

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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, April 18, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Pleased to table the following annual reports for Manitoba Justice.

The '22-23 annual report for the Victims' Bill of Rights, section 31(1) victim services complaints and the 2023 annual report for The Fatality Inquiries Act under section 43(1).

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Sikh Heritage Month

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I rise today to recognize Sikh Heritage Month in Manitoba.

For more than a century, members of the Sikh community have called this province home. This month, we remember all the pioneers of the Sikh community in Manitoba. This distinguished list includes individuals like John Baboo and John Singh, two Sikh men who served the Canadian Army in World War I, a time when they were not even allowed to obtain Canadian citizenship.

In the generations since their service, many Sikh community members have paved paths in a vast range of sectors, often guided by common principles of faith, equality, justice and service. From military service to public service, from education to the arts and sciences, and from business to health care, Sikh Manitobans have broken down barriers and helped many others along the way.

Honourable Speaker, today Manitoba is home to over 35,000 Sikhs. As the community grows, we have seen families reunited, eager students exploring new thoughts and ideas and creative and innovative workers joining our shared path toward economic and social growth. Manitobans of all backgrounds can appreciate this opportunity to diversify our thoughts and traditions.

The designation of April as Sikh Heritage Month by both the Province of Manitoba and the Government

of Canada is a testament to the important role that the Sikh diaspora has played in shaping our collective provincial and national identities.

Increasingly, political service is also becoming more representative of all who live in our communities. Today, I am proud to serve alongside three MLAs of Sikh heritage: the MLA for Burrows, the MLA for Maples and the MLA for McPhillips.

In addition to public service, the community's members have made valuable contribution to fields such as the arts, medicine and science, social services, business, agricultural and sport. We value and appreciate efforts, both small and large, that are helping to hold Manitoba into a national leader, while promoting our rich and diverse cultural heritage.

Honourable Speaker, there is strong commitment to the value of service through volunteerism within the Sikh faith that mirrors one held by Manitobans of all backgrounds. For so many organizations, volunteers are the drivers of their community impact, building community connections and impacting change wherever they live.

I would like to specifically recognize the efforts by women of the Sikh community who recently volunteered to assemble Valentine's Day care kits for women in local shelters. The thoughtful parcels for individuals that have experienced domestic violence and economic challenges were a gesture of kindness that went a long way for the recipients and their supporters.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the work of Sikh Heritage Manitoba, which works to preserve and celebrate Sikh history and culture in our province. Their efforts include programs and events that highlight the impact of the community.

I would encourage all Manitobans to celebrate the diversity of perspectives, traditions and cultural practices of our Sikh friends and neighbours. There are a range of activities hosted by the community throughout the year, but April is a month of special significance. It includes Vaisakhi, which celebrates the spring harvest, as well as Khalsa Day, which commemorates the Vaisakhi celebration of 1699, when Guru Gobind Singh identified the new practices for baptized Sikhs.

Our province continues to evolve, welcoming a diverse range of faiths, traditions and cultures. By

respecting and celebrating our differences, we create innovate-inviting spaces for our shared beliefs to flourish and grow.

I invite all members of this House and all Manitobans to join me in celebrating Sikh Heritage Month.

Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): It gives me extreme honour to be able to stand today and respond to the ministerial statement. Honourable Speaker, April is annually celebrated as Sikh Heritage Month, and I rise today in recognition of it.

Sikh Heritage Month is an important celebration because Sikhs are among the pioneers of Canada, as are many of the communities we see today, and this month allows us the opportunity to recognize, promote and learn about this strong history.

With centuries-old roots in Canada, the Sikh community's Seva enreached every corner of our country, including right here in the great province of Manitoba.

Sikhs have continuously demonstrated leadership across every sector, including in this very Chamber as elected officials, contributing to the further prosperity of Manitoba.

The population of Sikhs living in Canada has more than doubled in the past 20 years. In Manitoba alone, there are approximately 35,000 Sikhs living here in our wonderful province, and brings home to the fourth largest Sikh population in all of Canada.

Honesty, compassion, equality and Chardi Kala, are—or high spirits, are some of the many foundational tenants of the Sikh faith. These are values that I think all Manitobans can support and learn from.

Last April, the Legislature proudly opened its doors to the public to celebrate Sikh Heritage Month for the very first time.

This month, myself and our PC team and members of other political stripes had the honour of attending several events to celebrate Sikh Heritage Month, including the inaugural Ardas and Turban Day right here in the Manitoba Legislature, as well as Vaisakhi Mela at the Punjab Cultural Centre just this past Sunday.

This year was an especially historic celebration for Sikh Manitobans, who not only marked the 325th anniversary of the establishment of the Khalsa, which means the pure, but also the 55th anniversary

of the building of Manitoba's oldest and largest gurdwara. On top of that, Brandon's Sikh community also opened its first gurdwara this past January.

I look forward to continuing to celebrate Sikh heritage and culture in Manitoba, and I encourage all Manitobans to attend events and celebrate Sikh Heritage Month with Sikh Manitobans.

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

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

MLA Lamoureux: I rise this afternoon as April is a very special month that we all recognize as Sikh Heritage Month. And I'd like to welcome our guests here who have joined us in the gallery, Sat Sri Akal. [*Truth is God.*]

Sikh Heritage Month here in Manitoba continues to grow rapidly. In fact, Canada is home to one of the largest Sikh populations globally. And I am so grateful for what Sikhism, in our case, has brought here to Manitoba.

You know, Honourable Speaker, over the past couple of weeks I, along with my colleagues, have had the opportunity to speak at our Sikh Heritage Month here at the Legislature, at events in our communities and at local gurdwaras.

* (13:40)

And this year, I've used these occasions as opportunities to dive into what Sikhism means to me. Honourable Speaker, Sikhism is all about love, kindness, fairness, taking care of one another. It's about equality, treating each other as equals, and this truly is reflected in our communities.

When we celebrated here at the Legislature just a couple of weeks ago, I was able to recognize Khalsa Aid and their organization, as they highlight and practise these important teachings. They are also celebrating 25 years as an organization this year.

Honourable Speaker, I also associate Sikhism with slowing down and taking the time to recognize what is important. I've had the real honour of visiting the Golden Temple on multiple occasions, and it truly is an incredibly surreal experience. I like to describe it as feeling pure peace, a sensation of being blanketed in truth and protection. And for me it was almost a sense of overwhelming freedom and service all at once.

Honourable Speaker, on April 13 we celebrated Vaisakhi, and it's important to recognize that we do

this in honour of the birth of the Khalsa. And what is neat is, last time I was in India, just over a year ago, I had the opportunity to visit Anandpur Sahib. This is where the 10th guru, Guru Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa in front of thousands of people in 1699.

So, Honourable Speaker, whether it be Sikhism being practised here in Manitoba, servicehood, the Golden Temple in all of its truth or the birthplace of the Khalsa, we are so fortunate to be exposed to and have the opportunity to learn more about Sikhism.

In closing, I want to wish everyone a happy Sikh Heritage Month. Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh. [*The Khalsa belongs to God, Victory belongs to God.*]

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mitzi's Restaurant

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Food brings us together. Whether at the dinner table or your local restaurant, food can start conversations across differences and lift up communities. And today I'd like to acknowledge experts in food and community, the founders of Mitzi's Restaurant, Shirley Eng, her family and her late husband, Peter. They've been serving downtown Winnipeg for over 46 years.

Folks might know Mitzi's from their notably red roof to their famous menu of chicken fingers and Chinese cuisine. The restaurant's story is one of creative perseverance. Shirley moved from Hong Kong to Winnipeg in the 1970s. She met Peter in Winnipeg where he was working as a tailor and she was working at a bank.

Despite neither of them having a background in cooking, they mutually agreed to buy an existing restaurant at 250 St. Mary Ave., which later became Mitzi's Restaurant in 1978. For 10 years, Mitzi's served Chinese cuisine to downtown commuters. While the business thrived for those years, in the '80s, Shirley and Peter took time off to care for their second child and also to revamp their menu.

Peter came to love chicken fingers, and he was eating them at other restaurants and was convinced he could make them even better. He created his own chicken finger recipe and later invented the honey dill sauce we all know and love. Ever since, customers have flocked to Mitzi's for their fresh chicken fingers and house-made honey dill.

Shirley and Peter built an incredible business together that reflects their love for family and the Winnipeg community. Shirley has kept Peter's dream alive and thriving for 22 years since his passing. The restaurant was featured in many culinary magazines, received multiple awards, is in a favourite—and is a favourite of many in the downtown area.

After decades in the business, Shirley was ready to move on to new endeavours and Mitzi's final day was this past April 13. Our province, and especially downtown Winnipeg, is indebted to people like Shirley. Her story is an example of the perseverance and determination it takes to overcome barriers and achieve success.

Please join me in thanking Shirley and the Eng family for their service, their food and the legacy they've left in Manitoba. We're going to miss you.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The honourable member for—the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and active-long-term care.

MLA Asagwara: I'd just like to make sure that the names of Liang Li, Wing Minj Collins, or Ali, Irene Wallin, David Eng, David—Daniel Collins, rather, and Helen Labustro are also included in Hansard.

Miniota-Elkhorn C-Hawks

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): The Miniota-Elkhorn C-Hawks are certainly a dynasty in the world of senior hockey in Manitoba. The C-Hawks won the Hockey Manitoba Senior A title for the second straight year, defeating the Ste. Anne Aces in the best-of-three series.

The C-Hawks were formed in 2012 when the Elkhorn Canadians and Miniota Night Hawks were both short of players and made to the decision to combine teams. The result was instant success, as the C-Hawks won the North Central Hockey League title six out of the next nine years.

When the North Central couldn't muster enough teams to operate in the '22-23 season, the C-Hawks made the jump to the Tiger Hills Hockey League. Despite a higher calibre of hockey, the team won the league title in their first year and repeated in '23-24.

The C-Hawks are made up of players who live and work in the area. Many of the players went to school together and played minor hockey together, before moving on to junior and professional ranks.

There are four sets of brothers on the team. Perhaps the most famous are the Bowles boys, Brad, Jason and Shawn. The three are nightmares for opposing goalies with their offensive abilities combined with their physical play. The trio amassed 137 points in 18 regular-season games, and another 85 points in 12 playoff games.

The other brothers include Bryce and Tanner Kyle, Bray and Cody Rookes and Cory and Curtis Gardham. A team is nothing without leadership. Garth Mitchell has been behind the bench for the past seven years, after coaching many of the players through their minor and AAA hockey years.

His philosophy has obviously rubbed off on the players: be focused and play the game the same way; share the puck and have a team approach—play right, and you'll have success.

Honourable Speaker, the citizens of Elkhorn and Miniota areas are extremely proud of their hockey team. Today I ask all honourable members to join me in congratulating the players and staff on their many years of success.

Habitat for Humanity and Habitat ReStores

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Our government believes that everyone deserves a safe space to call home. The vision of Habitat for Humanity Manitoba is no different; this organization is committed to mobilizing community partners and volunteers to build affordable housing for low-income families.

Habitat for Humanity has been serving Manitobans for 37 years. They provide families with their first-ever home, giving parents and young children a new beginning in our province. Since 1987, Habitat Manitoba has, in fact, helped over 500 families and 1,400 children find stability through affordable home ownership. In 2024 alone, Habitat estimates the completion of 23 homes in Manitoba and Kenora, Ontario.

Winnipeg is also home to the Habitat ReStore, the first of its kind in the world. To be more self-sufficient, Habitat ventured into a small-business model that would provide a reliable source of income while rescuing salvageable building materials. So, the ReStore was born.

The success of the first-ever ReStore in Winnipeg has inspired the expansion of nearly 160 stores in North America. ReStores depend on the donation of new and gently used items, so I highly encourage my

colleagues to visit a ReStore and donate unwanted appliances, building materials and home furnishings.

The legacy of Habitat for Humanity is astounding, but none of it could be possible without the incredible leadership of the Habitat Manitoba team and the tremendous dedication of their volunteers. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Habitat Manitoba for nearly 40 years of service to our province.

In the gallery, please help me honour Jamie Hall, CEO; vice-presidents, Steve Krahn, Rob Barkel; Habitat board chair, Bradley Kopp and specialist, Bela Gyarmati.

Thank you.

RSR Wastewater Cooperative

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to speak about an amazing project that has far-reaching environmental and economic benefits in southeast Manitoba. The Red-Seine-Rat Wastewater Cooperative, also known as RSR, is a partnership between the RMs of Hanover, Taché, Ritchot and the town of Niverville.

The project is not only moving my constituency forward, but the entire province. RSR will be a state-of-the-art regional waste water treatment facility that has been a tremendous example of collaboration between neighbours, municipalities, the province and the federal government.

* (13:50)

This co-operative started back in 2019 when the four partners developed the idea of a regional waste water collection system and facility that would enhance waste water management in the region as well as ensuring affordable utility rates for its residents. It was at this time that the four rapidly growing municipalities realized that a plan for long-term growth included taking steps to protect our environment.

This project is going to allow for over 90 kilometres of waste water pipeline to connect communities across the southeast, eliminating the impact of earth lagoons that have on the environment. In addition, this project will provide capacity for 13,000 new housing units in the member municipalities, investment into the local economy of nearly \$1.9 billion in new capital and construction and approximately 3,400 new jobs.

I was honoured to be present at the announcement made a few weeks ago by the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which committed a \$51-million

investment. This loan commitment was the final piece needed to start construction. I am proud of my region of Manitoba—

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

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the member to finish his member's statement? *[Agreed]*

Okay.

Mr. Narth: I am proud of—in closing, I am proud of my region of Manitoba, and I look forward to seeing all the construction begin.

Thank you.

Starting Strong Program

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Today, I rise in recognition of Starting Strong, an incredible program for families with children one to four years old supporting play and healthy child development in Kirkfield Park and right across west Winnipeg.

Through the Starting Strong program, parents and kids collaborate on skills like literacy, numeracy and physical activity alongside other young families from their community.

Starting Strong offers programs like Book & Cook, which helps kids learn about nutrition, Move & Groove where families work on their co-ordination and fine motor skills and Bookworms Book Club, where staff use interactive puppet shows and other creative mediums to explore stories.

Starting Strong offers many other drop-in programs, meaning that there is something for every family.

I wish to spotlight the unwavering dedication of Sandra Doell, a pivotal figure and family resource co-ordinator at Starting Strong.

My first encounter with Sandra was six years ago during a playgroup session at the Westwood Community Church. Her warm and genuine demeanour instantly made us feel at home in the group.

I've seen Sandra welcome in countless families to Starting Strong. Her ability to connect with young kids through play and to support young parents through the first years of parenthood have helped many find a footing in a new and exciting phase of life.

The Starting Strong program was an incredible, indelible way for me, my wife and my daughter to not

only learn new skills but make connections with other young families—families that I ran into on the doorstep over the past year, families that I am so honoured to now serve.

Honourable Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating and thanking Sandra, who joins us virtually, and all the staff at the Starting Strong program.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Nominee Program Timeline for Next Draw

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, members on this side of the House had heard from students, workers, anxiously waiting the next Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program draw.

When is the next scheduled draw for the Skilled Worker Stream and the International Education Stream?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): I welcome the question from the member opposite. Our government takes very seriously matters of immigration, supporting students to be able to get an education here in our province. The diversity of our province, the diversity of Manitoba, is our greatest strength.

Our team has been hard at work. The minister's been hard at work making sure that we address the concerns in terms of what's been handed down from the federal government and communicating with families all across the province to provide reassurance.

We're going to continue to do the work of cleaning up the mess left by the previous government, the cuts to the department that have caused a lot of harm and strengthen this area of immigration education for Manitobans across the province.

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

Mr. Ewasko: It's obvious that the Deputy Premier is learning quite well from the Premier (Mr. Kinew) on the not answering any questions.

So I'm going to make this one pretty straightforward: the clock is ticking for the international community with limited work permit time. We're looking for answers on their behalf.

Is there anything that would prevent a draw for hopeful Manitobans from happening?

MLA Asagwara: Certainly recognize on this side of the House the importance of communicating with Manitobans—internationally educated Manitobans, folks who are immigrating here and who want to immigrate here, who are here and uncertain about their future due to the federal government's decisions and actions.

What our government is doing: Our government has been advocating consistently on this issue. The minister is doing an outstanding job advocating for folks across the province, and I want to commend her for her leadership on that.

This is an issue that I know the minister has met directly with community members on and is actively engaged with the federal government to ensure that we have a plan that meets the needs of Manitobans.

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

Mr. Ewasko: We have heard credible and troubling fears from the international community, who have requested that we protect their identity to save them from retribution.

International community have informed us that they have been threatened by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino). The Labour Minister, the MLA for Notre Dame, told the Provincial Nominee Program people that any protests on the failures of this NDP government would result in another four-month suspension of draws under the MPNP.

Freedom of peaceful assembly is a fundamental Charter right and violating that right through threats and intimidation by this NDP government is an absolute abuse of power and is wrong, Honourable Speaker.

Will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) do the right thing and ask his failing, vindictive minister to resign?

MLA Asagwara: Our Minister of Immigration has a long history of advocacy for the immigrant community, being a part of the immigrant community here in Manitoba.

The Leader of the Opposition continues to show that nothing has changed with their failed administration. Sowing seeds of division and reaping fear is their practice. On this side of the House, our government is hard at work standing up for families. The Minister of Immigration is standing up for families, dealing with the cuts the previous government made that didn't allow for us to process 2,000 applications.

Our minister is going to continue to meet with families, advocate for families and move this province in a direction that allows for all those who want to be a part of our larger Manitoba family—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Provincial Nominee Program Draw Skilled Worker and Education Stream

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): You just heard from our leader some deeply disturbing information.

I am going to table the correspondence I received, and I will keep my question brief and ask the minister to inform the House: On what day will the next draw be held for the International Education Stream and the Skilled Worker Stream?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Thank you to member opposite for your question.

Currently, we are experiencing of a huge backlog due to unprecedented levels of applications throughout Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, in part due to the cuts of the previous administration and in part due to the federal government's very recent decision in December 2023 and January 2024 to suddenly not extend work permits anymore.

* (14:00)

Our department is diligently working to prioritize those who have already received their letters of advice to apply and prioritize those whose work permits are expiring.

In addition to that, in February—and I continue to meet with the federal minister of Immigration—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Responsibility for and Frequency of Draws

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, can the minister explain to the House how the frequency of draws is determined, and who is responsible for making the decision of which draw to call and when?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to members opposite for their concern about this very, very important priority that we have here as an NDP government regarding immigration and fulfilling our economic needs and productivity for our business community, and filling the needs for our—for all our communities, especially in rural and northern communities in Manitoba.

Immigration is so important, and that's why in Budget 2024, our Finance Minister and Treasury Board

allowed us to have a very high number of budget so that we can have more people processing. Because of the previous PC government, they cut one third of the processors in the previous department, and we are slowly building that back up.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Agassiz, on a final supplementary question.

Ministerial Interference Concerns

Ms. Byram: I have one final question for the minister: Why did she threaten to interfere in the draws of the Provincial Nominee Program to prohibit individuals from gathering peacefully here at the Manitoba Legislative Building?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to member opposite for that question.

I do not interfere in any of the draws. These draws are suggested by the department based on overarching priorities that we give to the department.

I do not have any access to individual files or individual types of identifiers because that would be interference, and that's not something that we do on this side of the House.

We are working towards revamping this MPNP program once again to make it a national leader across Canada, like it was before members opposite pretty much ruined it.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Minister of Justice Conduct Concerns

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, Manitoba is a symbol of hope and dreams for those all over the world who are looking for a better life. Many are trying to escape government-forced control over their lives.

We witnessed yesterday the Minister of Justice trying to dominate his control over this Chamber, time and time again. Isn't that just the opposite of justice?

Why does the NDP government use intimidation and coercion to try and control those who disagree against them?

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

I would advise members that that particular topic is under review by the Speaker. It's under advisement. So therefore, it cannot be raised in the House.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I think what we just heard in this Chamber was a minister of government who answered pretty serious allegations and some pretty inflammatory language in a very professional and measured way. And it speaks to the way that we want to communicate with Manitobans, that we are one Manitoba, that we listen; we listen to the people of Manitoba and we ensure that their voices are heard in this Legislature.

This government's going to continue to do that work. Budget 2024 lays out our plan to make that happen. And we invite questions from the opposition on the important work that we're doing. We're happy to answer them here in the Legislature each and every day.

Minister of Labour and PNP Program Call for Independent Investigation

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): The people of Manitoba and the world need to know that their civil liberties will not be trampled on by this NDP government. Threats of retaliation are immoral and illegal. Manitobans are extremely concerned this government is trying to control them through force and intimidation with this blatant attack on human rights.

Will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) call for an independent investigation into the extremely serious matter?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, again, Honourable Speaker, you know, this government spends time out talking to Manitobans to—listening to Manitobans, the voices of Manitobans. And what we're bringing forward is a vision of a positive, unified future.

Now, when I go out and I knock on doors in, say, the constituency of Tuxedo, and I talk to the people in the constituency of Tuxedo, the fine people there tell me they want a government that listens. They want a government that responds and reacts to the good, positive things that are happening in this province.

That's why, I guess, our Premier is—been considered the most popular premier all across the country, because of his good work. We're going to continue to do that as a government.

Mr. Perchotte: It is unbelievable that the NDP government and their minister would threaten the future of people who dare to disagree with them. The rights of the people to protest against this government is enshrined in our constitution and laws.

Will the NDP government and their Premier denounce this minister and immediately call for a full and transparent, independent investigation?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, it's unfortunate that the members opposite would continue in this line of questioning.

Again, an opportunity for members to ask ministers of the government important questions, and in this case, to have good answers given back: answers about impartiality and about how we work together, the unity that we want to bring, not only as a caucus, but as all Manitobans.

That—you know, that's the kind of work that we're doing on this side of the House. The members opposite want to ask questions of ministers, we're happy to answer them. But we're just confused by their continual adherence to this campaign of division, which we saw in the election campaign, we continue to see—

The Speaker: Minister's time has expired.

Provincial Nominee Program Protest Ministerial Interference Concerns

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Honourable Speaker, we've consistently heard from members opposite that if individuals wished to protest, they were welcome to do so right here at the Manitoba Legislative Building. They've said that protesting to change policy and legislation is a democratic right and is essential to the healthy functioning of a democratic society.

I table the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for the minister to read. And I ask: Why is the Minister of Labour interfering with Manitobans' democratic rights?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, our government is focused on a message that brings Manitobans together. Manitobans affirmed that message, that vision, on October 3, by electing a government whose priority is to bring Manitobans together as one province, one people with one future.

Our 2024 budget does just that. It makes investments that benefit Manitobans across the province and strengthens health care, education, the economy, brings jobs. This is a budget that reflects the needs of Manitobans, and our government is focused on that: people.

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

Mr. Johnson: Honourable Speaker, it is deeply disturbing that we have individuals fearing that they

will—if they exercise their 'democratic' rights that the minister will take away their opportunity to stay in Manitoba.

These are individuals who have invested, studied and worked in our province that are now fearful of consequences from the NDP government that they will afflict upon them.

Why is the minister so blatantly abusing her power and threatening individuals?

* (14:10)

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, for seven and a half years, Manitobans watched the previous PC government fight to legislate away the rights—the constitutional rights of children in care.

Manitobans watched as members opposite, during their campaign, shamed Manitobans for coming together—20,000 Manitobans coming together to say that all Manitobans deserve to be safe and affirmed and uplifted in our province; Black Manitobans and Black people across the globe.

Manitobans watched for seven and a half years a PC caucus that was focused only on division. That's why Manitobans made a choice on October 3rd to vote for an NDP government that brings people together. We're focused on Manitobans each and every day. We're going to keep investing to make our province stronger—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Johnson: Honourable Speaker, it is a great privilege to live in Canada, and we enjoy many rights and freedoms. Under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we have the fundamental freedom—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I can't hear what the member's saying. He's sitting 10 feet from me. So I'm going to call all members to order that they need to listen to the questions, listen to the answer and stop hollering back and forth at each other.

Mr. Johnson: Under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we have the fundamental freedom to meet with anyone we wish and participate in peaceful demonstration. This includes the right to protest against a government action or inaction.

So I ask why the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), why are they infringing on the Charter of Rights and using tactics to prohibit the peaceful gathering of individuals here at the Manitoba Legislature?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, our government is investing in bringing people together. Our government is investing, the Minister of Immigration has invested, in making sure that immigration in Manitoba is strong, that diversity being our strength is a big part of a brighter future here in our province. Our Minister of Immigration has a long history in this province of standing up for those who want to call Manitoba home.

And on this side of the House, we stand with our minister. We back up her efforts. She is going to continue, as we all do, to meet and listen to Manitobans and, again, focus on one thing, one future, one province, one Manitoba for all.

Minister of Labour Resignation Request

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Honourable Speaker, a letter was tabled that shows this Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) using manipulation, coercion, threats of deportation. Now this minister refuses to even acknowledge this letter.

As a proud Canadian Pakistani from an immigrant family, my mother and father came here with nothing more than two suitcases and two kids in arm. And we are blessed to come here to Canada. And I believe we are better for it, and so is Canada.

This behaviour and action as the Minister of Labour and Immigration is fundamentally wrong, and she knows that.

Why won't this minister even acknowledge the letter that's been tabled today?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): Honourable Speaker, we're very pleased to stand up in this government to welcome people to Manitoba.

We know that this is a home for many Manitobans, and we want more people to call Manitoba home. And while they're here, we also want to welcome them here by ensuring that they have settlement services that our government is investing in; that they have job opportunities that our government is investing in; that they have educational opportunities that our government is investing in.

These are initiatives—how we take the immigration and newcomers to Manitobans, how we take their issues very seriously, something the former government never did.

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

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, the minister cannot run and hide and avoid that letter forever. It outlines manipulation, coercion, threats of deportation.

This is the new NDP—now deporting party—Labour Minister. Provincial nominees, international students and skilled workers that are dreaming of coming to Manitoba have now had those dreams shattered. Doctors, nurses, engineers, tradespeople are all now afraid of retaliation from this minister and this NDP government.

No one feels comfortable now applying for permanent residency in Manitoba due to threats by this NDP Labour Minister and NDP government threats.

Will the minister today do the right thing and resign?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, not only do we want to welcome newcomers to Manitoba, but we're investing in their future. We're investing in them by ensuring that we have more educational opportunities.

That's why we invested more in our K-to-12 system. We invested more in our post-secondary system, so that newcomers have opportunities to get the skills they need to work and grow in our economy. Not only that, Honourable Speaker, but we invested in their health care, so that when newcomers come here and have health-care services, they can be assured that they have a top—and expect the best health care that can be provided.

Those were all services that were not prioritized by the former government. These are actions that we're taking to make the lives of Manitobans and new Manitobans better each and every day.

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

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, these questions are not for the Minister of Economic Development. I know he wants to protect—and the Minister of Immigration wants to hide from the letter that's been tabled today.

Why won't the Minister of Labour and Immigration stand up and answer the question? They have threatened, 'coherced' and manipulated hopeful newcomers—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: –all due to what? Negative media stories for this NDP party? There's no way of sugar-coating this, Honourable Speaker. The minister has abused her power of office. This NDP government has abused their power of government.

This is against our fundamental rights and constitution. The minister needs to apologize, and once she's done that, she needs to resign—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: –as the Minister of Immigration and Labour.

Will the minister resign today, yes or no?

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

Stop the clock, please.

I was going to save this warning for another day, but I think today and now is the ideal time to remind members that there are rules in this Chamber. I've given quite a bit of leeway in members, because I believe in the healthy back and forth of debate. What we're witnessing here today, and what we witnessed yesterday, is not healthy back and forth of debate.

I cannot shirk my responsibilities as the Speaker to allow this to continue. There are rules that talk about naming members. There are rules that talk about expelling members. I don't want to do that. I don't want to get there. That is up to you folks. You have the power to decide whether I have to enforce the rules strictly. You have the right to decide; you have the ability to decide how you conduct yourselves in this Chamber.

And I expect better from everyone. So be warned that the rules will be followed, whether you like them or not. I don't plan to stop heckling; it's been a part of the tradition of this type of government since the Westminster type of government came into being. But we have to be respectful of each other. We have to respect that people have different opinions. We have to realize that people outside of this Chamber are watching us, people outside of this Chamber are listening to us.

And it's about time that we showed the people of Manitoba something better than what we've shown in the last few days. Nothing less is acceptable.

So keep that in mind as we finish the business before us here today, that the rules will come into play

and somebody isn't going to be very happy with the outcome.

* (14:20)

Mr. Moses: I thank you for those words. You know, we get elected into this place to represent our constituents and Manitobans, and it's important for us to keep in mind that we are putting our—forward our best foot in this space to represent their best interests.

So, Honourable Speaker, we will not buy into the member opposite's narrative. We won't feed into the narrative and believe the seeds of division, which the members opposite are trying to sow.

We instead will forge ahead on a path that puts Manitobans at the forefront of our decision making, one that ensures that we're investing in their health care, that we're investing in affordability, we're investing in their education.

And, Honourable Speaker, we will continue to do that for Manitobans—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Internationally Trained Health-Care Workers Permanent Residency Draw

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): First, this NDP government ripped up job offers to Filipino nurses. Now they're actively threatening hopeful newcomers eager to work and build their lives here.

The MPNP in-demand occupation list lists over 30 types of health-care professions as a priority. This NDP Labour Minister is now threatening newcomer nurses, physicians, pharmacists, psychologists, physiotherapists, right out of Manitoba and potentially right out of Canada.

To successfully attract internationally trained health-care workers, they need to trust Manitoba's permanent residency system.

Will this minister immediately reinstate a timely and consistent system for permanent residency draws?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, there is a consistent process in place for the draws.

Our minister is doing a tremendous job working tirelessly every single day advocating to the federal government to make sure that we have strong immigration pathways here in Manitoba. This minister has been working tirelessly from day one to do what the previous government refused to do, which is treat this file with the care and attention it deserves.

This minister is working each and every day, meeting with protestors, as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has done twice, meeting with folks in community, supporting meetings that I can have, as the Minister of Health, with newcomers in the province to strengthen our health-care system.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Roblin, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: Adding to the list of already-broken promises from this NDP government, no action has been taken on their five-point plan for internationally educated health-care workers. In fact, so far, the NDP have cut funding for the Filipino nurse recruitment program, fired health-care recruiters, and now they're purposely delaying permanent residency draws for hopeful newcomers.

Was the sixth point of their plan to drive out any hopeful health-care workers dreaming of living here? Newcomers need to trust that they can invest in Manitoba.

Can health-care workers looking for permanent residency trust that no further draws will be intentionally delayed by this Labour Minister?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, what our amazing minister does, with the greatest intention, is work every single day to make sure that our province's strength, that is diversity, is supported by the Immigration department in this province.

She works tirelessly each and every day to advocate to the federal government, is meeting with newcomers across the province to make sure that their voices are heard and our policies and investments in 2024's budget reflect their needs and concerns.

But you don't have to take my word for it, Honourable Speaker. I'm going to table a document that makes very clear that the Minister of Immigration, who met with a leader of the protest—is in full support of her work, and that she, in fact, is listening to their voices and they appreciate that each and every day.

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

Mrs. Cook: Health-care workers will go to other provinces when all this NDP government can offer is higher taxes, threats and broken promises.

In the media, the Labour Minister says that attracting international workers is key to staffing our health-care system. But behind closed doors, they're

threatening to delay or close the process for these workers trying to become permanent residents. This is just another example of how the NDP is making Manitoba the least attractive province in Canada for health-care workers.

Will this Labour Minister immediately reinstate a fair, trustworthy and honest permanent residency draw?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, Manitobans rejected division and harmful rhetoric on October 3rd and elected a government that, for the first time in Manitoba's history, looks like the constituents that we serve, and that is something that Manitobans can be proud of.

Our budget invests in making sure that all Manitobans have the opportunity to have a better health-care system, a stronger health-care system, a diverse health-care workforce. Our government is committed to continuing to invest in relationships, a culture in health care that is one where people want to be a part of our broader health-care team. That's a big change.

Seven and a half years of cuts, closures, disrespect of health-care workers, but we're doing that work because Manitobans deserve a government and a health-care system that works for them.

Drugs Given to Children in Group Home Profit Facilities—Review Request

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Media has reported that several Spirit Rising homes have been raided by police following allegations that workers were providing cannabis to youth daily.

We cannot assume that this is just a one-off case from a singular group home.

Can the minister confirm to the House today whether she has undertaken a comprehensive review, particularly of for-profit homes, to confirm that no other homes have been providing drugs to kids?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I want to say—or, thank my colleague across the way for a very important question that she poses today.

I want to assure the House and I want to assure Manitobans that when we became aware of some of the concerns with Spirit Rising House, I, as minister responsible, took immediate action, followed by our department.

And I also just want to also stress out there and acknowledge all of the folks that came together in an

immediate fashion to be able to ensure that the children that were housed at Spirit Rising House were well taken care of—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Group Home Accountability Funding for Agency Responsible for Oversight

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Accountability of group homes has been a continual issue. For example, a group home in Brandon was shut down due to the misappropriation of funds meant for kids in their care.

That is why it is surprising that the minister cut funding to the unit in her department in charge of accountability for departmentally funded agencies.

Considering these concerns, can the minister explain why she wants to reduce accountability for group homes? And I table these numbers now.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Miigwech to the member opposite for the question.

Again, I want to reiterate that, as minister responsible, I take very seriously the safety and protection of children that are in care across the province.

I do want to also say that, in fact, we are reviewing our relationships with all for-profit providers here in Manitoba to ensure that we don't see another situation like Spirit Rising House, which I would imagine that all of us in the Chamber can agree is an unacceptable form of practice of giving unauthorized, unprescribed drugs to children, some of the most vulnerable and marginalized—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Youth Mental Health Strategy Funding Concerns in Budget 2024

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): The situation is so horrific because leadership at these group homes are often looked up to as mentors. However, now we are learning these mentors have been providing drugs to our most vulnerable kids.

News about Spirit Rising first broke months ago, yet we fail to see any concrete solutions from this government on preventing something like this from happening again.

Considering the serious news, why was there no mention of a comprehensive youth mental health strategy in the government's first budget?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I want to disabuse the member opposite for the erroneous commentary that she's just put on the record.

Let me be explicitly clear: I, as minister, take this issue very seriously. Our department takes this issue very seriously. Our authorities takes this issue very seriously, as well as our agencies. And in responding to Spirit Rising House, all of us came together to work collectively and comprehensively to ensure that children are protected and taken care of.

* (14:30)

And so I would disabuse what the member is putting forward, and I would—I just want to take this quick moment to acknowledge and lift up all of the folks that did the heavy lifting—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Employment Standards Code Legislative Timeline for Bill 9

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Manitobans know that the PCs ran a campaign of division to try and save their tired government. They are still doing this in opposition by preventing Bill 9, which protects workers and extends sick leave to be in line with federal EI sickness benefits.

On this side of the House, we know where we stand—that is, protecting the health and safety of workers in this province and protecting good jobs for all Manitobans.

Can the Minister of Labour and Immigration please update the House on how they continue to play politics of division, and what they are denying Manitobans by delaying Bill 9?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Shameful, uncaring behaviour on this PC caucus's part to hold up Bill 9. This bill would grant up to 26 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave to workers with serious illness and injury and match that unpaid job-protected leave with EI benefits from the federal government.

In 2023 both business and labour groups made a joint, unanimous LMRC recommendation for this unpaid leave. We have heard from doctors, from cancer society of Manitoba, that patients are facing financial stress, job insecurity and that patients are being forced to choose between treatment and employment.

Doctors have even reported of cases where patients died because they couldn't take time off work from cancer treatment—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

**Minister of Labour and PNP Program
Call for Independent Investigation**

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): The NDP has tabled a text with no name, no nothing. They are hiding from accountability to Manitobans and misrepresenting the serious issue from the international community.

Why are they hiding from accountability?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): This coming from the member opposite who tables Facebook posts? I mean, I don't know, Honourable Speaker.

Listen, on this side of the House, we not only stand with our Minister of Immigration; on this side of the House we not only stand with newcomers; on this side of the House not only do we stand with health-care workers, on this side of the House we stand with all Manitobans.

All Manitobans. Our team is focused on one future, one vision, one Manitoba. Members opposite would do well to get on board with that vision because their approach of division is exactly why they're on that side of the House.

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

Mrs. Stone: Hiding accountability is becoming a pattern with this NDP government. First the Families Minister refused to call a public inquiry into CFS mismanagement under her watch. Then she hid from the media in New York during a crisis.

Now the Premier (Mr. Kinew) is refusing to call an immediate independent investigation into the abuse of power on display from this Labour Minister. This is a pattern with the NDP, hiding in New York from accountability to the public. This situation is unacceptable and fundamentally wrong.

Is New York where NDP accountability goes to hide?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): The member opposite seems to be a little bit obsessed with New York and those of us on this side as government, doing our job as government. That's what a good, listening, caring government does. We do our job even if it takes us to New York.

Now, the member opposite, if she's so obsessed with New York and what we do in New York, you know, maybe they should have, when they were in their failed government, offered the opportunity for their former Status of Women minister to go. But then again, what would they have reported on? Nothing. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

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

Mrs. Stone: If this government is so caring, then why are they manipulating, coercing and threatening the international community?

The Labour Minister has chosen to actively infringe on the Charter of Rights of Manitobans. The public deserves clear and transparent answers as to what is happening behind the closed doors of this NDP government. The Labour Minister has actively smeared Manitobans' reputation across the international scale.

Will the NDP commit to a publicly released independent review on the abuse of power displayed by this NDP minister? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Fontaine: So again, I just want to remind members opposite that this is supposed to be a Chamber of truth and repeatedly what we are hearing is erroneous facts being put on the record.

I want to remind every single member opposite there of the detrimental impact that they had to PNP with their cuts, trying to do government on the cheap and then actually forcing newcomers to pay a \$500 head tax.

That's what you all did. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable member for Midland, on a new question.

Mrs. Stone: Newcomers dream of coming to Manitoba. They invest their time, money and hope into our province. They come to build and raise their own families here.

Now the Labour Minister has decided she can pick and choose when and how 'resonsees' draws can or cannot happen. This will permanently damage Manitoba and break the trust of newcomers who desperately want to come here. Manitobans and hopeful Manitobans deserve answers and accountability from this NDP government.

Will the NDP immediately call an independent investigation—it's a simple yes or no question—yes or no?

MLA Fontaine: No. And also, we support our minister. Our minister is doing a phenomenal job. It's a job that she takes seriously. It's a job that she has the capacity and the commitment and the dedication to fixing the mess that you all left us and left Manitobans.

We're proud of the province that we're moving forward to get together again. One Manitoba that is a welcoming province led by an—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Fontaine: —amazing minister that we have full confidence in.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Point of order.

Point of Order

The Speaker: The honourable member for Turtle Mountain, on a point of order.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): I demand an apology from the member from Union Station about accusing of our party, our members here, of being racist when it comes to Black Lives Matter.

I don't know if anybody understands this, but I'm a father of a Black man in this—in Canada and I want to make sure that I need apology from that member from Union Station. Because the fact is, my son, during that whole time when George Floyd got killed, my son was locked up in a—because of—he had to do isolation because of COVID.

And he had to go through that all alone. It devastated him. He's a—he has an uncle that he used to—*[interjection]* Hey. Can I talk?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. I would call all members to order.

When a member's speaking on a point of order, there should be silence from other members. You may not like what the member has to say and there will be the opportunity for someone to respond, but sitting there hollering will not be acceptable.

Mr. Piwniuk: Honourable Speaker, I don't know if a lot of members know this, but some of them were—one of them was at the funeral of my mother-in-law, who actually immigrated here to Canada from Jamaica who actually worked as a domestic housekeeper. She came here—since she came here, there was a government

that gave her the opportunity—was a PC Party government. To—from the day that she got here, she supported the PC Party.

My wife, who is also half-Jamaican, supports the PC Party. And my son, who is also—supports the PC Party, and has never once, in this side, has ever been threatened about what the member from Union Station has accused us to be. My son actually went door knocking in Brandon, Manitoba, to help the chief—the former chief of police to come and actually win an election here to be representing Brandon West, Honourable Speaker.

So I demand an apology. And my son also used to go to hockey school with my brother-in-law; he used to be an NHL hockey coach. He actually coached—he actually had a—worked at the hockey school at—with Bob Hartley in York, Pennsylvania. And I remember one time when my son was driving with him from Dallas, Texas, where he used to coach to go to York, Pennsylvania, he told my son, you got to watch; if we ever get stopped by the police, you got to keep—show that you have your hands showing, because the fact is, you don't know when if something ever happens. Not once does my son ever feel that way in Canada.

And the thing is, when we—when they talked about defunding the police, it's important more than ever before that we need the police, because with our crime, the rate it's going, we need them more than ever.

So I just want to make sure that I want the member from Union Station to give us an apology.

The Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the point of order?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I will not apologize to that member. I will not apologize to any member of that caucus.

Honourable Speaker, I'm very proud to be one of the first three Black MLAs elected to this Legislature. I recognize that when I'm in this Chamber, when I'm out in our communities, I represent all Manitobans, quite frankly. Because all Manitobans, I believe at the heart of hearts, want our province to be a place for everyone, Black Manitobans included.

I'll admit it was difficult—not so much for me, but for my family—to, during the campaign, open up newspapers, to see literature, of a picture of me at a Black Lives Matter rally that members opposite used to try to imply that somehow I was a threat to safety of people in this province.

I am very proud to be someone who has long advocated for justice, equity and equality for all people in Manitoba. I will never, ever apologize for that.

And I will never apologize for making it very clear that when anyone uses their position of power or platform to target folks who are already vulnerable, that when anyone uses their platform to target those who deserve to be treated with respect, dignity and affirmation, I will never apologize for simply recognizing that that does real harm.

And I'm proud to be part of a team that recognizes that all Manitobans deserve a place here in our province where they know we are one province.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would advise the member that he does not have a point of order. However, I will advise all members, as I just said a few minutes ago, words are important. How they are interpreted by others are just as important. We need to, in this place in particular, always be cognizant of the words we use and how they're perceived.

Many members in this Chamber come from different backgrounds, have different thoughts, different processes and interpret what's being said and what's being done differently. I've asked us all to do better, and I will ask us all to do better in this regard also.

Thank you.

* * *

The Speaker: Petitions? Grievances? House business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): What was—where was—who had something else for me? You—what was the thing you had for me? You took it.

Honourable Speaker, I'm going to do a couple of things.

First, I am announcing—*[interjection]* Miigwech.

I am announcing that the following bills will be those classified as specified bills for this First Session of the 43rd Legislature: Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act; Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act; Bill 8, The Safe Access to Abortion Services

Act; Bill 10, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act; Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act; Bill 13, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act; Bill 14, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024; Bill 15, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act; Bill 17, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act; Bill 18, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act; Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act; Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Bill 22, the celebration of Nigerian independence act, commemoration of days, weeks and months act amendment; Bill 23, The Name Change Amendment Act (2); Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (Distribution of Fake Intimate Images). *[interjection]*

Does he have this? He does?

The Speaker: It has been announced by the Government House Leader that the following bills will be those classified as specified bills for this First Session of the 43rd Legislature: Bill 5, Bill 6, Bill 8, Bill 10, Bill 11, Bill 13, Bill 14, Bill 15, Bill 17, Bill 18, Bill 19, Bill 20, Bill 22, Bill 23 and Bill 24.

* * *

MLA Fontaine: Could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to amend debate—the debate provisions agreed to on April 17, 2024, in the following ways: (1) to consider only the following specified bills for debate today, in this order: Bill 22, Bill 10, Bill 23, Bill 15, Bill 14, Bill 5, Bill 6; (2) for the House to rise either following the question being put and resolved on second reading of Bill 6, or 7 p.m., whichever is earlier, unless unanimous consent is granted to rise earlier or later.

The Speaker: Is there leave to amend the debate provisions agreed to on April 17, 2024, in the following ways: (1) to consider only the following specified bills for debate today, in this order: Bill 22, Bill 10, Bill 23, Bill 15, Bill 14, Bill 5, Bill 6; (2) for the House to rise either following the question being put and resolved on second reading of Bill 6, or 7 p.m., whichever is earlier, unless unanimous consent is granted to rise earlier or later.

* (14:50)

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

As per the agreement in the House yesterday, the House will consider second reading of specified bills

under the provisions set out in subrule 2(10). Today is the 14th sitting day after first reading completion day. All government bills that had first reading moved within 20 sitting days of the Throne Speech and have been designated by the government as specified but not designated by the opposition as designated bills are eligible to have a second reading moved today.

For each such bill, the minister can speak for a maximum of 10 minutes, followed by up to 15 minute question and answer period. Critics of recognized parties and independent members may then speak for a maximum of 10 minutes per bill, following which, I will put the question on second reading of the bill.

If such a bill had been previously called for debate, all remaining actions just identified with—will be dealt with before the question will be put.

As agreed, the House 'sall' ship—'sallsh'—my apologies. As agreed, the House shall sit until the question has been put and resolved on second reading of Bill 6, The Manitoba Systems Amendment Act, or 7 o'clock p.m., whichever is earlier, unless unanimous consent is granted to rise earlier or later.

As agreed, the list of bills that will follow this process today will be the following: Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); Bill 10, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act; Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act (2); Bill 15, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act; Bill 14, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024; Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act; Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act.

Accordingly, I will now call Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

SECOND READINGS

Bill 22—The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): I move, seconded by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, that Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

The Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate

Change (MLA Schmidt), that Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I am so proud to have introduced Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act. It just so happens that 22 is also my favourite number and so I have been very, very excited about this—[interjection]

Yes, I wore number 22, that was my jersey number as a basketball player. So I've been very excited about this legislation for a number of reasons, but it just feels a little bit more extra special because of that.

This is a bill that reflects what's been talked about in our community, the Nigerian community, for quite some time. It recognizes the importance of having Nigerian independence day formally recognized here in Manitoba through legislation. It's a step that makes Nigerians feel seen and our history as a people valued in a province that has welcomed our community for decades.

This act would designate October 1 as the celebration of Nigerian independence day, a day that many Nigerians in this province have been celebrating for a long time. Certainly, I remember the celebrations as a kid growing up in Manitoba, where every October 1, we'd find a way—or around that date—to gather as a community and reflect on what our independence means as a people. And it was wonderful that we were able to find spaces to do that here in Manitoba.

The day in 1960, October 1, is the day that Nigeria freed itself from decades of British colonial rule, exploitive and violent rule. This day is deeply significant, not just to Nigeria, but certainly globally. It sends a signal about what achieving independence and freedom from colonial rule means.

With this bill I think of all the elders in our community who sacrificed so that generations could thrive in Manitoba, myself included. This bill uplifts all of those in the community who advocated so that we can be where we are today; who went without so we could be where we are today; and to inspire future generations to be proud of who they are.

There are more than 7,000 Nigerians living throughout Manitoba. I have to say that after being elected in the most recent election, the first trip to Brandon I saw Nigerians everywhere, and I thought that was amazing. I was surprised; I see Nigerians everywhere, and it really showed me, like, wow, our people are not only

here in Winnipeg but we are all across the province, calling Manitoba home.

Now this bill would create awareness for all Manitobans to learn about Nigerian independence day, what Nigerians have overcome and the significant contributions Nigerians have made to our province as a whole: the contributions we've made economically, socially, art, culture, et cetera. We are interwoven into the fabric of this beautiful province.

What I'd like to do now is acknowledge some community organizations and elders who have spent the past several decades fostering community and ensuring generations of Nigerian Canadians would not only be proud Canadians, but deeply connected to their roots, and understand the importance of never losing their identity as Nigerians who are diverse, beautiful, resilient, spiritual and an innovative people.

First I'd like to thank my parents: Doris Asagwara, my mother, immigrated here a few short years after my father, Dr. K.C. Asagwara. I don't know why my father didn't tell her how cold it was. She arrived here and didn't have a proper winter jacket and was pretty shocked at just how cold it was. But the warmth of this province embraced her very quickly.

And my parents instilled an understanding and an appreciation in us of how fortunate we were to be Canadians, on how blessed we were to be Nigerians—Igbo Nigerians. Their commitment not only to their kids but to our communities has resulted—has contributed to a really tight-knit and growing community here in the province, and I'm really proud. I'm really proud of the work that my parents did; I'm really proud of the work that my mother did and continues to do as a leader, as a matriarch in our community, who has worked in early childhood education for my entire life, and who will be retiring from early childhood education on her birthday this coming fall and has made it a point of being somebody who also extends a warm welcome to Nigerians and all newcomers, when they arrive in Winnipeg. She ends up being that warm blanket that she benefited from many years ago.

It is so important, the work that elders have done, elders like Chief Jim Ogunnioki, Dr. Ed Onyebuchi, Titi Tijani, Dr. Anyadike, Yisa Akinbolaji and more. There are so many people that I intend to recognize and uplift as this bill makes its way, hopefully unanimously, through the House in order to recognize and thank them for their contributions to our community and province.

Organizations like ACOMI, the Umunna Association of Manitoba, NAMI, have been leading the way for decades, bringing people together, providing education and awareness, advocacy and support, which has helped our community to grow and continues to do so.

* (15:00)

I'm very proud of the ways in which our community has grown, fostered connection and has expanded the ways in which we navigate our society. Kids of all identities in the Nigerian community are being raised to be authentic, to know that they'll be loved by their elders, to know that they'll be held by their broader Manitoban community, and this bill recognizes not only how long we've been in Manitoba, how long we've been free in Nigeria, but how far we've come as a people and where we're headed together.

And so while there's much more I look forward to saying, for right now I just want to express my thanks, not only to the elders and leaders and families, but also to the First Peoples of these lands, the First Peoples of these lands who welcomed our communities, our Nigerian communities, here in Manitoba. We have a shared history of colonization, which is a painful thread, but it's important to acknowledge. And we have also, I believe, a shared future which is very bright.

Thank you.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions to be asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): I would like to ask the member who they consulted on on this important bill to yourself.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): I thank the member for that question.

I had the opportunity, thankfully, to be able to meet with almost 100 members of our community on a couple of occasions—elders predominantly, youth, as well, and organizations—in order to get ideas and thoughts about, you know, what does it mean to be a

Nigerian in Manitoba and to understand the historical landscape in doing the work to bringing this bill forward. And a lot of those organizations represent literally thousands of Manitoba—or Nigerian Manitobans across the province, and their voices are reflected in the bill.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I want to thank the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) for bringing this forward.

We might not agree on a lot, if anything, in this House, and it does get very heated. But on this Bill 22, I'm very happy to see this come forward, and I want to congratulate the member for that. So, at times, we can come together to recognize great things that are happening, the celebration of the Nigerian community in this province. So on that I want to say congratulations.

I also, quickly—you mentioned your parents quickly. How proud are your parents of you for getting this through today?

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for that question and for the support of this legislation.

It is very difficult to talk about my parents, my mom especially, and not get emotional. Because my mom has had a hard, hard journey—hard journey—and yet, has always put people first and has really modelled what it means to be in community in a good way. And I know that my parents are proud, I know my mom is proud, but honestly, I am so exceedingly proud of her. I'm proud of the person that she is. I'm proud of the role that she has in community, and this is like a very small thing that I can do to recognize the elders in our community who've done so much.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I, too, want to congratulate the member on this bill that's been brought forward here. I'm quite positive it's going to pass unanimously today.

But I'd just like—a curious question: if the member could speak about some of the different Nigerian community associations in our province of Manitoba and if they support this bill, which I'm sure they do.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for that question, and I appreciate his support for this legislation.

There are, I mean, so many different Nigerian communities. There are many—I'm Igbo, myself, so our people come from the south southeastern region of Nigeria. And I consulted with community organizations across the spectrum of identities of Nigerians. So, across faiths, we have a lot of Nigerians who are Christian, Catholic, Muslim faith background.

We have folks who come from all regions who are reflected in this legislation. It was really important to get a good capture of the community organizations and the diversity of them, and they are reflected in this legislation, which I think is a really important thing.

Mr. Khan: You know, one of the greatest honours I had was been the former minister of sport, culture and heritage, getting out to a lot of community events.

And the Nigerian community was welcoming. They were so amazing—their food, the festivities, their music, their stories, all of it. It was an honour for me to—and our previous government, and I'm sure this government now—to support the diversity in communities; Nigerian community is one of them.

I'm just curious—and I'm sure the minister, the member from Union Station, will do this—just curious on if they have any plans on how they want to continue to support the Nigerian community, because it is an amazing community.

MLA Asagwara: I appreciate that question from the member opposite. Again, he has already acknowledged that we don't agree on everything, and sometimes there's a little bit of tension. But where we certainly do agree is that the Nigerian community is amazing.

Nigerian community is amazing. We are a welcoming, loving, proud, loud, community and there's going to be a big, big, big celebration, you know. This bill will become law, hopefully, and the community will, in a new way, be able to celebrate independence day knowing that they've got the backing of the Province behind them, you know, the unanimous support of their elected officials behind them, and I think that's really special.

So next October 1, I'm going to extend the invitation in advance for all folks—the clerks, the pages, bring your families and let's celebrate Nigerian Independence Day together.

Mr. Khan: I want to the member for Union Station for that one.

And on the last question from this side of the House, I guess, is the member and I have gone to—the last two years, I believe, the African and Canadian cup, where Nigeria, I believe, won last year or the year before—I think we're one and one in that bet so far.

So I'm just wondering if the member from Union Station wants to go double or nothing this year on the third year of the Afro-Canadian cup.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Asagwara: Well, I appreciate that question from the member opposite.

I personally do not make bets of any kind, but if I were a betting person, I would put all the money I have on Nigeria for the African Cup of Nations this coming summer. It's a great event put on by some wonderful folks—Nigerians, West Africans, East Africans. It's a great effort. I want to shout out Gode and Seigon [*phonetic*] for their efforts to pull that together.

And it speaks to the heart of this legislation, that Nigerians and Africans bring people together, and that speaks to our government's approach to leading. Bringing people together means you get the best results.

So I'm proud that this bill is bringing folks together in this House, and I hope we continue to see more of that as we move forward in this session.

Thanks.

The Speaker: There are no further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: Floor is open for debate.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): I'm really pleased to get up and speak to Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act, brought forward by the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara). After today's question period, I love that we can start on something that's going to unify us and keep us on a calmer note.

I would also like to thank the member for Union Station for bringing forward this bill to the House today.

Bill 22, The Celebration of the Nigerian Independence Day Act, holds a significant value for many reasons. Honourable Speaker, commemoration days are both sombre and inspirational. Sombre, because they usually signify a time when sacrifices were made for a cause or a fight for equal rights, for justice. Inspirational, because it signifies a time of unity and solidarity, a time of peace and equity—equality. October 1 will always remain an emotionally memorable day for Nigerians around the world.

Commemoration days should inspire us all to advocate for human rights, to step up and act when needed, and work together towards a just, compassionate society. It is important that we, as people, foster a sense of unity, that we stand together and support one another.

* (15:10)

The celebration of Nigerian Independence Day is an acknowledgement of the history and the resilience of the Nigerian people. History is the knowledge of the study of the past. It is the story of the past and a form of collective memory. History is the story of who we are, where we come from and where we are going.

When we remember and reflect on past history, we gain insightful information into ideologies and actions that can lead to positive change in the future.

It is important that we stand together and raise awareness about issues and historical events. We have a duty to learn about the past and to do everything we can to ensure certain things do not happen again. This is why I would like to thank the many Nigerian associations of the province for the great work they do.

And with those words, Honourable Speaker, I will let the floor go to someone else.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm very happy to be able to rise and just put a few words here on record.

I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation, and through their description of the legislation and listening to them speak, you can tell they hold it very, very close to heart, and that makes such a profound impact here in the Manitoba Legislature.

And I love that the bill number is also their favourite number. I think that just makes it extra special, Honourable Speaker.

Nigerian Manitobans are so incredibly important to the fabric of Manitoba's multicultural society. In fact, they make up one of the largest groups of racialized people here in Canada, and you can tell this through everything that they've contributed through our country as a whole and right here in Manitoba,

The member made mention to this, but no matter where you go in Manitoba, even out in Brandon, we are seeing larger and larger groups and populations from the Nigerian community continue to grow, and this is something that makes all of us here, I am sure, exceptionally proud to be living here in Manitoba.

I learnt a lot through the debate and stories shared from the member who brought forward this legislation, just about Nigerian history, and it was very informative and helpful and really motivates us to have a better understanding of our history, of Nigerian

history, of what really makes Canada and the world what it is today.

So I'm very pleased to see this bill continue on with unanimous support from the House, and looking forward to committee.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: If there are no more members wishing to speak, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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

The honourable—I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Is there a will to call it unanimous?

The Speaker: Is there a will to call it unanimous?
[Agreed]

The bill is passed unanimously.

Bill 10—The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

The Speaker: We now move into second reading debate of Bill 10, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Government Services and Consumer Protection, that Bill 10, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Cable: I am so pleased to rise again to provide some comments on Bill 10.

This bill will amend The Advanced Education Administration Act and introduce changes that allow government to take steps to protect students, staff and faculty against sexual violence in our post-secondary institutions.

Honourable Speaker, student safety is a top priority of our government. These changes ensure all post-secondary institutions in Manitoba are accountable

and equipped with the tools to respond to and promptly address incidents of sexual violence on campus.

Furthermore, this bill will help with addressing and preventing sexual violence and this bill will ensure staff—students, staff and faculty in our post-secondary institutions are safe both in on- and off-campus activities.

Now, Honourable Speaker, we know that most of our institutions are responsive and responsible partners that share the same values and priorities as our government. However, in the event an institution fails to uphold or appropriately take action, our government will now have the ability to act.

Post-secondary institutions in Manitoba are required to adopt and implement sexual violence policies in their institutions. However, there are currently no provisions in the act to encourage them to act in accordance with their policies or recourse when they fail to do so. The proposed bill will ensure that post-secondary institutions remain accountable and respond with appropriate policies and procedures whenever there is a disclosure of sexual violence.

Also, institutions are required to regularly review their sexual violence policies. The proposed changes would ensure that the result of their review is made publicly available for proper accountability and transparency.

The proposed amendment would also give recourse to the minister to reduce funding of institutions who fail to adhere to their own sexual violence policies in accordance with the act. The intent is to strengthen compliance and ensure that institutions work alongside students, faculty, staff and community organizations to collectively build a safer environment for teaching and learning.

I look forward to the bill proceeding to the committee stage and I am now prepared to answer your questions.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions may be asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining question

to be asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I would just like to ask if the Minister is aware of any post-secondary school in the province of Manitoba without a sexual violence policy?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I thank the honourable member for the question. This really is a proactive policy to ensure that there is compliance. I am currently not aware of any institutions that do not have a policy in place.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I asked this question during the bill briefing and there was no direct response there, so I'm hoping she's had the opportunity to do some further consultation.

But my question is: Can the minister explain which institutions specifically she consulted with when drafting this bill?

MLA Cable: So we meet regularly with all public institutions and all funded institutions, along with the students' associations and the faculty there, so we meet regularly. And again, this is our work being—this is us being proactive to help ensure that there is compliance.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Can the minister share a recent incident in which she believes a Manitoba post-secondary school has failed to take appropriate action in response to sexual violence on campus?

MLA Cable: I appreciate the member's question, and you know, I am sure that he, like all members in this Chamber, respect the privacy of folks who are victims of sexual violence, survivors of sexual violence. So it is not appropriate for me to name a specific incident in this Chamber.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Is the minister aware of any post-secondary schools in Manitoba that have not conducted a statutory review of their sexual violence policy as required by the current legislation?

* (15:20)

MLA Cable: Again, I thank the honourable member for the question.

The current act, which was implemented in 2018, lacks mechanisms that encourage self-compliance.

So, really, this will ensure that when institutions are not in compliance that we have the tools to ensure that they are.

Mr. Perchotte: Can the minister share how many incidents of sexual violence occurred in Manitoba post-secondary schools over the last five years?

MLA Cable: I thank the honourable member for the question, and this legislation will help ensure that we can answer that question in a meaningful way and that institutions are bound to report what's happening there and that when I send my son or daughter to post-secondary in Manitoba that I can be assured that they are safe, that their friends are safe and that if there were incidences where they were not kept safe, that it would be known.

Mr. Schuler: So if the minister can't answer the question about the last five years, perhaps can the minister share how many incidents of sexual violence occurred at Manitoba post-secondary schools in 2023?

MLA Cable: Thank you to the honourable member. I didn't—I understood this to be questions about the bill, not on the failed operations of the former government. I—again, this legislation will ensure that we have recourse if something does happen and that institutions are held to account when they're not adhering to their own sexual violence policies.

The Speaker: Just before we proceed, I would remind members that reading questions from your electronic device, your phone, can't be done; it has to be kept out of sight at all times when you're asking questions.

Mrs. Cook: Have any students come forward to the minister to express concerns with the current sexual violence policies on their campus?

MLA Cable: I'm proud to stand in this Chamber as, you know, half of the female part of the Cabinet here.

Yes, official complaints? Not directly to me. I'm sure that the member opposite has many experiences, the same as I do with having anecdotal expressions of things not being great, and there is a culture of secrecy around sexual violence. There is fear of retribution, and there is absolutely still a culture around sexual violence and rape culture that really doesn't encourage folks to come forward.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Perchotte: In consultation with the schools, did you directly speak on this bill? Did you talk to the people at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, BU,

university of the North, St. Boniface in the specifics of this bill or did they receive a letter with the direction of your department?

MLA Cable: I thank the honourable member for the question.

As I said before, we meet regularly with all of our post-secondaries, and this work is us being proactive, and we have met with experts in this field, and we take their findings seriously. There are numerous organizations across the country who are undertaking this work, and we know that post-secondary institutions are one of the places where consistently, year over year, there are folks who find themselves in terrible situations and really have a difficult time continuing pursuing their education because of incidences that happen on campus.

So we want to ensure that we're doing everything we can to help change the culture not only on campuses but in the broader community.

Mr. Schuler: So if the minister has not met with those institutions on this bill, could she tell us has she met with Red River Community College, Assiniboine Community College, Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology, Providence University College, Booth University College, Steinbach Bible College? Did she meet with them directly on this legislation?

MLA Cable: I thank the honourable member for the question. And I know it's difficult sometimes when the way that things have always been done are not the way that they're going to be done anymore.

And while I—as I said, I speak with the post-secondary institutions regularly. In a case—in this particular case, it's incumbent upon all of us to recognize that there are—continue to be challenges in post-secondary institutions around sexual violence and that it's up to us, as leaders, to put in the appropriate measures to ensure that that doesn't happen anymore.

Mrs. Cook: Will the minister be making more funding available for sexual assault education initiatives and specialized training for school staff and students to comply with the new legislations?

MLA Cable: I thank the honourable member for the question.

As I expressed before, this is really a mechanism that will allow us to withhold the grant if an institution isn't in compliance. There is ongoing education efforts, not only through the individual post-secondaries but through WAGE as well. And again, it's incumbent

upon all of us to help educate ourselves and to help demystify and debunk some of the myths around rape.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to know from the minister, when the minister spoke of experts, specifically who are your experts that you consulted with?

MLA Cable: I thank the honourable member for the question.

The experts in post-secondary and specifically, individuals who work across the country on sexual violence policy in post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Schuler: Well it's very concerning that the minister says the new approach to legislation is that one doesn't consult at all. So, she hasn't consulted with the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, Brandon University, university of the north, St. Boniface, Red River and so on and so forth.

So then how does she get feedback with them if under her new program, one does not consult with these organizations because evidently that was the old way of doing things?

MLA Cable: With the proposed amendment, institutions will be required to make publicly available the results of the review of their policies. These reviews are already required to be conducted every four years. This will re-~~crate~~—create more accountability, provide oversight and tell us whether the policies are having the intended impact.

The policy already exists. This will allow us the opportunity when it is not complied with to peel back the grant allocation to the institutions.

And I just want to take a moment to talk about what it is to live in this world in a female body and to have a daughter and to be concerned about her position in the world and whether or not she is cared for. And I know it's hard sometimes to empathize with folks who don't share.

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

Mrs. Cook: What would be the minimum fine for a post-secondary school that has failed to meet the requirements of the new legislation?

MLA Cable: That is a wonderful question and I will say, in an ideal world, there will never be a fine. In an ideal world, we will never have a situation where we have to claw back the grant allocated to an institution because institutions will do the right thing and do the right thing by students.

The legislation says that it's under the purview of this office, but again, in an ideal world, it—we wouldn't do it at all.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I need to check Hansard, but I believe the minister stated in their preamble that post-secondary schools must share their values.

Can the member state who is the judge and jury of whether the post-secondary schools meet compliance? Who determines compliance?

MLA Cable: I'll invite the member to read Hansard. That wasn't what I said at all.

* (15:30)

Mr. Johnson: Who determines compliance?

MLA Cable: The department would determine compliance.

Mr. Perchotte: Can the minister explain if the Department of Advanced Education and Training has ever had legislation in front of them before where they gave them the opportunity to fine schools directly?

MLA Cable: I thank the honourable member for the question. That's a very good question. I'm not sure. I do know that there are—you know, in this case, I wouldn't call it a fine. We would claw back the grant. Again, in an ideal world, we are never having to impose this, but it is an added incentive for folks to be in compliance.

The Speaker: No further—oh, sorry.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister tell us, then, who is that designated person within the department who would assess who would be able to go and give a ruling on compliance? Is there someone that's been designated within the department?

MLA Cable: I thank the honourable member for the question.

At this moment, I can't name that person.

Mr. Schuler: Is it a position, then, rather than—the minister says she can't name the individual, but is it, then, a position that she will designate that that person who holds that position then does the assessment?

MLA Cable: I thank the honourable member for the question.

Yes, it would be part of the regular processes. It will be assigned to an individual in a regulatory way.

Mrs. Cook: I can appreciate that in an ideal world, no fines would be levied, but I still think it's a valid question as to what the minimum fines would be, what the maximum fines would be, and who is making that determination.

MLA Cable: I thank the honourable member for the question.

Those details are yet to be determined, and I'm sure that you can appreciate that the grant allocation to individual institutions varies. Some of our larger public institutions receive a large grant; some of the smaller ones receive a small grant, could be a percentage, could be a dollar value. Again, ideally, we don't have to enforce it.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): The importance of keeping students safe from sexual violence of any sort has to be taken extremely seriously.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Under the current legislation, the mandate for the school systems is to review their policy every four years and to make it public. With children of my own attending schools—my daughter attended the University of Winnipeg for several years—her safety was of utmost importance to our family.

We want our children to go out into the education system full of excitement and hope and dreams for the future. We want them to gather an education in a safe environment, and we want to ensure that legislation is put forward to protect them at all times.

Every school that I have spoken to has a policy. Every member that I have spoken to at those schools is aware of the policies that are at hand. I agree that we have to ensure that schools are following their policies that protect our most vulnerable. We need to do better as a society to stand up for those around us.

I do have concern of government overreach with the schools. A part of the role of the minister is to promote excellence but also respects the appropriate autonomy of the educational institutions and recognize the principles of academic freedom.

The fact that there has been zero instances of this being brought to the minister's office—the students' unions have not brought this forward, the parents have

not brought this forward at all—makes me wonder the true intent of this bill.

I have seen already in the education system where schools have been 'dramastically'—dramatically harmed by losing their international students and those being given to the schools of choice, under this government.

The ability to take from a school funding to fine some institution because we feel it's appropriate is concerning without any oversight. The legislation brought forward, we would all agree, is important to protect the students at those schools, but the troubling part of this legislation is how far reach does this government have?

We do not know of any other instance where this department has been—had the ability to fine. They have lots of abilities to contact the school boards, to make recommendations, to move forward, to discuss at length the requirements of the education system, but at no time have they been forced to face a fine.

Now, it may be a good thing if they don't comply to be fined. I think it's important that we ensure that people do comply, and that may be one of the opportunities there. But now we have a department that becomes judge, jury and executioner with no opportunity for appeal, or a process. We don't know what the fines are. This is very troubling and concerning that we're moving forward on legislation, we don't even know what it's going to look like. It is a: trust us, and hopefully, we do the right the thing.

Those are just the items that I've been wanting to get on the record for this bill. We are a hundred per cent in favour of protecting every one of our students and making sure that nobody ever faces sexual harassment at any form, whatsoever.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

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

It's a very interesting piece of legislation and I'm curious to see and learn more as the legislation goes through committee. It is a little bit concerning. There are some red flags, and that's why, again, we'll see what happens at committee and through presentations. We'll learn a little bit more about it on the other side of things, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

During the bill briefing, and again, just 20 minutes ago, here, in the question and answer portion, we asked the minister about which specific schools were consulted in the creation of this legislation and the minister says,

all groups were consulted with, but will not name any specific groups.

I know that I would like to hear, was the University of Manitoba consulted? Was the University of Winnipeg consulted? Was CMU consulted? Was the University of Brandon consulted? I think that there are major institutional facilities that at least should have some say or awareness in what this legislation is before it passes through the House.

I want to make sure that our educational institutions are not nervous about their funding being pulled, especially because this legislation, the way that it has been described, is really allowing the minister to have her hand in the pot. We need to make sure that any government of any level, of any party are not the ones overseeing the pot. We want to make sure that it is done fairly and justly and our institutions are not afraid to bring things forward at the risk of losing their funding or their grants, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

I think that the hope behind this legislation is to look at standardizing sexual violence policies, and I think that there are many ways we could be doing this. And I think that our post-secondary institutions would very much be in favour of this. So let's have a conversation with them. Let's formulate this policy with them. We can bring forward legislation, whether it be through the education department, through the justice department, to make sure that we're doing everything we can at a provincial level to protect those involved with our post-secondary institutions.

With those few words, Honourable Deputy Speaker, again, I do want to reiterate, I think this will be a very interesting committee and I'm looking forward to learning and hearing more there.

* (15:40)

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 10, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 23—The Change of Name Amendment Act (2)

The Deputy Speaker: We'll now move on to second reading of Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act (2).

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable), that Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act (2), now—be read now a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Naylor: I am pleased to speak to the House today about Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act.

This bill will prohibit persons who are convicted of designated criminal offences, including sex-related offences, from legally changing their name in Manitoba. It addresses concerns raised from victims and advocates and aligns Manitoba with other provinces who have similar legislation in place.

Currently, people who have resided in Manitoba for at least three months immediately before the date of the application and who are 18 years of age or older are eligible to make an application to the Vital Statistics Branch for a legal name change in accordance with The Change of Name Act.

As part of the current application process, all adult applicants are required to obtain a fingerprinting report from an authorized third-party agency to link the name change to the national repository of criminal record information if there is a record in the system. However, Vital Statistics Branch does not receive a copy of the results of the fingerprinting.

If this bill is approved, a certified criminal record check, which includes fingerprinting as part of the application process, would be required in order for the Vital Statistics Branch to determine if an applicant is ineligible for a legal name change because they have been convicted of a designated criminal offence including sex-related offences.

The Vital Statistics Branch currently charges a fee of \$120.07 to process a legal change of name application. This does not include the costs associated with the current fingerprinting requirement and the proposed criminal record check requirement, which are at the expense of the applicant. Vital Statistics Branch has no control over those fees, as they are set by authorized third-party agencies.

The bill also includes a ministerial discretion clause to allow for the minister or delegate to exercise discretion in certain circumstances to be prescribed. There may be limited circumstances where a legal change of name should be granted to a person who

would otherwise be prohibited from doing so, and this clause enables such action.

If approved, the bill will take effect upon proclamation. This will allow the department time to develop regulatory changes to the existing change of name regulation to include additional detail necessary to operationalize the prohibition of convicted sex offenders from legally changing their names. This will include identifying the designated sex-related offences, which will trigger the change of name prohibition.

Development of regulations will include consultation and engagement with police agencies, Indigenous governance organizations, the Department of Justice, Women and Gender Equity Manitoba and other stakeholders.

I believe that the amendments we are proposing here today will benefit all of Manitoba as this is another step this government is taking to enhance public safety, and for Manitobans, especially victims and their families, to feel safer in their communities.

I look forward to the opportunity to hear from Manitobans on these changes during committee, after the second—after the passing of the second reading of this bill.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Honourable Speaker, the bill provides the opportunity for the development of regulations in consultation with stakeholders.

I'd like to ask the minister what the stakeholder—what is the stakeholder engagement plan?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): That's a terrific question. I really appreciate that question from the member opposite.

And, as I did state originally in my notes, that there will be opportunity to engage with police services as well as organizations that represent victims

and their families. So that will include places like the Child Protection Centre. And you know, I know there's a number of other organizations provincially that represent people who are survivors of violence.

It also means engaging with—internally within our justice department, as well as the—with the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) and to look at some of the issues in there, as well as—

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

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this really important and good piece of legislation.

My question for the member is: In other provinces, is it also at the discretion of the minister to make an exception for change of name?

MLA Naylor: That's a very good question. I actually can't speak to that. I can tell you a lot about the policies in other provinces. I'm not certain about that, but I'm happy to explain why.

The reason for that has to do with programs referred to as the administration of justice. So there are times when, for example, you know, the law—there may be some reason under the law that someone needs to have their name changed.

And so, you know—there—I—there's a term, kind of a colloquial term that isn't the real term, but when we talk about, like, victim—oh sorry, like, the kind of informant-type people that—I forget what the term is. But when people—when legal—

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

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I'd like to thank the minister for bringing this forward.

If regulations will be developed, what's the expected timeline for this bill to come into force?

MLA Naylor: I appreciate that question. We're looking to bring this bill into force in the fall.

And one of the reasons why it won't be in the spring is that we do—within the regulations, we will be—and with all that consultation process, to determine which crimes will prevent someone from being able to change their name.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): I know that the PCs had called for this type of legislation.

So I was just—therefore I was wanting to ask: Is that what has inspired this minister?

Thank you.

* (15:50)

MLA Naylor: Thank you for that question.

You know, actually, I'm inspired by, well, my own career. I started my career working with victims of violence 30 years—more than 30 years ago. I've spent decades working with mostly women and girls who've been sexually abused and worked in a program for teen survivors of sexual exploitation. And spent my whole life in that space, listening to and supporting folks who've been affected by this type—these types of crimes.

Mr. Guenter: I'm wondering if the minister has an exhaustive list or an idea of where she may like to see this legislation go when it comes to the regulations in terms of the serious offences this bill would encompass.

MLA Naylor: I appreciate the question from the member. We did have the opportunity during the bill briefing to talk about this a little bit, so I appreciate him giving me the opportunity to share that with the House.

In a couple of provinces, two—the first two provinces who passed this legislation, they used—I believe it's called part A; it's the first part of the Criminal Code. So it's very specific to sexual crimes.

In Newfoundland, they approached it a little bit differently and chose specific crimes, and that—I want to do that. And the reason I want to do that is in part B of the Criminal Code, there are some very specific crimes that I think many of us in this room—you know, things like there's a very notorious case going on in Manitoba right now. The women who are buried in the landfill, the man who has been charged with—

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

MLA Lamoureux: Honourable Deputy Speaker, I know our minister is saying to allow her a little bit more time to finish answering those questions.

So I'd like to ask if she could have a bit more time for that.

MLA Naylor: I appreciate the member for that opportunity.

What I wanted to say is there's this very notorious crime in our province right now, and that person hasn't been charged with sex crimes, but I think everyone in this room can agree that we would not want him to be able to change his name and to—you know, and right

now, someone can change their name from jail, even if they have committed multiple murders.

So we're looking at those and, as I said, consulting with Victim Services and many other justice organizations to make sure we have the right crimes on the list.

Mr. Wowchuk: Yes, and I know the minister talked about reaching out to stakeholder consultations.

Has any thought been put into expanding to public consultation?

MLA Naylor: I appreciate that. Because the list of crimes to be included will be done as part of regulations, there's an automatic public consultation process that's involved for any regulatory changes in the province.

So the initial work will be done with the groups representing the public, representing victims as well as folks working in Justice, but then there will be the consultation process that comes along with any regulatory changes.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, we'll move on to debate.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Honourable Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to just put some brief comments on the record with regard to Bill 23. I believe it's an important bill, and I want to thank the minister for bringing it forward.

And I also want to recognize my colleague, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), for his work in put—calling for this legislation and working with the drafters here at the Legislature to develop legislation like this. And it is encouraging to see the government take this legislation up and that we have the opportunity to pass it here today.

You know, it seems pretty clear as to why this legislation is necessary. We here in Manitoba are aware that in December, the Free Press reported that four Manitobans on the Sex Offender Registry had changed their legal names since April 2021. And so that is very concerning and undermines the expectation of the public that criminals should be held to account, and so this legislation will address that.

And we've also seen in neighbouring provinces concerning headlines involving individuals changing their name after being paroled for serious offences and then taking up residence in a community and hiding

their identity from the public. And no one wants to see that; that should not happen.

For example, in Saskatchewan there were documented cases of sex offenders changing their name in the province. And, currently, a criminal can move to our province of Manitoba and apply for a legal name change, which threatens the safety of their—of our communities. These are dangerous and long-term offenders that pose a threat to public safety, and we recognize these very serious concerns.

And as I said, we're proud to bring forward a bill to address this with our change-of-name amendment act that was put on notice at the beginning of this—of the sitting. And we recognize, as well, that jurisdictions across Canada are taking the necessary steps to keep individuals safe by introducing and passing legislation to prevent name changes for serious offenders and making criminal record checks mandatory.

So again, as I said, I thank the minister for bringing this forward. I want to recognize as well and thank my colleague for Brandon West, not only for his many years as the—with the police force in Brandon but for his work as a legislator here in Manitoba in, again, calling for this legislation. So I—we will be supporting this legislation.

Thank you, Speaker.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm happy to rise this afternoon and just put a few words on record about Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act. I very much appreciate that the member brought this important legislation forward, and we are very much in favour of the legislation. I believe that it's a great tool for protection, and it will, in fact, protect many Manitobans.

We agree that people shouldn't be able to hide their identity behind a wall if they're—if they have committed acts such as sexual violence or sexual assault or rape, Honourable Deputy Speaker. Consequences of these decisions should be faced; you shouldn't be allowed to pretend that you did not do these crimes, commit these actions upon people. And by being allowed to just change your name, it sort of defaults you from the consequences. And that's why I do think it's—very important piece of legislation.

And I can reference a media report just on December 21st of 2023 which outlined that a convicted sex offender who stalked someone was able to legally change his name and hide his identity from people. I believe that this is a disservice to Manitobans,

Honourable Deputy Speaker, so I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this piece of legislation.

I am interested and curious to learn more about it at committee, Honourable Deputy Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for just taking the time to answer our questions as well.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act (2).

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

I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Is there will of the House to call it unanimous?

The Deputy Speaker: Is there will of the House to call it unanimous? [Agreed]

The motion is accordingly passed unanimously.

Bill 15—The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: Moving on to second reading of Bill 15, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Acting Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Schmidt), that Bill 15, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

* (16:00)

The Deputy Speaker: The—it has been moved by the Minister of Environment—oh, sorry—it has been moved by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change—apologies.

It has been moved by the Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, and seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, that Bill 15, The Credit Union and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Moses: Manitoba's credit unions and caisses populaires are a crucial part of Manitoba's economy. With over \$43.3 billion in assets, our credit union

sector has a bigger share of deposits than in any other province or territory in Canada.

Since Manitoba's first credit union was established in 1937 in St. Malo, the sector has grown exponentially. Today, when—there are 16 credit unions and one caisse populaire serving more than 737,000 members. They are located in almost every locale in Manitoba, with 181 branches, 125 of which are located outside of Winnipeg. Our credit unions and caisses populaires are also key employers right across Manitoba, collectively employing roughly 3,400 people.

Honourable Speaker, although Manitoba's credit unions and caisses populaires are a success story, this does not mean that they do not face challenges. Canada's financial services sector is in the midst of major change as the industry faces challenges from new, disruptive entrants, particularly the so-called fintechs, who have made major investments to improve and expand their digital offerings.

One of the consequences of these changing landscapes has been the consolidation of the credit union sector in Manitoba. As recently as the year 2000, there were 65 credit unions and caisses populaires. Today, there are only one quarter as many. Many smaller firms have merged with larger ones to attain the size they need to compete and innovate.

We should be deeply proud as a province of what this sector has created, and our government celebrates the role our credit unions, caisses populaires will continue to play as we grow Manitoba's economy into the future.

Part of ensuring the continued success of Manitoba's credit unions and caisses populaires is listening to the sector and responding to changing conditions. This bill is one of those responses, and it was drafted after consultation with Credit Union Central of Manitoba.

This bill will update several sections in the existing legislation to address issues that have arisen as the operation of credit unions and caisses populaires have evolved, particularly in the connection with its members' meetings.

In particular, the amendments will permit credit unions to submit proposed bylaw amendments to the provincial registrar in advance for confirmation that they are consistent with the legislation. This would avoid situations where credit unions and caisses populaires submit a bylaw amendment to its members for approval, only to learn after obtaining such an

approval that the registrar determines the amendment is inconsistent with legislation.

Additionally, no longer permit members to put forward proposals, including the nomination of a director, at a meeting of members, in which case such nominations would need to be submitted prior to the date for the commencements of voting on items to be considered at the meeting.

Most credit unions now allow voting members in advance of a meeting—a members' meeting, rendering the current provision allowing proposals to be submitted at the meeting impractical.

Additionally, to eliminate the ability of members of a credit union to access the register of members, with certain exceptions. There is no reason to allow such a general access, which creates a significant privacy concern and has the potential to create security concerns as well. Additionally, to clarify that voting at a meeting of members can be done by electronic means.

Also, it would allow management of a credit union to determine the membership of a member who is engaging in contact that is abusive, discriminatory or threatens the health or safety of others, coupled with a right of that member to have the termination reviewed by the credit union's board of directors.

Termination of a membership of a member for any reason will require a passage of a resolution to this effect by a super-majority of the credit union's board.

Honourable Speaker, in closing, Manitoba credit unions and caisses populaires are a crucial part of Manitoba's financial services sector. We applaud the contributions to Manitoba's economy and we celebrate their work. These amendments in this bill will help ensure that the governing legislation is up to date, and that the sector can continue to make an outsized contribution to growing Manitoba's economy well into the future.

Honourable Speaker, I'm so pleased to have this bill presented for the House's consideration.

Thank you.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions

asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I want to thank the Minister of Finance for bringing this bill forward and speaking on that briefly, and being here to answer these very important questions.

So I guess the question, very simple, is, you know, who did the minister consult with in bringing this bill forward? Very simple one to start.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Thank you for the question.

I want to start out by thanking my colleague for doing some important work there, delivering those comments in my absence. I am rushing back from Brandon, from a Chamber speech there, state of the city—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Even if it's referring to your own absence from the Chamber, you can't refer to the presence or absence of members in the Chamber.

MLA Sala: So the Credit Union Central of Manitoba really drove the recommendations in this bill. Of course, they represent credit unions across the province. We're proud to be bringing forward these changes that'll help to support a strong credit union sector here in Manitoba.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Can the minister outline just a little bit further for us when he began his consultations with the credit unions on this particular piece of legislation?

MLA Sala: Sure. We've had many conversations with the Credit Union Central of Manitoba, again, as the body that represents credit unions across the province. They're in a great position to bring forward the voice of the many credit unions in Manitoba.

* (16:10)

So we've had many conversations going back many months.

Mr. Doyle Pwiniuk (Turtle Mountain): Can the minister be able to explain if there's any major economic downturns, how prepared is the credit unions to handle it and is the minister prepared to backstop our credit unions?

MLA Sala: I appreciate the question.

There's no question that credit unions are facing increasing headwinds from increasing competition

from fintechs and other financial services organizations and, of course, larger banks who are much better heeled than they are. We want to do what we can to support them with these measures.

This will help to ensure that they can remain financially healthy and continue to serve Manitobans for the future—for the long future.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation.

I understand that the minister has met with some credit unions. I was just hoping that the minister could share with us if he has met with any members specifically of credit unions.

MLA Sala: No, we've met with, again, the Credit Union Central of Manitoba who, again, represent credit unions across the province.

I am fortunate to have been somebody who worked in the credit union system before. Really honoured to be bringing this forward to help ensure a healthy credit union system here in Manitoba. I think this represents some really important changes that will help to support their ability to succeed here in our province.

Mr. Khan: The Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) alluded to that he used to work at the Assiniboine Credit Union, I believe while or maybe prior to when he was a rock star.

But when he worked at Assiniboine Credit Union, did he experience any of the violence or threats that this bill is looking to protect employees from?

MLA Sala: No, I really appreciate the question. I worked in a back office function, so I didn't have a straight consumer, customer-facing role.

But I do know that having worked there that we did hear at times where there were challenges for some of the customer-facing individuals working in our branches, and I know that's the case for many credit unions across the province.

My understanding is that throughout the pandemic, there was somewhat of an increase and some challenging experiences for folks working in our credit union environments, and I think that one aspect to this bill certainly seeks to respond to that challenge.

Mr. Jackson: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and just—or, Deputy Speaker—and a question for the minister.

Does this bill do anything to protect or backstop credit unions in this province should there be a serious situation or economic downturn in Manitoba?

MLA Sala: This bill does not seek to respond to those concerns that have been raised by the member and also by a couple members in the opposition. This bill seeks to respond to a number of concerns that were identified by our credit union sector here in Manitoba.

That is a bigger concern that we'd like to continue discussing but, again, this bill is focused on some specific recommendations that we know will go towards helping to make credit union employees safer and as well as putting in some measures that will help to reflect the modern environment that we're in—specifically, one where there is electronic voting.

Mr. Piwniuk: The minister give us some examples of random abuse and discriminatory behaviour that the front-line staff in credit unions do experience time and time again in making sure that people are safe within their—in—at every branch around Manitoba?

MLA Sala: That's a great question. What I'd say is that we know—and, again, we heard stories in some conversations with CUCM about concerns about some staff within credit unions dealing with, perhaps, members who were aggravated, frustrated, and them being left in a very challenging position in terms of how to respond to those situations and how to respond to those members.

We—you know, this is certainly something that I think we can all agree, we want folks working in credit unions to be safe. This bill will help to ensure that we can do that.

Mr. Khan: The minister did allude—or did mention that he used to work at a credit union and he was in the back office of one of the credit unions.

Does the minister think that with his experience in working with a credit union and having friends and relationships with credit union, that this poses any sort of conflict of interest when he's bringing this bill forward?

MLA Sala: No, I appreciate the question. I don't believe there is any conflict of interest here. In my role as the Minister of Finance, I'm proud to be in this function where I get to work with the credit union sector in Manitoba and have this opportunity to bring these important changes forward that, frankly, again, will help to keep employees safer and help to ensure that our proud credit union sector here in Manitoba can continue to grow and serve Manitobans in a good way.

Mr. Jackson: A question for the minister: Does the appeal process in this legislation allow for members to have the right to appeal a decision, and how does that compare to what happens in our banking institutions? Is there parity or an equal nature in this legislation—proposed legislation? And how does that react to how credit unions serve our communities and meet some of the gaps that, perhaps, other financial institutions are leaving in different areas of the province?

MLA Sala: That's a good question. I would say, you know, first and foremost, of course, we know that credit unions—no credit union ever wants to terminate the membership of a member. This is their folks that they serve; this is a very—you know, extreme situations that we're talking about here where we would see a credit union want to proceed with terminating a membership.

But to the question that was asked, in those situations where membership is terminated, a member may request that the board of directors of the credit union review the decision, so there is a provision here that would allow the board to review any decision, as long as that request is made in writing within 14 days after notice of termination of the membership was given to a member.

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, with—thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker. And I was just wanting to know, with the minister being actually an employee of the credit union at one time, is there—is he concerned about what's going to be happening now when the—now that mortgage rates are starting to increase and a lot of renewals are coming up with a low interest rate being renewed at a higher interest rate?

And we saw that the economic crisis of 2008 put a lot of foreclosures on properties and mortgages throughout the United States. Is he concerned about what's going forward here when it comes to the possibility of being able to have customers be able to continue paying for their mortgages?

MLA Sala: I appreciate the broader question about affordability. Doesn't necessarily have relevance to the bill, but I do appreciate that we have a lot of Manitobans that are struggling with mortgage refinancing as they're coming up. We know that those Bank of Canada interest rates are creating a lot of financial stress for Manitobans. I think that's one of the reasons why our \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit is going to go so far in helping Manitobans to deal with those elevated financial challenges that they're facing in this high-interest-rate environment.

So it's certainly a big concern. Our government is focused on improving affordability and proud that we brought forward measures in Budget 2024 that respond directly to those challenges.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Can the minister tell us more about why a director nomination proposal must be submitted before a meeting of members in order to be considered at the meeting, as the bill proposes?

MLA Sala: The reason for that is that CUCM clarified that this allows for folks who are voting electronically at a meeting to ensure that they have visibility on those proposals in advance of a meeting.

Mr. Khan: The member from Spruce Woods had brought up a question about appeal for decisions based—and the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) has, I believe, responded that they would be reviewed by the board.

Does the minister believe that having the board review an appeal decision, or an appeal by a member is the best way to do this, or does the minister believe that it should be a third party that reviews this appeal decision or appeal request?

MLA Sala: You know, again, this bill contemplates giving credit unions the ability to do something that would only occur in extreme circumstances. No credit union wants to terminate a membership unnecessarily. These are folks that we know credit unions are there to serve. Credit unions love their membership. These are the folks that, you know, that ultimately help to contribute to their business and are really important to every single credit union across the province.

So it's only in extreme circumstances that we would imagine this type of termination clause would be utilized, and having that opportunity for that member to have recourse to going to a process where their board is able to review the concerns, I think that provides—

The Deputy Speaker: The minister's time is expired.

* (16:20)

Mr. Khan: And I want to thank the minister for that answer, and, I mean, within that answer itself, it kind of lays it out. I mean, no one wants to see anything bad happen. I don't think any credit union wants to kick a member out. Nobody wants to see a crime happen. No one wants to see an offence happen. But these things do happen, and that's why there's rules and laws set in place.

With that being said, does the minister think it's fair that the credit union that has removed a member or kicked a member out for extreme situations and that member wants to appeal that process, that that appeal actually goes through the board that just kicked the member out? Does the minister think that that's fair, or it should go to a third party for an unbiased review of the situation at hand to see if that member can then be reinstated to the credit union?

MLA Sala: Again, appreciate the questioning, and again, what we say, credit unions do not want to be terminating members. These are extreme situations. We have trust in credit unions that they will be proceeding responsibly with the provisions that would be put forward here in this legislation.

Again, credit union boards make very important decisions every day, focused on supporting the best interests of their business; this would be no different. They do not want to terminate members unnecessarily. That would be a last-course decision. We're confident that this is not something that would put membership at risk or unduly put Manitobans' banking services at risk.

Ms. Byram: Can the minister tell us the reason for no longer requiring a members' register to be made available at meetings related to protect the privacy of the members' information? Is that the rationale for the change?

MLA Sala: I apologize, I'm not totally quite clear on what's being referenced, but I do know that the bill seeks to ensure that there's a limitation placed on the ability for members to access the lists of members within credit unions. That's being brought forward and was recommended by CUCM for reasons related to protecting privacy and protecting security. So there's just, at this point, from the perspective of CUCM, no reason for members to be able to see the entire list of membership within a credit union, so this seeks to respond to that concern.

Mr. Piwniuk: Can the minister outline a bit about the director's responsibilities for the management of the credit union and their duties and the fiduciary responsibilities for all the members?

MLA Sala: Well, credit union board directors provide broad strategic oversight for credit unions. They provide important services and ultimately are there to ensure the best interests of credit union members are served.

These are, you know, just to take this opportunity to highlight; one of the great things about credit

unions are these are Manitoba-based organizations that keep profits in our province. Their boards are made up of folks who are from Manitoba, who have our best interests at heart. You know, really, this is honestly a phenomenal area of our economy. I thank folks who are working within our credit union sector for all the important work they do in providing Manitobans with very low-cost financial services across the province.

Mr. Khan: I believe the member from Spruce Woods had touched on this question a little bit earlier, and I'll just ask the minister for a little bit of further clarification on that. I mean, being how the credit unions in Manitoba, I believe, have the highest provincial market share of any other province in Canada, 720,000 members with, I believe, \$34 billion or \$42 billion in assets, does the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) have any proposal or plan that if there is a bank run on credit unions, what is the minister's plan to deal with that and support credit unions?

MLA Sala: Appreciate the question. Again, it does touch on an important concern. This bill isn't seeking to respond to those concerns. I do think that those are concerns that, of course, as government we should be thinking about, and I would suggest that this bill, here, is focused on responding to some key priorities or areas that our credit union sector wants to see us move forward on.

This is a great opportunity for everyone in this House to help support our credit unions, show that we understand their needs, show that we're here to support their success. Really looking forward to seeing support from all members of this House for this important bill.

The Deputy Speaker: And with that, the question period has expired.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I want to thank the Minister of Finance for his clear and concise answers and actually answering questions that were brought forward in the bill. It's nice to have healthy dialogue in question period when you actually get responses to those answers, so I want to thank the minister for that.

I also want to thank the minister for his bill briefing that he did with myself and the member from the Liberal party as well. And it was nice to sit in a room and talk about the vital importance of credit unions play in this province.

I think today there must be a full moon or an eclipse—I guess we had that a few weeks ago—where we actually—members in this House agree on a lot of things today. That is nice to see, that we agree on the importance of credit unions. We agree on the vital role they play.

Earlier today, Bill 22 was passed unanimously in the House as well. This is another bill that looks to strengthen credit unions in Manitoba and we're excited to discuss that. I'm excited to talk about the importance of credit unions and what they do in this province.

And it's actually kind of surprising. Myself born and raised in Ontario, I never really—I had never heard of a credit union, really. There was a co-op credit union, which, I believe, went to Altea [*phonetic*] credit union. My father used to work for the federal government, so he banked at there. Never really heard of it.

And then went to school in Vancouver; moved to Winnipeg, and credit unions were everywhere. It seemed like the big five banks didn't really exist here. They had a place with credit union—Steinbach Credit Union and various others were everywhere, and I remember when I said, hey, what is a credit union? How does it work? And the idea of what a credit union is, is actually one that I think Manitobans take a lot of pride in. I think it really speaks to what Manitoba is in its core existence of Manitoba.

Everyone knows Manitobans are very charitable. We love to give back. We love to help. We love to support. Credit unions, in that same vein, are very similar. Over 720,000 members; largest credit union membership per capita in any province in Canada; they have the highest provincial market share with 40 per cent of assets. They are the primary financial institution for 33 per cent of Manitobans. You can't say that anywhere else in Canada.

Fifty thousand business members. I know, after discussions with various credit unions, that they want to increase that number and they are looking at increasing their business offerings and the robust system of what they have because, you know, that is really a market here in Manitoba that can grow for credit unions.

And I hope that the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), I would be happy to sit down with him and work with the credit unions on how maybe there's an opportunity to support credit unions in growing that sector of their business, because, at the end of the day, that's a win

for Manitoba; it's a win for the credit unions; it's a win for all the owners and members of this credit union.

Credit unions are non-profits so, you know, they offer a wide range in products that all the large banks offer at lower rates. And the money stays right here in Manitoba, which is really important for an economy like Manitoba, for a province like Manitoba, where we don't have the population of an Ontario or a Vancouver, where we are looking to continually grow our economy and sector here, to keep that money here is something vital.

So, you know, the member for bringing Bill 15 forward, I commend him for it. I commend him for that it was a solar eclipse—lunar eclipse—one of the two the other day—and that's why I think the House is aligning to move forward on these bills.

After speaking to members of—on this side of the House—that it was nice to hear that this was actually in the works as well previously, and it's nice to see that this gets across, because this is what the credit unions are wanting. This is what they've asked. The member said in his consultations have also met with them as well and had conversations, and this is where the credit unions want to go.

Now, is this bill perfect? No. There are some concerns that if—we do have in this bill, and we brought those up in question period that just happened. And I hope that the minister would take some of those comments away, like the bank run issue, which the minister addresses not in this bill—I understand that, but I think it's something that needs to be addressed with the \$43.3 billion of assets holdings within this credit union.

I think it's also really important that we look at what this bill goes through, and I'll touch on that in a few minutes. But credit unions are integral part of what happens here in Manitoba. So any way we can support them, any way we can make them stronger for the people of Manitoba, I think you'll have a very receptive side to that.

You know, it's important in rural Manitoba. A lot of my colleagues on this side of the House are from rural Manitoba, and after speaking with almost all of them, they all have—either bank—actually I think you guys all bank at credit unions, which is fantastic to see the support of credit unions, and, you know, I, myself, actually, after doing a deep dive on this bill, I believe I'm probably going to leave the big five and join a credit union, too. Maybe the member opposite has a recommendation on where I should go, but, you know,

when you can support Manitoba, when you can support the people of Manitoba, when you can make things better, I think that's what we are elected here to do.

* (16:30)

Members on this side of the House are in full support of that. As I mentioned, we were working on this previously; our members on this side were working on it previously, so it's nice to see it get done.

There is, again, the concern that I did bring up with the Finance Minister, and I really hope—we brought this up in the bill briefing and bringing it up again today, that I really hope he does give it some serious thought of having a third-party appeal process. I understand the unions don't want to kick members out; no one is saying—agree with you. But a lot of bad things happen in this world. Some things need to have an independent body to look at it. Whatever those circumstances may be, you know, I'd really urge the Finance Minister—I'm having ongoing discussions with credit unions as well—to look at the process of having a third party in there.

These instances happen very rarely, but in the one time that it does happen, it would be a real shame—a real tragedy—if that member is wrongfully removed and cannot get back into that credit union. I don't want the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) to wear that. I don't want the Province of Manitoba to wear that. So I hope that there is some common ground where we can come to on that.

You know, and this bill addresses, you know, issues that are brought up—advance notice of members wishing to run as a director—that's a good thing. Advance notice is good so we don't go through the process of all that time, due diligence and resources. The privacy of the members of credit unions, this bill addresses as well, and the well-being of safety of front line in credit unions. Of utmost importance is always the safety of employees in all industry and all sectors. Not only employees; all Manitobans.

This bill takes a step forward in protecting workers of credit unions. You know, I would hope that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) would take a page from the Minister of Finance and do something to protect Manitobans, not just credit union workers. It would be nice to see them do things to actually protect Manitobans.

This is a step forward that works on that, and I can see the Minister of Justice is nodding his head and agreeing with what I'm saying, so maybe he can get

together with the Minister of Finance and they can share some ideas on that.

The Speaker in the Chair

It was nice to talk to the Canadian Credit Union Association, the Manitoba credit union association and various other credit unions in this province, get their feedback on this, get their support. They are in favour of this, so on this side of the House, we will be speaking in favour of this.

There are some serious concerns—and I've brought two of those up, one of them being the bank runs, one of them being the appeal process—for this minister and that I would hope he would take that away. Now in closing, I will also—I don't know if the Minister of Finance—you know, I can already see that the Minister of Justice and Finance are already getting together to maybe work on crime prevention and others and you know, incidences in this province to work, so that's great to see. It's great to see us all coming together to make Manitoba better.

I will also leave this Minister of Finance with this, and I'm sure he's probably read the budget—Ontario budget page to page. I don't know if he has. He may be giving me a head nod. I don't know if I—but on page 111, it actually references the issue of having a bank run—of support of the government for guaranteeing the load—the assets of the credit unions. So page 111, I would encourage the Minister of Finance to take a look.

You know, they have \$95 billion of managing assets and 9,000 employees, so, you know, it goes on to: the provincial government is 'concouraged' by the proposal; you know, it talks about protecting them from liquidity and emergency measures. That's really important for credit unions. I know the minister agrees with that.

In conclusion, I will say, credit unions, keep up the great work. We're happy on this side of the House to support credit unions, and I thank the member for—the Minister of Finance for bringing this bill forward.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm happy to rise this afternoon and just put a few words on record about Bill 15, the credit unions popularities amendment act.

Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation as well as just for the bill briefing that he provided. It was a

very informative bill briefing. I know I learned a lot through the bill briefing just about credit unions.

But it is an interesting piece of legislation, and I'm curious and eager to want to learn more through the committee stage. I actually had a person reach out to me after the bill had been introduced expressing concern that the bill is enabling only internal resolution to occur when there could be a type of situation that should be arbitrated by a third party.

I recognize my colleague from Fort Whyte spoke about this quite a bit, so I won't echo everything that he has shared, but I do think that it's very important that we are putting procedures in place, not only for the credit unions, for—but for the members of the credit unions, and I'm hoping to learn more about this at the committee stage, Honourable Speaker.

I do think it's really important, though, that we're protecting our credit unions and the staff at credit unions, and doing everything that we can to have the measures in place the way that we do at some of the major banks here in Manitoba, Honourable Speaker, and I think that there are ways to, in fact, do this, and I think perhaps this legislation could be a way for this.

Again, I would just like to hear a little bit more from the members if there are concerns on their half. I think that we as parliamentarians have an obligation to protect all Manitobans, and while I think this is—very, very positive step for credit unions, and my hope is that this legislation will, in fact, go through committee and there will be very positive response at committee, I'd still like to hear just a little bit more to reinforce that confidence, Honourable Speaker.

But I'm happy to support it through to committee at this point. Thank you.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is—the question before the House is second reading of Bill 15, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker—
[interjection]

The Speaker: Sorry.

Bill 14—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024

The Speaker: Next, we'll progress to the second reading of Bill 14.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move by the—I move, seconded by the member for—the Minister for Advanced Education, that Bill 14, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: We can hear the excitement in the House for this annual omnibus bill, known this year as Bill 14, but always known as The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act.

This bill is an annual omnibus bill, as I said, that is primarily concerned with correcting typographical, numbering and minor drafting and translation errors in Manitoba's statutes book. This bill also contains minor amendments to several acts.

This year, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act deals with amendments in three main areas. Part 1 makes French-language improvements, updates cross references, citations and terminology, and corrects drafting errors to provide clarity and consistency across Manitoba's statute book.

Part 2 contains amendments related to the term associate judge. On May 30, 2023, An Act respecting the Title "Associate Judge" (Various Acts Amended) received royal assent. This legislation amended several acts to change the designation of judicial officials appointed under The Court of King's Bench Act from master to associate judge. The majority of amendments found in part 2 of The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act change the French version of the term from juge puîné to juge adjoint in response to a request made from the judiciary.

Part 3 contains amendments that change the French name of the Law Society of Manitoba from La Société du Barreau du Manitoba to Barreau du Manitoba. These amendments fulfil a request made by the Law Society.

Last month I was proud to join my colleagues to celebrate International Francophonie Day in—on March 20 here in the province, and we were accompanied at that time by members of the legal community to announce an expansion of French-language legal services.

* (16:40)

These amendments, requested by the legal community, reflect our government's ongoing commitment to support the French language, ensuring that French terms used in our provincial laws are up to date. As a bilingual Legislature, it is critical for all our legislation to assign equal weight and value to both French and English. By updating multiple laws with more precise and accurate French terminology, this bill does exactly that.

I want to take a quick moment, Honourable Speaker, to thank the drafters of this bill. These are folks who work in our department, in the Legislative Counsel office, who do tireless work, not only to prepare all the legislation that's prepared and presented here in the Legislature, but also do this kind of work that is more behind the scenes, so to speak, in the sense that it takes a tremendous amount of effort to go through all of the bills and statutes to ensure that they are current and up to date.

And so I want to thank them. And I appreciate their work, of course, as public servants here in the province of Manitoba, but also because of their work as impartial employees and civil servants here in the province. You know, we see other jurisdictions around the world that have a different way of doing things. Here in Manitoba, we have a great, professional public service. They do this kind of work, and we were—appreciate it every single day.

With that, Honourable Speaker, this concludes my remarks on Bill 14, and I'm pleased to answer any questions, even from the member from St. Johns, or any others in the Legislature who might have questions. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or 'denalig'-designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition member. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I'd like to thank the Minister of Justice for the bill briefing on this, and the fact that this is truly a non-partisan bill that looks at changes throughout the act.

But my question is, notwithstanding the language corrections and updates, does the minister see any amendments or corrections resulting in a substantial change in the interpretation or implementation of any of the 54 bills that this omnibus bill will seek?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): No, I really don't. And, in fact, it's my understanding that in drafting this legislation it really would be improper or not following in the spirit of how this legislation is generally brought forward for us to bring in any consequential changes.

Again, important changes; changes that will, I think, properly recognize, in this case, the legal community and improve the French-language translation. So it is important, but not consequential, I think, in the way that the member may be asking.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Thank you to the Minister of Justice for the briefing on this. What measures are in place to ensure accountability and transparency in the implementation of Bill 14?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, it's interesting to me, anyway, that I would imagine that this could be a bill that—or a process—that could be removed from the Legislature in the sense, as the member for Brandon West just said, non-partisan; these are sort of administrative changes.

That being said, it does come to the Legislature. It does come to the floor of the House. We're able to answer questions here, it will come—I believe—to a committee; it goes through the regular legislative process. And so if there are any specific questions I do encourage the members opposite—I—as the member said, we had the bill briefing. But at any point during the process, if there's any clarification, I hope that we can offer that, and it, hopefully, will pass in the Legislature.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Can the minister clarify to me, are the changes a result of ongoing reviews of the legislation or external stakeholders or both?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, that's a really good question because, as a new minister, I'd say it is part of the process of learning, and I think the member hit the nail on the head when he said both, both external and internal.

So had a chance to go over to visit the Leg. Counsel office, meet all the amazing drafters that we have over there, thank them personally for the work they do. But this is an ongoing, year-round process that they're cleaning up our legislation and old statutes. But then, as the member rightly points out,

there was also a consultation, within this case, the legal community, who are saying, we would like this change. And so we're responsive to them, but the work is ongoing on a regular basis within the department as well.

Mr. Balcaen: Again, to the Minister of Justice, more specific, page 10, under The Police Services Act of this bill, honourable Minister, it talks about enforcement of First Nation laws. And I'm just wondering if you can speak a little bit further on that regarding the ability of First Nations to enforce laws on their land, and will this, in fact, free up local police of jurisdiction from enforcing on First Nations land?

Mr. Wiebe: I'm, you know, I think I've got the section that the member's referring to; if I don't, he can correct me on the next question. But this amendment authorizes First Nation safety officers to enforce land management laws made by a First Nation as well as laws made by a First Nation under self-government agreement.

First Nations did not have the ability to make such laws when The Police Services Act was passed. First Nations safety officers are already authorized to enforce bylaws made by a First Nation under the Indian Act. So this is sort of a, if I can maybe phrase it this way, chicken and the egg situation where you have an act that now needs to be updated because of the changes with self-governing bodies.

MLA Bereza: Question to the minister: what feedback has been received from the public regarding Bill 14?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, this is a real barnburner, Honourable Speaker. We get calls day and night in my office, wanting to discuss the contents of Bill 14, I'm sure—maybe not.

But I will say that, as I said before, the legal community—to be perfectly serious, the legal community has asked and has made reference—representation, again, not at the direction so much as—of our department that we've instituted these changes. But once that request came in, Leg. Counsel was very good about responding to that and being very responsive to that. So we do expect that there'll be full support for the work that was done in this bill.

Mr. Perchotte: As I understand what we're hearing in the Chamber today—I wasn't a part of the bill briefing—but this is mainly a housekeeping-type process that reflects what's happening today. What departments particularly work on this?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, that's a good question, Honourable Speaker, because, as I said, our legislative drafters do a ton of work to prepare this bill and go through and be very responsive. But they do hear from departments because again, you know, if you can imagine all the statutes that we have, all the regulations, all of the bills that have passed this Legislature, you know, since the province of Manitoba began, there's a lot to go through to ensure that we make sure we get it right. So we do listen to departments, and when they bring forward a concern about a change that needs to be made, at that point, Leg. Counsel will decide if it's deemed appropriate to be included in this annual bill.

The Speaker: No further—honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

MLA Bereza: My last question to the Minister of Justice: how does this Bill 14 align with existing laws and regulations in Manitoba?

* (16:50)

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, Honourable Speaker, because the way that this bill is presented, on a yearly basis, precludes any kind of consequential changes that might, you know, might exist. It really is very narrow in scope. I mean, it—really, if you go through the bill, there are actual instances of just, you know, corrections in the terms of grammar and other simple changes like that. But, really, any consequential changes would have to come in a different format, in a different bill.

And so we trust our public servants who do this work. They do amazing work. I'm so proud that in a province like Manitoba we have impartial and professional civil servants. We lean on them a lot, and they've brought—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate. No? Seeing there—oh, the honourable member for Brandon West.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, just gives me an opportunity to put a few words on the record. I'll make this very short because, again, this is a non-partisan bill and it is housekeeping.

I did find it interesting during our bill briefing to talk with the minister and the staff and learn that a lot of the changes from French language comes from people listening in on either the legal proceedings or listening in on parts of our processes here in the

Legislature and finding that there is significant worded–wording differences between the French language and the translation from English to French.

So I do appreciate the work of Legislative Counsel that does the work on these bills and doing the drafting. It must be tedious work and it must be very difficult to constantly be switching between the 54 different bills and regulations that this act targets.

So it continues to ensure that Manitoba and nation-wide—to pursue gender-neutral and updated language in legislation, and I think that's important for everybody in the House to make sure that we follow that trend that's both here in Manitoba and national.

The act also, as I stated, corrects language errors in the bills and it attempts to rectify, in a variety of different statutes and amendments, things that are no longer applicable to law or do not make sense based on changing laws, including French translations, to ensure that we have the proper French translation within our Manitoba statutes and amendments.

And with that, Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 14, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024.

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

I declare the motion carried.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Adult Literacy Act

The Speaker: We'll now move on to debate on second reading of Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act.

As there are no speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 6—The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act

The Speaker: We will now move on to debate and second readings of Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act.

There are no members wishing to debate? Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is the second reading of Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

* * *

The Speaker: As this concludes the business previously agreed to for the House to consider today, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 18, 2024

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