé dans l'année 1965, à une réponse à des retraités qui n'avaient rien, qui vivaient dans la pauvreté, qui ne pouvaient pas acheter la nourriture. Comme tout Canadien, les Manitobains vont être là, prêts à prendre la responsabilité pour une décision irresponsable par une autre province.

Les Manitobains peuvent être confiants dans la stabilité du régime de pension canadien et ne pas avoir peur que nous allons utiliser ça comme une pièce sur un jeu de « checkers ».

Pourquoi est-ce que la coopération nationale est importante ? On est commis pour travailler à une relation collaborative avec le gouvernement fédéral pour assurer que les Manitobains ont la vie stable, et que nous allons travailler pour faire leur vie mieux ensemble.

Le régime de pension canadien parle des valeurs partagées entre tous les niveaux du gouvernement et va supporter nos Manitobains quand on travaille collectivement pour adresser nos questions difficiles ensemble.

On doit mettre notre focus à ce qui rend le régime de pension canadien bon et améliorer cela – pas le détruire. On doit affirmer que les Manitobains peuvent déménager du Manitoba à une autre province s'ils ont besoin. Un programme national comme le régime pension canadien donne aussi aux Canadiens, et aux autres membres des autres provinces, la liberté pour déménager, pour venir au Manitoba, sans avoir la peur que le régime ne va pas être protégé.

Le régime de pension canadien prouve ce qui peut arriver quand le fédéral et le provincial travaillent ensemble pour rendre la vie plus facile pour les gens. La prospérité économique et les ressources du

Canada, c'est une des choses que le monde peut vraiment tenir et dire : « c'est ça ce qui nous rend Canadien ».

Les chefs qui croient autrement devraient penser à des meilleures manières pour aider les gens. Les Manitobains reçoivent des prestations de régime au-dessus de 1 300 \$. Ça donne aussi une pension d'invalidité. Ça donne aussi des prestations pour des dépendants.

C'est une des choses les plus importantes dans notre province. Ça considère les générations qui vont prendre la retraite et les générations qui vont les suivre. Tu dois être au moins 60 ans et avoir fait au moins une contribution à les régimes de pension. Le monde, ils donnent beaucoup. Ils ont souffert. Ils travaillent fort. Ils donnent des heures, le temps qu'ils vont 'sacrificier' loin de leurs familles, loin de leurs enfants. Et c'est une question d'être juste que la pension sera là quand ils vont prendre leur retraite.

La contribution peut inclure le travail que tu as fait tout partout au Canada, soit à la Saskatchewan, les Territoires du Nord-Ouest, ou à l'Île du Prince-Édouard. Ça peut sécuriser votre famille, vos femmes, vos épouses et vos partenaires. La pension, c'est basé sur une moyenne de ce que vous avez fait année après année. C'est une véritable protection pour tout le monde qui fait leur part pour contribuer à bâtir un Manitoba fort. Ça assure que les travailleurs, les plus vieux de demain, qui vont être bien soignés, avoir de stabilité financière.

Le régime de pension canadien est une des choses les plus importantes que nous avons faites comme une nation. C'est une raison pour laquelle les autres pays regardent au Canada et à notre pension et disent : « on devrait la copier ».

Les personnes avec invalidité travaillent déjà avec des défis quotidiens. Et ça inclut des prestations de régime de pension canadien d'invalidité du régime pour les personnes qui ont des invalidités mentales ou physiques. Quand on reçoit cela, le monde peut dépendre qu'il peut se nourrir et aider leur famille. Ça donne un genre de sécurité que tu peux lever le matin et aller acheter ce que vous aurez besoin pour vivre, pour avoir une vie de dignité. On devrait être capable de dire : « j'ai travaillé très longtemps, et cette pension va être là pour moi ».

Le Manitoba a été conçu par les Manitobains qui ont vécu dans les ères les plus difficiles au Canada dans les 30, à travers les deux guerres mondiales. Et ils ont le droit de savoir que le régime de pension

canadien sera là pour eux lorsqu'ils prennent leur retraite.

Alors, Monsieur le président, merci pour m'avoir donné un peu de minutes là pour parler d'une chose très importante, et j'offre ma position à quelqu'un d'autre pour parler de cette pension importante.

Merci.

Translation

One of our first priorities—a very high priority—is to be a government that will protect Manitobans.

Manitoba will always strive for a pension plan for Canada, by Canada.

We know that we get better results when we all work together. For the first time in seven years, Manitobans can count on a government that will work for them. We can only address hard issues in our province if we work together and with other levels of government.

One of these issues is to ensure that Manitobans can live independently and with pride.

As a government, we take issue with what Alberta is trying to do to the Canada Pension Plan, as it will increase premiums for Manitobans and lower their benefits.

We live in difficult, uncertain times, with a lot of questions. Manitobans should not have to worry that their pension plan will be there when they retire.

Manitobans deserve to know if members opposite are going to support what my colleague mentioned earlier; they deserve to know whether the Canada Pension Plan is still going to be there; they deserve to know whether our leaders are going to take a stand today and work for Manitobans who have retired, who have contributed their lives to building this province.

There are major consequences to leaving that pension plan.

How are we going to care for our pensioners, our retirees? How are we going to protect their lives if we opt out? Our seniors and elderly people should know that their retirement has been secured by their efforts. We want them to enjoy their retirement, to hug their grandchildren and to spend time with their families.

Pensions should be for those who have contributed; they should not be a political pawn.

That scheme could really disrupt people's lives. The CPP is one of the best pension funds in the world. Why do they want to destroy it? It was created in 1965 in

response to a situation where we had retirees who had nothing, who lived in poverty, and could not buy food. Like all Canadians, Manitobans will be ready to step up in the face of an irresponsible decision by another province.

Manitobans can trust in the stability of the Canada Pension Plan; they need not fear that we are going to use it as a pawn in a game of chess.

Why is national co-operation important? We are committed to working collaboratively with the federal government to ensure that Manitobans have a stable life and to make their lives better together.

The Canada Pension Plan speaks to the shared values of all levels of government, and it will support Manitobans as we work collectively to address difficult issues together.

We need to focus on what makes the Canada Pension Plan a good plan and make it better—not destroy it. We need to reaffirm the fact that Manitobans are able to move away from Manitoba to another province if they need to. A national program like the Canada Pension Plan also gives other Canadians—residents of other provinces—the freedom to move to Manitoba, without fear that their pension plan might not be protected.

The Canada Pension Plan is evidence of the good things that can happen when federal and provincial governments work together to make life easier for people. Canada's economic prosperity and resources are some of the things Canadians can really look at and say: "That's what makes us Canadian."

Leaders who believe otherwise should think of better ways to help people. Manitobans can receive plan benefits of more than \$1,300. They can also receive disability benefits, and benefits for dependents.

This plan is of the utmost importance in our province. It takes into account the generations that will be retiring and the generations that will follow them.

To be entitled to benefits, a person must be at least 60 years old and have made at least one contribution to the pension plan. People give a lot, suffer, work hard; they sacrifice time away from their families and children. That pension being there when they retire is a matter of fairness.

Contributions can include any work done anywhere in Canada, whether in Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories or Prince Edward Island. The CPP can provide security for families, spouses, and partners. Benefits are based on an average of earnings over the years. It is real protection for everyone who did their

part in helping to build a strong Manitoba, and it ensures that workers—the seniors of tomorrow—will be well looked after and will have financial stability.

The Canada Pension Plan is one of our most important accomplishments as a nation. It is the reason other countries look at Canada and our pension plan and say, "We should copy it."

People living with disabilities already face daily challenges, but the CPP includes disability benefits for people with intellectual or physical disabilities. With these benefits, people can rely on being able to feed themselves and help their families. These benefits provide a sense of safety, knowing that one can get up in the morning and go and buy what they need to live a dignified life. Everyone should be able to say: "I've worked for a very long time, and this pension is going to be there for me."

Manitoba was built by people who lived through some of the toughest times in Canada—through the 1930s and two World Wars—and they have the right to know that the Canada Pension Plan will be there for them when they retire.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me time to address this very important issue. I will now yield my time to another member so they may talk about this important pension plan.

Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): In accordance with rule 45(5), I'm advising the House that I will be splitting my time with the member for Fort Whyte (MLA Khan) evenly, so 15 minutes for my speech and 15 minutes for his.

The Speaker: It has been announced by the member for Steinbach that they will be splitting their time with the member for Fort Whyte as per rule 45(5). A 30-minute limit is allowed to be split.

Mr. Goertzen: Honourable Speaker, while I am supportive of this government motion that has been brought forward, I'm not, maybe, in support of some of the wording. I'm not sure that I would have used the word condemn, necessarily, in a motion that's clearly referencing another province and in a form that's trying to get another province to reconsider some of the statements that they've been making.

While I would agree with the substance of the motion, I'm not sure that the mechanism by which they're speaking of the resolution is probably the best way to do it.

Nonetheless, when we talk about the Canada Pension Plan, I think that all of us as elected officials, whether we're new elected members or have been here for a long time, would recognize one thing. When we talk to seniors in our constituencies, it is often the case that seniors in particular feel vulnerable when it comes to things like their pension fund.

In fact, I know when knocking on doors for many, many years, it's often been the case that I would have seniors say to me, you know, is my pension in jeopardy? Now, while that's largely governed by the federal government, of course as elected officials, people will speak to you at the door when you show up regardless of what level of government it is, partly because you're there and partly because they don't know who governs what, often, in our system of government.

But seniors in particular feel vulnerable when it comes to CPP, and that's why, you know, I have a concern about what Alberta is doing. Not just from—I know they have the legal right to withdraw from CPP with, I think it's three years' notice, is what the original rule stated.

I think it's a bad policy decision, but I also worry about what it will do to many seniors, who might just be hearing about a province as big as Alberta pulling out of CPP, hearing the commentary about what that does to the sustainability or the actuarials of CPP, and maybe not fully understanding, and simply just worrying.

* (15:20)

And so that's a real concern to me, that this, which I think is somewhat political gamesmanship—and I understand the concerns that the Alberta government has with the federal government, and many of us have the same concerns with the federal government, at times. But, doing this, I think, preys upon the vulnerability of seniors, in particular.

But it's not just seniors, some members might be surprised to know, and I'm sure I'm not the only one to have had this experience. I've actually drawn funds from CPP. Many might wish that I was retired already. I'm not retired, but because my father died when I was quite young, there is something called survivor's benefit under the CPP plan. And my mother would pass along that money to us, to the children, to my—me and my sister, the survivor benefits from the CPP plan, which was intended for children when a contributor to CPP dies, you know, much before they're able to draw.

My father died when he was 33 years old, so we, then, drew that survivor's benefit. So we actually—I think it was \$108 or something. But, as a student in university, that was not insignificant, and it was actually quite meaningful at that time. So the benefit of CPP isn't just for those who are retired, but it certainly is for those that are retired, but there's many different programs.

And my friend from Roblin spoke about how our government, when we were negotiating around CPP, added onto some of that. And I was particularly proud that we focused on some of the survivor benefits portions of the plan, because it was helpful for those long before they would have reached retirement if they had a loved one who passed away and wasn't able to draw the benefits of CPP.

Now, the plan itself, the CPP plan, is really quite renowned around the world. It is one of the best managed government plans in the world. I think we're in the top five or the top six when it comes to return. I haven't looked recently, but I think the return for CPP was around 10 per cent—averaging about 10 per cent a year over the last number of years, which is quite extraordinary. And, course, the market's gone through good and bad times over that period of time. But really, that's a very, very solid return for an aggregate pension plan, and so Canadians should feel secure about that.

Now, there was a time, of course, when CPP was more vulnerable and people were concerned about it actually being there for them when they retired. And there was a quite a discussion about it, and the contribution rates, both for employers and for contributors were increased. We've seen that over the last number of years, for those who watch their contribution rates, will have seen the rates and the cap that you can contribute each year go up relatively significantly.

And while that might be, you know, something of an irritant at the moment while people are paying more into their CPP and then seeing less for their take-home paycheques, the reality is that it has made the Canada Pension Plan solid, it has made it durable, and it has made it one of the best plans in the world. So, that's very, very important.

Now, Alberta—again, there are larger geopolitical reasons why, I think, Alberta is making these noises. And maybe that's instructive and maybe that will provide some motivation to this federal government or a future federal government active—after the next election to address some of the concerns that Alberta

has that are beyond the Canada Pension Plan. Obviously, a lot of those relate to energy; a lot of them relate to how they feel, their natural resources and the revenue from natural resources that are shared with other provinces in Canada. And this is—I wouldn't want to say it's a proxy war, per se, Honourable Speaker, but clearly it is part of a larger irritation that Alberta has with the federal government. And I wouldn't say that some of those concerns are not real or substantive.

And it would be incumbent, I think, upon the federal government—or, again, a future federal government in a couple of years, if that's what the electorate decides—to address some of those concerns with Alberta, and then, perhaps, some of these issues around CPP will go away.

But what concerns me, you know, about what Alberta is doing—and I've stated this publicly before the motion was ever brought forward by the government—what concerns me is that it destabilizes an institution in Canada that is actually working really well.

I read a study last year that, I think it was about 35 or so per cent of Canadians have lost faith in institutions—large institutions.

I mean, we think, of course, about government, as a government institution, but there's education, there's, you know, justice, there's all sorts of institutions.

When you lose faith in institutions, that's really difficult for a democracy. Democracies can't properly function if 35, 40, 45, 50 per cent of the—those whom which these institutions are serving don't have faith in those institutions. And it's not just that those institutions were making bad decisions. One could argue, you know, on either side of the Bank of Canada's decisions on rate adjustments is one example.

That's a legitimate debate about whether or not the Bank of Canada didn't raise interest rates fast enough or whether they raised them too quickly. Those are, you know, legitimate policy debates to have, but the study actually showed that Canadians not only, you know, had lost faith in the institutions of—that governed them, but they actively believe, or said they believed that those institutions were actively trying to harm them and their families. And that is very, very troubling.

So concerning here is that when it comes to CPP, this is actually an institution that is working quite well. It's financially stable; I think it serves the people that it's intended to serve. It's not intended to be a

pension that will necessarily provide a replacement to one's income. I think it's around 25 per cent or so that it was intended to replace for the income. But the funds are actually working and the funds are actually there.

People should also know, because this is important, because it's a bit of a myth, I think, sometimes in Canada, that the CPP funds are in general revenue, that are dumped into general revenue and that the government is pulling those funds at will and that they're not really there. And sometimes that's a concern about government, is that, you know, you have a notional allocation on your audited books, but the money doesn't really exist within the government itself. It's just part of a general revenue. And when the money is due, it gets paid then out of general revenue.

But CPP is actually set aside, and the government can't touch it. So you have a Canada Pension Plan system now that has been revamped so that, obviously, the contribution rates from the employer and the employee are higher, but it stabilized the fund. It has significant returns in terms of its investment returns, which is laudable for those who are managing the funds, and the money is secure in that it's set aside, away from government.

And so I wanted to put those words on the record, because, not that I'm, you know, Pollyannaic and I believe that there are thousands of seniors who are listening to this debate, but I do think it is important for us, as elected officials to, wherever we can, try to provide confidence in the institutions that deserve to have confidence applied to them. And CPP is certainly one of those.

And I would want those seniors to know, in my constituency and certainly in the province more generally, that the Canada Pension Plan is stable, that the Canada Pension Plan is there for them, that the Canada Pension Plan is one of the best pension plans in the world, and they don't have to be in their homes, in their apartments, in their seniors' centres, worried that the Canada Pension Plan itself is not stable.

And I would say to my friends in Alberta—and I have many friends in Alberta, some of whom are elected and some of whom are not—to encourage your elected officials if you have concerns with Ottawa. Many of us have concerns with Ottawa; there are different ways to take that concern on. There are different ways to argue against the federal government's policy when it comes to energy; there are different ways to argue against the federal government's policy that they may be bringing

forward in a number of different ways, without attacking an institution that Canadians broadly rely upon, and that provides security for seniors in our country. And as I mentioned before, not just seniors, because I benefitted, too, from the survivors' benefit.

So I support the motion that the government brought forward. Again, I think that the language—condemn and that sort of thing—is a little highly charged and a little bit too political for the nature of the motion. But the intention, if the intention is to say that the Canada Pension Plan is stable, that it works for Canadians, that it is something that Canadians can rely upon and that the provinces who are all within the plan—of course Quebec isn't in the plan—but the remaining provinces that are in the plan should remain in the plan, I do support that. I support it fully.

* (15:30)

So my hope is that, in some small way, the passage of this motion will have a twofold effect: (1) it'll send a message to our friends in Alberta that we clearly want them to stay within the plan and that it benefits them and their residents to stay in the plan. But also to those seniors and others who might be relying on the Canada Pension Plan, they should not worry about the plan itself, in its current state, as we speak here today on December 7, here in the Legislature, that it's a very well run plan that gets significant returns—one of the best in the world—and it will be there to serve them when they need it.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I thank my colleague from Steinbach for allowing me the opportunity to share the time with him on this side of the House. I know the members were really surprised when he stood up and said we're going to share some time together, but I am honoured and privileged that the member will let me stand up and put a few words on the record when it comes to this motion brought forward by the member from Notre Dame.

You know, I don't have a lot of experience in dealing with the CPP; obviously, I'm well aware of it, I've done some reading on it in the past and especially more so with this resolution coming forward. And, I mean, I think the strongest thing that comes to mind is really, as my member had said, and other colleagues have alluded to, is the language in this resolution—or, sorry, in this motion—is the language condemning the Province of Alberta for wanting to make their own decision.

I think that's really concerning when we're sending that out there, when provinces do have the autonomy to make the decisions for themselves. And again, as my colleague from Steinbach has said, in principle, we agree with the substance of it, though. The Canadian pension plan is a very good thing, it's a very strong pension plan. It's the best pension plan. It's one of the largest pension plans in the world and it's a pension plan that's very important to a lot of seniors and a lot of Canadians. *[interjection]*

But what's confusing about this, the wording in this—and I know the members opposite are talking away and they probably have questions because they have no idea what's going on, and that's been reflected over and over again in the last three weeks here—when the members bring forward a motion, something like this that hasn't been done in years by a government, and when the government brings a motion or a resolution that's usually learned—by opposition parties.

So maybe the current NDP government was too used to being in opposition and they still think they're in opposition. That was evident today in question period, where wherever the opposition would ask a question to hold the government accountable, what would they do? Not answer the question, they would fire back with another question. So question period turned into question, question, question, question and no answer by the government.

And you know, when it comes to this motion, you kind of wonder, what is the need for this motion? What are you trying to accomplish by getting this motion forward? And again, the principle—sure. We want Alberta to stay in the Canadian pension plan—great. What about the QPP? Or is there any mention of that in the resolution? Do members opposite even know what that is?

I see no answer, no head nod; on their phones, not paying attention, and even the member that brought this forward. Quebec Pension Plan: have there been anything—any discussions about the Quebec Pension Plan in this? Quebec is not part of the Canadian pension plan either. Why are we not condemning Quebec?

I don't know why the member of Notre Dame—so the—you know, the question of—again, of the wording of this just adds question as to what is the need of this. And again, the need of this is to ask Alberta to stay and to emphasize how important it is, and how important this is for seniors for affordability. You know, the member opposite, again, just want to chirp away.

They don't want to listen, they don't want to hear to—thoughtful criticism on what this motion is.

That's really unfortunate. You know, and when it comes to governing, a motion—again—is used by opposition. It's not really used by a government. This is the time that should be filled with legislation, with laws that we want to bring forward. And we've seen this—a motion—again, you know, the member from Notre Dame says she is, and they are. Well, a motion isn't law. A motion's not law.

And the member from Notre Dame wants to say, I am, I am making law. You're not. It's a motion. They're very clear; they're very different. So this is a time there—should be filled with legislation. Regardless, this is where we are, here. *[interjection]* You know, and we want to—they're trying to fill the time. I get it; they wanted to leave at 4 o'clock, last week. *[interjection]* They're having trouble putting up speakers to speak in favour of their own bills. *[interjection]* You know, they're wanting to understand this. It's just, frankly—it's just bad policy. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Please refrain from hollering back and forth during debate. It's not helpful.

The member for Fort Whyte has the floor. *[interjection]*

MLA Khan: And again, you know, it is unfortunate that I'm being heckled down by the member from Union Station as well, now, and the member from Notre Dame.

What—again, in principle, I mean, they're not even listening to what we're saying. We're saying we agree with what the principle of this motion is; we're just saying the wording isn't the best on it and that there's not really a need for a motion here to bring it forward. And their time should be filled with legislation.

That's what we're saying, and yet members opposite still want to yell at me and shout me down. I don't know why. I gave them candy canes this morning. I had a great member's statement. I thought it was a great day. We had some laughs back and forth. It's a great last day of session.

So, you know, it is what it is. But we all agree that the CPP is important. And on this side of the House, historically, we have spoken very strongly in support of the CPP and how we can make it stronger. That's what this should be about, not a motion condemning another province to do what they want to do, which,

legally, they are entitled to do what they want. There's no legal reason why Alberta cannot leave the CPP.

The member is trying to get Legislature to condemn these actions of another province, yet legally Alberta's within their rights. So now we're Manitoba trying to tell Alberta what to do. It's not a good look for the new government here; and I get it, they're learning. They're new. They'll figure it out. And that's okay.

So when you want to talk about strengthening the CPP, why don't we look at substantive motions that could be done to enforce it? So if you look back—a little history lesson, because maybe we haven't looked at that, and I think it's important to know where the CPP is in Manitoba; that's important, to understand what we've done here. You just go back to 2017, where the previous PC government strengthened the CPP in a way to make it better for seniors in this province, in a way that supports seniors. Because when it comes to affordability and security, it's important for seniors.

Seniors are hit the hardest with the economic world we live in right now, with inflation, with taxes; people on fixed income—those—the people have been hit the hardest. So affordability measures are very important.

So how do we strengthen legislation in Manitoba to make the CPP stronger? If you look at what was done here, this motion doesn't do any of that. It just talks about condemning Alberta.

Now, when you look at that, you say, okay, well, what's really going on in here, it's kind of creating a wedge—divide—between provinces. And when you look at that more, and we sit with it, and I read it over and over again, I said, okay, this actually kind of makes sense. This is what the leader of the opposition likes to do.

He's done the same thing with Manitobans. He did the same thing—his government did the same thing with the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) when it came to the tax fuel pause. They did the exact same thing. They've rushed a bill forward. The language wasn't right on the bill. We said right on day one it has to change. And they refused to do it.

Fast forward to sitting late in committee. They said they wanted to go home early. We kept them there 'til 11 o'clock and then, magically, miracle Christmas, they changed it.

So, you know, again, another issue that was rushed forward that didn't represent all of Manitoba, that wasn't in the best interests of Manitobans; it was in the best interests of this political party, the NDP government, to try to get it forward.

And I can see you're probably wondering where this is all going, and you're trying to wonder—well, it all ties back to affordability measures. And if this was a motion really designed to try to make affordability and give seniors security and stability as they get older and will need to pull on the CPP, this does not do that. It really doesn't.

Legislation could have done it. They could have brought something forward to do it. But they didn't. The tax fuel, I've already mentioned that, that's exactly what that was. And then you look at the carbon tax, another affordability measure they could have easily taken. They voted it down today. Why? Because I guess the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) best friend Justin didn't want it, or he said, ah, you've got to leave it on, right?

I mean the—I don't know—I mean the reality, like, I mean the carbon tax—*[interjection]*—oh, really guys, the—or, sorry—I'll just continue, sorry—the carbon tax just doesn't make sense when it comes to affordability. I know the members opposite want to yell at me and shout me down and, honestly maybe, you know, if any of them want to talk to me about it, we can have a two-minute conversation about affordability for the pension plan—Canadian pension plan.

So I'll move on, because I can see the Honourable Speaker is getting—saying, where's the relevance in this? So the relevance is about affordability for seniors. It is about that this could have been used to make this better. But it wasn't done for that.

* (15:40)

So you know, when you look at that, you say, what could they have done in 2017, and I'll circle back to this. You know, Quebec is not part of the CPP. No mention of them; no mention of forcing them back in or condemning them for not being in there. I would imagine Quebec probably has a very, very large provincial plan as well, probably not as big as Alberta's, but very large; that would be nice to have as CPP. Why is there no condemning them CPP not being in there? Let's get them in. This is all good for all seniors when it comes to the CPP.

You know, when you talk about what they could have done, I'll go back to what previous governments have done. It says, you know, and I'll read you a quote,

and I quote: We commend the provincial government for taking action to make this important retirement saving options available. Most of our 21 members are small companies and enabling PRPPs makes it much easier for them to offer employees the opportunity to participate in a pension plan. Who said that? Loren Remillard, the president and chief executive officer of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. And who was he saying that about? The former Finance minister from the PC government, minister Cameron Friesen. That's how you get things better when it comes to CPP.

When you want to talk about that, that's the best way to do it, right? *[interjection]* Now, I know the member from Notre Dame wants to shout me down—sorry, from Union Station—wants to shout me down and say what happened to that member. What happened? That member, the former minister, served very respectfully in this House. That member did a lot of good work for this province. *[interjection]* And the member from Union Station wants to continue heckling and yelling at me when we're supposed to be in here to represent the constituents that we've been elected by to speak about the CPP.

Now, if you continue to look at what else has been done, I'll make another quote here by the Canadian Kraft Paper chief financial operating officer, Ann Evans: And changes to the Manitoba pension benefit regulations are welcome updates helping align our operations in a competitive business environment while providing retirement security for our valued employees. This is how we make things better in the province of Manitoba—

The Speaker: Order, please. Is the member quoting from private documents? And if he is, I would request that he please table them.

If you can clarify, is it a private document or a public document?

MLA Khan: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I'm more than happy to table it, but if anyone was to just go to the Internet and look in the Free Press on this article—

The Speaker: Order, please. *[interjection]* Order, please. *[interjection]* Order, please. *[interjection]* Order. Order.

The member for Fort Whyte (MLA Khan), when he's called to order, please needs to quit speaking, and I would advise him, please, not to reflect on the Chair. I've asked him, if those are private documents, to please table them, end of discussion. If they're private

documents, table them. If it's a newspaper article, you don't have to.

MLA Khan: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I apologize. I didn't hear you calling me to order when I was standing, so I apologize for that.

It is a public document that's available. If you'd like me to table it, I can bring you a copy of it as well, but it is public.

Okay, so, as I was saying, these are quotes by people in Manitoba who have spoke favourably to what previous PC governments have done when it actually comes to strengthening the CPP. That is how a government is effective at making future—of making the CPP better. We're not in the business of condemning other provinces on their actions when legally they are allowed to do what they want to do. Of course, we'd want them on board. Of course, they would make the plan better, they'd make it more robust, they'd make it larger, they'd make it more effective, and that can be messaged to the Province of Alberta. But the question of how we condemn another province from making their own, it sends the wrong message.

Now, you know, there's on and on—I could go on. There's a lot of public documents out there that speak in favour of the work that has been done. And another really interesting thing is that, you know, I'd ask the member opposite, you know, was there a consultation process done with this? Have they looked at—so, again, these are back in 2017 that was done by the previous PC government to strengthen CPP. Times have changed, affordability has changed, lots of uncertainty in the world. So, you know, was there any consultation brought forward? Were there meetings brought forward on how this could be better, on how we could make this motion better, or was there legislation that could've been brought forward past—post-pandemic to make this stronger?

Again, the CPP is something that we are all blessed to have here in Canada, if we contribute to it. It is one of the largest and best plans in the world, we all agree with that. We all, you know, hope that Alberta would stay, and maybe Quebec will get back on board, and we can make this even stronger and better for all Canadians.

You know, and that—I will leave it at closing remarks and saying that, while we all do agree in principle with this, it would have been nice to see something else of substance with this. It would have been nice to see this government bring forward some

legislation to strengthen that. We can all agree that this is something that is much needed for seniors when it comes to their affordability, their stability, moving forward in life.

And I want to thank you very much for the time to share a few words on the record, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm happy to rise this afternoon to just put a few words on record here.

Employers and employees are required by law to contribute to the Canadian pension plan. We do this for many reasons, in large to provide certainty for all who age that if they contribute to our economy and work hard, that they will be guaranteed a pension to continue earning income after their retirement.

We know that there is a lot of risk if one province pulls out of the CPP, as it sets a dangerous precedent for other provinces. It is worrisome, as it creates a situation where one province is isolating themselves from the federation, and, Honourable Speaker, this could create a situation where rates will be raised for working people residing in other provinces.

I want to be completely clear: I am strongly against Manitoba pulling out of the Canadian pension plan, just as Alberta is proposing to do, because this is an arrangement with the federation. We want to ensure that retirees across the country, no matter where they live, no matter where they may move, will have the same access to benefits.

Honourable Speaker, we understand that some provinces are unsatisfied with their current situations, but we also need to make sure that political opportunism is not at play, and that people's lives and pensions are not being played with.

Thank you for the opportunity, Honourable Speaker, and I will be supporting this motion.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I am grateful for any opportunity to rise in the House and talk about, you know, what it is that Manitobans benefit from and what supports them in living full, healthy lives and enjoying, you know, the opportunities across our province.

And, certainly, this being brought forward is important because we know that seniors across our province are talking about CPP. And a catalyst for that conversation that many seniors are having and concerns that they're raising comes from the approach

that we see being undertaken in Alberta in terms of CPP.

So it is important for Manitobans across the province to see their government making explicitly clear that we believe that CPP is important, that it should be protected and that what that really speaks to is that seniors' well-being is being protected in Manitoba. And so I want to take this opportunity to thank seniors who have built our province. I think it's so important for us—*[interjection]*—yes, I want to thank seniors who have built our province.

And, you know, I reflect on seniors throughout my life. My parents came to Canada in the late 1970s. We didn't have any grandparents. We were, you know—our family was here. We didn't have any other blood family that were in the country for a very long time. And I had godparents, who were essentially my grandparents, because they were, basically, seniors when they were ascribed those roles in my life.

And I know the importance of seniors. I've watched my godparents navigate retirement and that part of life, and I know the value and importance of having something that you can depend on at that next stage of life.

You know, I'm also somebody who has watched my own family members—my mother is a huge source of inspiration for me. I think that many of my colleagues on this side of the House have gathered that, and over the years, and even recently. And she's someone who began a new journey in her life financially much later in life than maybe other folks do. She found herself in a really important situation where she was starting fresh, and that financially, you know, she was having to make decisions and build a foundation for herself that, you know, my siblings and I all wholeheartedly supported and continue to support her in that journey.

But certainly, you know, seeing—and I won't talk about how old my mother is, because culturally that's completely inappropriate, and I feel like somehow she'd find out—but, you know, I've watched her build her life, and the importance of being able to count on CPP in order to do so is certainly not lost on me on a personal level.

* (15:50)

You know, there's something that I think a lot of us reflect on, and it's not just the fact that seniors have built our province and deserve to have fiscal stability later in life. But it's also reflecting on the fact that there are youth right now who are going to be—we're

all going to be, a lot of us—some people are already seniors in this House, maybe—I'm going to be, hopefully, a senior one day.

But when I think about youth of today and how it's so important for us as legislators to make decisions right now that set up youth to have bright futures and to be able to be seniors and thrive and have good outcomes, it's not lost on me that the decisions we make today very well do impact the youth of today. And I think specifically about youth who maybe face increased challenges, like trans youth. And I know that on this side of the House we believe that trans youth and trans seniors should be protected. They are deserving of the care and the love and the affirmation and protections that any other Manitoban and person also has and experiences.

And it's interesting because, statistically, trans youth disproportionately don't actually get to live to a stage of life where they get to live out their lives as trans seniors. That's why, in the queer community, in the 2SLGBTQ+ community, we celebrate our two-spirited and LGBTQIA+ elders. We celebrate them because, for so long, so many members of our communities didn't become seniors. And I think it's so important when we reflect on the supports fiscally that allow for seniors to have stability and to make decisions that allow them to live out their fullness of their lives, we have to also reflect on the decisions we make as legislators that affect trans youth, that we hope to become seniors who access CPP.

And I want to be explicitly clear when I make these remarks that members on that side of the House, including the member for Fort Whyte (MLA Khan), started his statement today saying, I don't know much about CPP. And I would also argue that maybe that member doesn't know enough about trans youth. Because if he did, perhaps that member would've made different decisions in recent months to recognize the impact those decisions have on the people that we want to become seniors in our province and who deserve to be protected in our province.

And, Honourable Speaker, I will never, ever minimize the impacts that we have as legislators on the targeted and marginalized in our communities, who deserve to know that no matter how we identify, where we come from, what our experiences are, who we love or how we stand in our gender identities, they deserve to know that their government respects them as whole people. Trans youth deserve to become trans seniors.

And so I would encourage members of this House, I would encourage members opposite, who have done a lot of harm to the very people who will one day, hopefully, be benefiting from a strong CPP program, that we want to be strong so that no matter, you know, what generation enters that phase of life, they benefit from that fiscal stability that we've, you know, on our journeys all contributed to and all said that we believe that seniors in the province, no matter their identities or abilities, can count on that. I hope that they reflect on the fact that the decisions they've been making recently directly impact who it is that gets to become seniors in our province.

That's a responsibility that I hold very, very dearly. I know it's a responsibility that my colleagues on this side of the House believe is a sacred responsibility, to borrow language from my colleague, the Minister for Families. And so again, when we talk about CPP, we can't divorce ourselves from talking about those folks who we hope will live full lives in our province and be able to access CPP one day.

I shared a little bit about my own mother's journey and the importance of having something fiscally that she's contributed to in our country for over 40 years, that she should be able to benefit from that and trust that there are governments across our country—not just in Manitoba, because we know that one jurisdiction's decisions on this matter do, in fact, impact people across the country. We are tied together. We talk about—and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) talks 'verly' eloquently about the fact that we are one Manitoba. We are one community. We are one peoples.

And it's so important to recognize that that lens should be applied nationally, as well, from coast to coast to coast. We should lean into the fact that the decisions we make in our own jurisdiction are not necessarily separate from, you know, the outcomes for folks in other jurisdictions. That's why we work across borders and have important conversations about not only CPP but other fiscal decision making. That's why we get to know our neighbours in other jurisdictions and hear what they're doing and maybe what they've done that doesn't work so great.

It's to benefit not just ourselves as legislators to bring forward motions, like this motion that has been brought forward by our side of the House, but it's to make sure that we are making decisions across the country that reflect our values as Canadians. And I would say that our values as Canadians is believing that everybody across our wonderful nation deserves

the opportunity to age, to age well, to age with dignity, to age in affirmation and to benefit from what they have contributed to financially for many, many, many years. In some cases, you know, generations of families have contributed to establishing this very important program.

The last thing that I'll say is, you know, just talking about fiscal education, I was somebody who was raised—my parents are both very well-educated, both university-educated here in Manitoba, which is a privilege, most definitely. I was raised—culturally, it's not uncommon for Nigerians to be raised to think, get a professional job and lean into those benefits and that will guide you.

And, you know, later in life, I learned more about investing and things like that, and I have to say, I made the mistake during the peak of the pandemic of looking at my investments—shouldn't have done that; shouldn't have done that. That was, I think, for a lot of people, you know—the realities of what was going on in the market, which can be very volatile—concerning.

But there is something that Manitobans have been able to depend on for a long time, and that's CPP being there for them. And it's so important that we ensure that that is strong and it's consistent so that, no matter what's going on in people's lives financially—maybe some other investments haven't gone so well, cost of living and affordability is challenging—no matter what's going on, if you're a senior, not only here in Manitoba, but certainly in other jurisdictions, you can count on CPP being there for you as part of your journey as a senior in our province and no matter where you live.

And so I support this motion. I know that many folks have put words on the record. Certainly, on this side of the House, I think we've been very clear about the importance of this being brought forward. And I sincerely hope that all members of this House will support this, it is important—and that they will support it not only from a place of recognizing that seniors across our province deserve to know that this government and all members of this House are going to protect something that helps protect them and that we're going to affirm that their contributions to our province financially will result in them reaping the rewards of that as Manitobans later in life—but I hope that we also reflect deeply as legislators, again, on the importance and the necessity of being responsible with our voices and our platforms as it pertains to youth, the youth that we all hope will contribute to our economy in a myriad of ways, contribute to our

province—can increasingly becoming a beautifully diverse and dynamic place for families to live.

There's a responsibility there that I hope all members of this House—I know on this side of the House we do—but I certainly hope that all members of the House can lean into that and embrace that as a gift that we've been given by Manitobans. No matter who won the election, I think it's crucial that we embrace that it's a responsibility we should hold, as my colleague has said before, as a sacred responsibility.

Thank you.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister for Justice, that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: Debate is adjourned and shall stand in the name of the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine).

The honourable minister—honourable Government House Leader.

MLA Fontaine: Can you please prepare for royal assent?

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will now prepare for royal assent, so we'll take a few minutes to prepare and then we will—the Lieutenant Governor will show up for royal assent.

* (16:00)

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Cam Steel): Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Her Honour, Anita R. Neville, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, the Speaker addressed Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

The Speaker: Your Honour:

At this sitting the Legislative Assembly has passed certain bills that I ask Your Honour to give assent to.

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Vanessa Gregg):

Bill 2 – The Louis Riel Act; Loi sur Louis Riel

Bill 3 – The Fuel Tax Amendment Act (Fuel Tax Holiday); Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur les carburants (période d'exonération de la taxe sur les carburants)

Bill 4 – The Employment Standards Code Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act (Orange Shirt Day); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi et la Loi d'interprétation (Journée du chandail orange)

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): In His Majesty's name, Her Honour assents to these bills.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

* * *

* (16:10)

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, would you see if it's the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.?

The Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Ms. Heather Stefanson (Leader of the Official Opposition): As this is the final opportunity before we rise prior to the holiday season, I just wanted to take this opportunity, from our caucus to the other caucuses and to the Legislative Assembly staff, to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy holidays.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to extend a warm and hearty happy holidays to the Leader of the Opposition and to her team, to the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux), to the clerks, to the pages, and to you, Honourable Speaker. Merry Christmas and happy holidays. Have a safe and festive time as we head into the new year.

And I want to say to the people of Manitoba: I hope that you have a wonderful time of year where we come together to celebrate one of those universal human values of generosity. This is one of my favourite times of the year, and it's because we get to spend time with the people we love. We get to give to those folks in our communities who need that assistance, and we get to take a little bit of time to celebrate all the bounty and good things that we've been given in our lives.

So, I say, miigwech bizindawiyeg. *[Thanks for listening.]*

Ojibwe spoken. Translation unavailable.

And bonnes fêtes, joyeuses fêtes, et puis je vous remercie beaucoup.

Translation

And happy and cheerful holidays, and thank you very much.

English

Happy holidays.

MLA Fontaine: Honourable Speaker, is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.?

The Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

Before we all rise, I would once again remind members that if they have not already done so, to remove the contents of their desk before they leave the Chamber, as Youth Parliament will be using the Chamber.

And, as a reminder to all members and all Legislative Assembly staff, you're invited to stop by the Speaker's room in room 244, a come-and-go end-of-session get-together, an opportunity for us all to get to know each other a little better.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 6, 2024, at 1:30 p.m., or at the call of the Speaker.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 7, 2023

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Ministerial Statements		Workplace Replacement Workers	
		Lamoureux	474
		Kinew	475
International Human Rights Day		Manitoba Lotteries Possible Strike Action	
Simard	465	Lamoureux	475
Narth	465	Marcelino	475
Lamoureux	466		
Members' Statements		Workplace Replacement Workers	
		Lamoureux	475
Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Capstone Program		Marcelino	475
Marcelino	467	Narth	475
Linden Woods Holiday Celebrations		Health-Care Investments	
Khan	467	Chen	476
River Heights Hanukkah Celebrations		Asagwara	476
Moroz	468	New School Construction Projects	
Tuxedo Hanukkah and Holiday Celebrations		Narth	476
Stefanson	468	Altomare	476
Lack of Affordable Housing		Concern for Number of Child-Care Spaces	
Wasyliw	468	Byram	477
		Altomare	477
Oral Questions		Speaker's Statement	
Provincial Financial Forecast		Lindsey	478
Stefanson	469	Petitions	
Kinew	469	Hearing Aids	
Affordability Measures		Lamoureux	478
Khan	470		
Kinew	470		
Education Property Tax Rebate			
Stone	471		
Kostyshyn	471		
Education Property Tax Rebate			
Bereza	472		
Kostyshyn	472		
Education Property Tax Rebate			
Cook	473		
Sala	473		
2024 Tax Rebates and Credits			
Jackson	474		
Sala	474		
Manitoba Hydro Debt			
Jackson	474		
Sala	474		
Fuel Tax Amendment Act			
Jackson	474		
Sala	474		

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>