

First Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Justice

Chairperson
Billie Cross
Constituency of Seine River

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE**

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – MLA Billie Cross (Seine River)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park)

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the committee present:

Mr. Balcaen, MLAs Chen, Cross, Messrs. Khan, Oxenham, Mrs. Schott

APPEARING:

Hon. Adrien Sala, Minister of Finance

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine, Minister of Families and of Women and Gender Equity

Lauren Stone, MLA for Midland

Kathleen Cook, MLA for Roblin

Hon. Matt Wiebe, Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Doyle Pivniuk, MLA for Turtle Mountain

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Bill 6 – The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act

Kate Kehler, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

Josh Brandon, Make Poverty History Manitoba

Jim Silver, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives–Manitoba

Bill 8 – The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act

David Grant, private citizen

Bill 15 – The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act

David Grant, private citizen

Bill 19 – The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act

David Grant, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 6 – The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act

Bill 8 – The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act

Bill 11 – The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act

Bill 14 – The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024

Bill 15 – The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act

Bill 19 – The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act

Bill 20 – The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Bill 24 – The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (Distribution of Fake Intimate Images)

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Clerk Assistant (Ms. Katerina Tefft): Will the Standing Committee on Justice please come to order.

Your first item of business is the election of a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I'd like to nominate MLA Cross as Chair.

Clerk Assistant: MLA Cross has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, MLA Cross, will you please take the Chair.

The Chairperson: Our next item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

MLA Sala: I'd like to nominate MLA Oxenham as Vice-Chair.

The Chairperson: MLA Oxenham has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, MLA Oxenham is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act; Bill 8, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act; Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act; Bill 14, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024; Bill 15, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act; Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act; Bill 20, The Highway

Traffic Amendment Act; Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (Distribution of Fake Intimate Images).

I would like to affirm—inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. A standing committee meeting to consider a bill must not sit past midnight to hear public presentations or to consider clause by clause of a bill except by unanimous consent of the committee.

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in a committee. In accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members. Questions shall not exceed 30 seconds in length, with no time limit for answers. Questions may be addressed to presenters in the following rotation: first, the minister sponsoring the bill; second, a member of the official opposition; and third, an independent member.

If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is a signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

Bill 6—The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act

The Chairperson: All right, our first presenter is Kate Kehler from the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and she is joining us virtually.

Kate Kehler (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg): Am I waiting for my name, or do I start?

The Chairperson: Yes, just one second.

K. Kehler: Perfect, thank you.

The Chairperson: Sorry about that. Kate, please proceed with your presentation.

K. Kehler: Oh, of course. Thank you very much.

Good evening, everyone.

Thank you for—very much for the opportunity to speak with you tonight on the necessity of implementing Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act.

As some of you may know, I represent an organization with 105 years of experience working to create a better city and province for all. Our current vision statement is for sustainable community that is just, equitable and caring.

I will be highlighting two specific areas of our work: child and family poverty in Manitoba, as well as the data from the Winnipeg street censuses in order to support our argument for the adoption and full implementation of Bill 6 as quickly as possible. I will also bring my previous experience with the John Howard Society of Manitoba to the discussion as well.

It has long been a call from community-based organizations that support people on EIA and social justice advocates concerned that the current emphasis of EIA on finding employment, any employment, can trap individuals into low-paying jobs.

While Manitoba has made some progress on increasing minimum wage, it is still not a living wage. Someone, especially a full-time working parent, should not have to rely on food banks, for example, and yet Harvest Manitoba's most recent Voices report notes women who remain the predominant leaders of single-parent families are more likely to access food banks and work more part-time lower paying jobs when compared to men. They are more likely to face food insecurity due to factors such as a lack of accessible child care and flexible work opportunities that can accommodate caregiving responsibilities.

Higher education is the answer to this problem. Be it in trades or academic degrees, education opens opportunities for higher incomes and can move people from beyond cycling in and out of the EIA system because they cannot make ends meet on a minimum-wage job they were forced to take or risk being deemed ineligible by their worker.

It must also be noted that EIA rates still only put individuals at about 40 per cent of the poverty line, so by extending EIA to people pursuing an education is hardly offering them the easy way out.

As I mentioned, SPCW is turning 105. When we were approaching our 100th anniversary, we were looking back over our history and we found some records of discussions of government legislation dating back to the early 1920s.

That legislation was talking about what to do about the problem of unmarried and, gasp, pregnant women. It was generally agreed that something had to be done but what they very clearly spelled out is it could really—it shouldn't be too much because

they didn't want to, quote, unquote, encourage that behaviour.

And, unfortunately, that's been—that's continued to be our thinking. It's our society's thinking and therefore it's reflected in our government policies, that we continue to think that we can punish people out of poverty. It didn't work back then and it hasn't worked in the last 100 years.

Do people succeed and move on from EIA on their own? Of course, but that is usually in spite of the system and not because of it. And when we start talking about the intergenerational poverty, it's just that much more difficult.

I mentioned Harvest earlier. They are a long-time partner on the Campaign 2000 annual Report Cards on Child and Family Poverty in Manitoba. The most recent data, 2021, based on the CFLIM-After-Tax poverty measurement demonstrates that Manitoba, while having, quote, unquote, beat out our long history of being the province with the highest rates of child and family poverty by Saskatoon in 2021, but only by a mere 0.2 per cent.

* (18:10)

We are still the province, though, with the highest rates of child poverty for children under the age of six: 27 per cent of Manitoba's children under the age of six lived in poverty. That is a full 11 per cent higher than the overall rate for Canada.

Why am I talking about children when we are talking about adult education? To be adding it to EIA? Because our most recent Campaign 2000 reports highlight the health, physical and mental harms done by even short stints in poverty as a child. Pre-term and low-birth-weight babies are too. Thank you. Doubling the Healthy Baby Prenatal Benefit will help with that; however dental extractions are also high, pointing to food insecurity as children move beyond infancy.

Our reports also speak to the cognitive damage done to brain development through 'toxis'—toxic stress caused by poverty. The most telling statistic in our report is that teenagers in the lowest income quintile are more than four times more likely to die by suicide than the other four quintiles combined, my point being that we are damaging our children by allowing the depth and breadth of poverty we have.

And so we owe it to those children who have grown into adulthood in poverty to do everything we can to help them catch up. And the good news is they can. People can recover, but they need the appropriate

supports and the light at—that light at the end of the tunnel to keep them moving forward.

As an additional note, all three Winnipeg street censuses that we have been involved in—2015, 2018 and 2022—all demonstrate that the vast majority of Winnipeg's unsheltered population are Indigenous. Campaign 2000 reports and countless others demonstrate that Indigenous people are overrepresented in poverty. Family breakdown and Child and Family Services involvement are also cited as reasons for people becoming unsheltered, and 18 is still the most common age people first become homeless. So the aging out of care and into being unsheltered is an ongoing concern.

Voices Manitoba—Voices: Manitoba's Youth in Care Network, also partnered on our most recent reports, and, according to them, Bill 6 could be a game changer. To quote: Too many of our youth graduate the CFS system without graduating high school and need time, support and financial stability in order to complete grade 12 or a GED. Those who do complete high school before aging out would like to see a way to pursue higher education. Unquote.

Bill 6 will contribute to Canada's Youth in Care Network's equitable standard's framework by supporting its first pillar: financial stability. Every young person—again to quote: Every young person should have the financial resources required to meet their needs. Youth in care deserve to have a financial starting point that is above the poverty line and allows them to pursue their career interests and dreams.

So Bill 6, while it does not get them to the starting point of above the poverty line—we can talk about that later—but it could provide a path to higher-income jobs.

Bill 6 would also contribute to achieving many of the goals outlined in the previous government's poverty and education task force report, especially in the overarching theme of a need for equity in education, as that should include addressing the long-term effects of poverty on people's educational trajectory.

I would—just a little bit of information from my time when I was at John Howard Society of Manitoba. Obviously, we offered literacy programming, and we knew at that time the vast majority of the people we worked with had about a literacy level average of grade 8.

So there is need for folks exiting institutions to actually also be on social assistance and actually also be provided with the support so they can continue

their education because what we know through our reintegration program and the bail program when we were there, when we take people and we drop them right back into the exact same social conditions that led them to be susceptible to crime in the first place, we're just repeating that. It's a—just a disaster waiting to happen, and we continue down this road.

So instead of focusing on bail reform—and should legislation come forward I'd be happy to speak more on that, but I just wanted to make that point that this is one way we could actually stop people from exiting institutions and unfortunately picking up and—where they had left off.

So, finally, while I've spoken on why Bill 6 is essential for people in poverty, this should not be the only lens we use. I know this is odd coming from me; however, someone was in a decent-paying job but lost that position or found that it was no longer a good fit for a multitude of reasons, why would we want to deny that person the opportunity to retrain or achieve a higher education while they figure out life's next steps? No society has ever fallen apart because its population is too well educated. It is societies who allow ignorance and discrimination to prevail that do. We need to encourage more education so that everyone has the critical thinking and reasoning skills needed in our complex world.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I just wanted to say a profound miigwech and appreciation to Kate Kehler and all of the really important and critical work that you do. Obviously, as you know, I am a huge fan of the work that you do, and I think that you are just a pillar of the community.

And I really want to just lift up the analysis that we can't punish people out of poverty. And that is a core principle and tenet of our government, that we will deal with the root causes of why folks come into conflict with the law and also put those legislative measures and those social policy measures that lift people and help work with people to get them out of poverty.

So I just want to say miigwech for all of the work that you do.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Any other questions?

Sorry, Kate, you have a chance to respond.

K. Kehler: I just want to say thank you very much for those kind words. They're very much appreciated.

I know I come to this organization after a—as I said, a very, very long history of some incredible work.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Thank you, Kate, for taking time out of your evening to speak tonight. I'm sorry if you're having trouble hearing me; I'm just getting over a cold here.

But in your comments, you had mentioned, you know, the challenges of, you know, how this current system traps individuals and vulnerable individuals into low-paying jobs.

So we're facing a, you know, critical skilled labour shortage here in Manitoba. So from your expertise and experience, you know, what do you find the biggest educational skills gaps or skills training gaps that exist right now that you think this bill can help mend?

The Chairperson: Kate.

K. Kehler: Sorry, you've said my name now? Sorry about that.

The Chairperson: Yes, go ahead. Sorry.

K. Kehler: So I am actually not an expert in—on the labour force, so I don't want to offer too much about that. Somebody, another speaker after me, might actually have better information on that than I do.

I would just say that, you know, I know it seems like the soft answer, but when you have—when you're dealing with folks, especially folks in poverty who have had so many—so much of their agency taken away, that I wouldn't like to actually have to then decide that this is the job you need to take, or you need to take this sort of education. We need to give people back agency.

Let them, again, just learn how to learn, and then they will be able to move forward in a—with something that is their passion. That's something that they can then succeed in.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Kate.

Are there any other questions?

Hearing none, then I would like to call the next presenter, Mr. Josh Brandon from Make Poverty History Manitoba, who is also joining us virtually.

Mr. Brandon, feel free to start when you're ready.

Josh Brandon (Make Poverty History Manitoba): May I begin?

The Chairperson: Ready if you are.

J. Brandon: Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to present this evening.

I'm here representing Make Poverty History Manitoba. We're a coalition of organizations and individuals working towards ending poverty in Manitoba. And we're pleased to support Bill 6, the assistant amendment act, as a small-but-important step towards minimizing the effect of poverty and working to address the difficult cycles of poverties that our current social systems keep far too many people trapped in.

Make Poverty History Manitoba conducted consultations with the community last year ahead of the provincial election to ask people who have experience in a diversity of fields and have front-line experience, people with lived experience with poverty, policy advocates: What are the key measures the government should adopt to mitigate poverty and work towards ending poverty?

We asked people to consider policy changes or solutions that touch people the most who were in the deepest poverty, and also recognize the inequitable distribution of poverty in the province and the need for policies to address those groups that are hardest hit by poverty, including Indigenous people, newcomers, people with disabilities, children, women and people from gender-diverse communities.

* (18:20)

And through that process we developed a platform of 10 key areas the government should focus on. And I've had a chance to share this whole larger platform in other fora, and I won't touch on all our demands here.

But one of the key relevant areas in our demands for Manitoba is to invest in programs that support the educational pursuits of residents of all ages. And this is critical because we know that few Manitobans are able to escape poverty if they are not given the tools to be successful in their educational pursuits. To quote Justice Murray Sinclair: Education got us into this mess. Education will get us out.

And so the—poverty and education can unfortunately create a feedback loop that it's difficult to escape. Low-income families face barriers to educational success including poor housing, overwork, fewer benefits, lack of income and often fewer models

of academic achievement in their own families or communities.

And so we know that education for all Manitobans is increasingly a lifelong process. And that's why we're promoting an education system that encompasses all stages of life, including early learning, K-to-12, post-secondary and adult education.

Concerning adult education, our report listed three demands. Firstly, double the annual budget for adult literacy and learning, which is flat currently and less than 1 per cent of what we currently are spending on K-to-12 education and less than a per capita basis on what we spend on our prison system. To double the annual budget would only cost an additional \$20 million.

We also said: Ensure that Manitoba income support program switches from a work-first orientation to an adult education approach wherever possible, to support recipients to improve literacy and education levels. And this current bill touches on that demand directly.

And then the third demand was to move rapidly towards the creation of adult learning hubs which would combine adult learning centres, adult literacy programs and a child-care centre. Many in need of adult basic education have young children, and the availability of child care would be an important part of that.

According to the Manitoba government's own reports, there are currently 192 Manitobans between the ages of 18 and 65 who lack literacy levels to enable them to participate fully in society, and addressing this gap is an important part of the process of reconciliation, recognizing overrepresentation of Indigenous people in poverty and the high demand for adult education within Indigenous communities in Winnipeg and across Manitoba.

We also know newcomers in Manitoba often require additional supports due to language barriers, interrupted schooling and discrimination they face in employment and education systems.

The proposed amendment to the assistance act will make education more available for people who need it most, including those on EIA, by making it a requirement for the department to consider adult education as an employment enhancement measure.

This meets the principle that adult education and literacy is a key pathway out of poverty for people living on EIA and also recognizes the need that the

transition from EIA into employment needs to be sustainable. Unfortunately, the current approach too often requires EIA recipients to focus on finding jobs that are not sustainable for which they have insufficient job readiness or lack the skills for, and this approach is not working. More than 37,000 families representing 62,523 individuals relied on the EIA program last year. Of these, only 2,662—or 4 per cent—reported employment income.

For some individuals on EIA, it may be a stopgap program to provide some additional support while they find employment. However, for far too many, it is a trap that keeps people within a debilitating system of poverty.

We are hopeful that the changing approach represented by this bill is the right one and will have positive effects to allow more people in EIA to successfully leave the program with the skills they need to participate fully in society.

While this measure is important, it's also important to recognize that the low level of income support in the program is also a barrier to educational attainment.

We know that the levels of assistance provided by the programmer—inadequate to meet basic needs. According to data collected by the Maytree Foundation, households relying on EIA have incomes far below the poverty line and generally below the level classified as deep poverty.

For individuals on EI general assistance, total incomes were only 40 per cent of the poverty line last year, and people with disabilities were little better off at only 55 per cent of the market basket measure. In fact, the levels of PIA and Rent Assist announced this year, total incomes for EIA recipients would drop further in 2024.

When we consider inflation, calculating real incomes for people on EIA, we calculated that incomes have dropped 10 per cent since 2018.

So we'd like to see an EIA basic needs system—EIA transform its basic needs program into a level that at least meets the market basket measure with an aim of transforming towards a basic livable income and a benefit that all Manitobans can have the dignity they deserve.

As a first step the government should consider with this bill increasing supports for individuals in employment enhancement programs, including all

those in adult education, in order to maximize their chances of success.

Thank you so much.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

MLA Fontaine: Miigwech, Josh Brandon.

I appreciate the time that you've taken to share things that we need to consider and things that are in your report.

I also just want to acknowledge you for all the work that you do as an anti-poverty activist and an activist on a myriad of different fronts. I know that we see you at many, many different functions challenging every government, no matter who's in government, to do better. So I just want to acknowledge you on that.

Miigwech.

J. Brandon: Thank you, Minister Fontaine, for your kind comments, and I look forward to continuing to be an advocate for these issues.

The Chairperson: Any other questions?

Mrs. Stone: I also just wanted to say thank you very much for taking the time out of your night and clearly for your passion and your experience in this area as well. It was a very thorough presentation, and I appreciated learning more about it.

So thank you very much.

The Chairperson: Are there any other questions?

Seeing no other questions—[interjection]—sorry; I apologize. Would you like to respond, Mr. Brandon?

J. Brandon: Again, just thank you very much for your comments and I hope that the information I provided will be useful in your deliberations today.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much.

We'll move on to our next presenter. I will now call on Jim Silver from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives of Manitoba.

Please proceed with your presentation, Mr. Silver.

Jim Silver (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives—Manitoba): Thank you very much.

So I'm here on behalf of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. I'd like to admit into the proceedings two reports on adult education that some of you will have seen before.

This amendment is one of the recommendations that we've made in the work that we've been doing on adult education, and I'm delighted with—that this is a really important step forward.

Up until now, in EIA there's been a work first—what's called a work-first approach—which means that when somebody is an EIA recipient, the worker tries to push her or him as quickly as possible into the paid labour force to drive down the numbers of those who are on EIA, whether they're prepared to go into the workforce or not.

Often, they are not fully prepared. It doesn't work very well. They get a job that doesn't lift them out of poverty. Sometimes they quit their job out of frustration because they're not getting ahead with it and it's just another failure that sets them back.

What this amendment does is to shift us from a work-first approach to an education-whenever-possible approach.

* (18:30)

Not everybody on EIA can succeed in the mature high school program, but many can, and many are knocking on the doors of adult learning centres, wanting to do their mature high school, to get their diploma, and in many, many cases they're being turned back because in the regulations it says that EIA recipients can go into education under exceptional circumstances only. It's a work-first approach; it's an anti-education approach.

This amendment changes that, and that's a wonderful thing. It's going to mean that lots of people are going to get their grade 12. Many of those who get their grade 12 will go on to further education. They'll go into the paid labour force. They'll pull themselves out of poverty.

We have lots of evidence, and when mom or dad are in adult education, their kids do better in school. Presumably that's because mom's doing her homework at the kitchen table after supper and the kids see that, and they figure, hmm, education's a pretty good deal.

So this is important for individuals who will pull themselves out of poverty, and for families that are in poverty. It's really, really hard work to complete a high school diploma when you're 33 years old and have three kids, or you're 37, or you're 29 or whatever the case may be, it is extremely difficult.

So what we're talking about here is creating the opportunity for people on EIA to really bust themselves to get their mature high school diploma. These aren't people who are 'lollygagging' about; these are people who want to improve their circumstances and their families' circumstances by doing the hard work that is necessary.

I think it's important to note that the amendment says, when deciding on employment enhancement measures for an applicant or recipient, the director, the director of EIA, must—must—consider whether adult education is the most appropriate employment enhancement measure.

So the word must is really important here. It seems to me it's equivalent to the word shall. It's not the word may, it's the word must. So in other words, what we're saying here, it seems to me, with this amendment is every case—every case—must be looked at with an eye to whether that EIA recipient can succeed in high school, whether she or he wants to and whether they're capable of doing so.

It'll also be important to change the wording in the regulations and in the EIA administrative manual. The regulations are full of work-first, and the administrative manual is full of work-first. They are anti-education documents; education in exceptional circumstances only.

So I think that it's going to be important to change the regs and to change the administrative manual to make it consistent with this amendment to the act.

It will also be important that the director of EIA meet with the front-line workers. It's the front-line workers ultimately who make decisions about whether an EIA recipient can go to school or cannot go to school.

They need to be instructed by the director that things have changed, there's an amendment to the act and they must consider whether this particular recipient can go to a mature high school program or, in some cases, to a literacy program.

So adult education, adult basic education in this province, the adult learning centres that offer the mature high school diploma and the adult literacy programs that prepare people to take high school courses, it's fabulous. It works really, really well, it produces lots of graduates. From a budget point of view, it's been flatlined for decades by both parties. We need to change that.

We recommended a doubling of the budget this year. The budget is \$20 million, really small potatoes in a big budget like Manitoba's. I know there's many demands, budgetary demands. But this is a transformative thing, adult education. It transforms people's lives and families' lives.

It's an anti-poverty initiative. It pulls people and their families out of poverty. It's part of reconciliation, which is important in this province, particularly, because Indigenous people are represented in adult education programs at about two and a half times their share of the population.

And it's about the labour shortage. It's producing workers; it's producing skilled workers, which we need in this province.

So this is a very important amendment. I'm delighted that this amendment is before us, and I hope it will get all-party support when it goes back to the House.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Silver.

Before proceeding to questions, there are only two copies of Mr. Silver's reports, and they are quite lengthy.

Is there will of the committee for the clerk to scan these and upload them to the MLA portal instead of making copies? *[Agreed]*

We will now move to questions. Are there any questions?

MLA Fontaine: Really fast here, because I have 30 seconds, I just want to lift you up for all of the work that—you literally, in Manitoba, are an OG in respect of all of the anti-poverty, anti-racism work, reconciliation work. You are just—I honour the work that you do on behalf of everybody here in Manitoba.

And I really want you to know that I have some of my departmental staff who have taken notes in respect of some of the recommendations on the regs and the administration manual, so changing the language there. And also writing down about the director meeting with the front line. So I really do appreciate those recommendations.

And again, once again, miigwech so much for your work.

J. Silver: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Stone: Yes, I also just want to say thank you for taking the time to come and present to us tonight. And

I look forward to reading the report that you've brought to us tonight, so thank you.

The Chairperson: Mr. Silver, any?

J. Silver: Thank you.

The Chairperson: Okay.

Any other questions?

All right, thank you, folks.

Bill 8—The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act

The Chairperson: We are now going to move to presentations for Bill 8.

And we have David Grant, who is joining us virtually.

Mr. Grant, are you there? Mr. Grant, can you make sure that your mic and your video is on, please?

David Grant (Private Citizen): Okay, my—I'm unmuted and my video is on. Is that okay?

The Chairperson: We can't see your video, but we can hear you now. Oh, now we can see you—or, we could. Now it went off again.

There you go. All right. Please proceed.

D. Grant: Sort of new to this. I've been to the Leg. before, but not to this, so excuse my clumsiness.

Anyway, on Bill 8, this bill has a noble cause, and my background is I strongly support the rights to obtain abortions. But I'm concerned about the bill, the wording.

A large number of abortions in Manitoba are chemical in nature and depend on imported pharmaceuticals. We know that the enemies of abortion try to restrict the supply of those pharmaceuticals.

And so I'm concerned that the bill does not ensure that the supply chain goes uninterrupted, so that the bill can have the effect that it's supposed to. So just a suggestion that maybe it should go in that direction.

Also, if protesters are kept several metres away, and they're limited in numbers, safety can be assured. By outlawing visual clues of disapproval, Bill 8 ventures far from safety and into denial of what we would call—some would call human rights. We know that the city has occasionally done this, when it forbids use of a road by anybody not on a bike, that sort of thing.

So, just concerned that we tread lightly on rights.

Thank you. That's all I had to say on 8.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Are there any questions?

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Thanks for taking time out of your evening to join us here tonight.

The Chairperson: Mr. Grant, any comments?

D. Grant: No, nothing further. I got two more bills here, but thank you.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we will now move on to Bill 15.

* (18:40)

Bill 15—The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act

The Chairperson: And Mr. Grant is also presenting on Bill 15, so whenever you're ready, Mr. Grant, please proceed.

David Grant (Private Citizen): On 15, the removal of a person from a business when they're presenting a problem for those in the business, physically removing them can be done now without Bill 15. And it's obviously the law, civil law, is intended to protect us from unruly people or those who present an infection danger.

But removing a person from membership in a membership-based financial institution—I am a member, but I don't have a mortgage, et cetera, with them—I believe this could ruin a person financially. And this fact puts requirements on the act to draw solid lines between trivial insults and actual threats to life.

And I think that's something that should be in it, some kind of guidance for when it's expected that a person would be removed from membership in their credit union. Because in that case, I would expect it should be something fairly serious, not failure to wipe your hands with the squirt bottle as you come in.

But that's my comment on 15. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Grant.

Are there any questions from the floor?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I just want to thank you for taking time to come share your concern and appreciate making time in your evening here.

Thank you.

D. Grant: I'm sorry, I couldn't hear that. Somebody's making noise here. I'll try to turn up my mic. So can he try again?

The Chairperson: Minister Sala, would you like to repeat that?

MLA Sala: Just wanted to thank you for taking time to be here tonight.

D. Grant: Thank you.

The Chairperson: Are there any other questions?

Seeing no other questions, we are going to move on to Bill 19.

Bill 19—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act

The Chairperson: And Mr. Grant is also presenting on Bill 19.

Whenever you're ready, Mr. Grant, please proceed with your presentation.

David Grant (Private Citizen): Madam Chairperson, 19 adds heavy-duty trailers to the vehicles that can be declared unsafe and unfit by authorities. It seems like a good idea, but it does remind us all that MPI has, in the opinion of some, been abusing safety rules to advance its own corporate causes and predilections.

Some of the—of which—these rules pushed are completely unrelated to the danger that a vehicle might pose to the public. Examples are numerous, and the—a carefully maintained and rare vehicle, except for slight hail damage to it is easily replaced is declared unfit based only on age.

It is time to bring MPI to account, in my opinion, for the cost of some of its policies when they cannot be linked, logically, to road safety. And that's something I think should be done here, because I could see them doing the same thing for a certain brand of trailer where it presents no safety issue, but it can still be declared unfit forever.

So, thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Grant.

Are there any questions for Mr. Grant?

All right, Minister Wiebe. Please proceed.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Grant. I really appreciate you taking the time to be here this evening.

I think it sounds to me like we're on the same page with regards to the importance of safety and the importance to focus on that and the importance of getting MPI back on track, which has been a major goal and endeavour of this government so far.

We're going to keep working on it; there's a lot to get right. But keeping rates affordable and getting MPI back on track is absolutely a focus of this government.

So thanks for your time.

D. Grant: And thank you very much, Minister.

And at the open house in December, I did get the card for your assistant, and I would like to follow up in a couple of ways because, as you pointed out, we both share a goal of making Manitoba roads safer and fixing MPI.

So thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Grant.

Are there any other questions?

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Well, thanks, Mr. Grant, for your presentation, and thanks for coming here tonight to give us this information. We appreciate it.

Thank you.

D. Grant: I didn't catch that. Could it be said louder?

The Chairperson: Sorry. Yes.

Mr. Piwniuk: Sorry, I'm actually at the end of the road here.

Thanks, Mr. Grant, for your presentation and coming here tonight to present and give us the information. I know the value, we all value the safety. I was the minister, at one time, of Transportation and Infrastructure, and I value this—your concerns about safety on our highways.

D. Grant: Yes, thank you very much for your comments.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your time.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

* * *

The Chairperson: In what order does the committee wish to proceed with clause-by-clause considerations of these bills?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Excellent. I suggest that we consider the bills in this order: Bill 15, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act; Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act; Bill 8, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act; Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act; Bill 14, The Minor Amendments and

Corrections Act, 2024; Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act; Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; and Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (Distribution of Fake Intimate Images).

The Chairperson: Is there agreement from the committee to read the bills in the following order: bills 15, 6, 8, 11, 14, 19, 20 and 24? *[Agreed]*

Bill 15—The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act *(Continued)*

The Chairperson: We will begin with Bill 15. So we will now proceed with clause-by-clause of Bill 15.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 15 have an opening statement?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Yes.

The Chairperson: All right, Minister Sala, please proceed.

MLA Sala: Grateful to have a chance to speak briefly here about Bill 15, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act.

I know folks here all agree that credit unions and caisses populaires play incredibly important roles in our provincial economy here. They have over \$43.3 billion in assets, and we know that they have a bigger share of deposits than in any other province or territory in Canada. So we know credit unions are just an incredibly important piece of our financial services sector here in Manitoba.

We do know, however, that credit unions are facing increasing headwinds in Manitoba and across the country with the advent of fintechs, AI, credit unions are facing greater challenges than ever before.

And we see that and the pressures that they're facing in the fast rate of consolidation of credit unions here in Manitoba. We had at one point over 60 credit unions only a matter of years ago, and now we're down to about 16, or 16 total. So we see that the pressure sort of manifesting in terms of that pace of consolidation, and that continues to happen today.

We should be deeply proud of what this sector has created here in our province, and our government celebrates the important role of credit unions and the caisses populaires, and the role that they continue to play in serving Manitobans and providing very important financial services.

Part of ensuring that they can continue to succeed is ensuring that we're listening to them and listening to the needs that they have and that they're bringing forward so we can ensure that they can continue to provide those important services and help to play an important role here in our provincial economy. This bill is one of those responses to us having listened to them, and it was drafted after consultations with the Credit Union Central of Manitoba.

It will update several sections in the existing legislation to address a number of issues that have arisen in the operation of credit unions and the caisses populaires, and this is particularly in connection to members' meetings.

I will just highlight just the key changes that this bill brings forward. First it will permit credit unions to submit proposed bylaw amendments to the provincial registrar in advance for confirmation that they are consistent with legislation, and this will help to avoid situations where credit unions submit bylaw amendments to its members for approval, only later to learn that that bylaw was not permitted with the registrar.

It will also no longer permit members to put forward proposals, including the nomination of a director, at meetings of members. And the reason for that is because voting can often happen now in advance of those meetings, so this ensures that all members of the credit union have the appropriate opportunity to vote on proposals.

It will also 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 general access, as this creates significant privacy-related concerns.

* (18:50)

The bill also clarifies that voting at a meeting of members can be by electronic means, which is, of course, increasingly the way that voting is taking place at meetings, not only in the credit union sector, but, of course, in all sectors.

And the bill will also allow management of the credit union to terminate the membership of a member who is engaging in conduct that is abusive, discriminatory or threatens the health and safety of others, coupled with a right—and this is very important—of that member to have the termination reviewed by the credit union's board of directors.

Of course, termination of membership would only happen in extreme circumstances, and in those

circumstances, those members would still have that ability to have, again, that termination reviewed by the board.

So, in closing, we know that credit unions are, again, a crucial part of our financial services sector. We want to see them thrive. We want to see them continue to succeed. We applaud their contribution to our provincial economy, and we believe this—the amendments in this bill will help to ensure that they can continue to do that important work.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Well, without repeating a lot of what the minister said—I think he had a lot of this—overlapping notes there, so I won't go into too much detail on that.

But I do want to say it was a pleasure to work on this bill with various credit unions. Curtis Wennberg, president and CEO of Credit Union Central of Manitoba; I want to thank him and his team for all the work they had done and the discussions we had around this bill.

This bill is an important bill. It is a step in the right direction to support the important work that credit unions do, and caisses populaires, within the province of Manitoba.

And from Ontario born and raised myself, I hadn't had much exposure to credit unions, and this bill—moving here, you get to hear a little bit about them, but reading this bill in detail and having meetings, you actually see the great work they do. It's vital for Manitoba's economy. So this bill is a step in the right direction.

So I'm happy to see this come forward; however, there is a further discussion to be had, and it was—came up at second reading and the minister acknowledged this, and I look forward to working with the minister on this, as well as coming up with further protections and more supports for credit unions.

Ontario has brought forward legislation on bank runs to support their ability to compete and ensure broader market stability. That is important with the amount of assets that credit unions are holding. It's important to enable direct access to the Bank of Canada's emergency liquidity facilities, and these are discussions the minister and I have had.

I look forward to having many more on these on supporting the very important work credit unions and caisses populaires do in Manitoba.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is an agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 through 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clauses 5 through 7—pass; clauses 8 and 9—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 6—The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act
(*Continued*)

The Chairperson: We will now consider clause by clause of Bill 6.

Shall clause 1 pass—oh, sorry, my bad.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 6 have an opening statement?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): First and foremost, I just want to once again reiterate my gratitude to all of the folks that came and presented today. I take everything that was said very seriously and, as I said, I do have some of my amazing team here tonight who have been taking notes, and already we are starting to work on some of the recommendations that were brought forward today. So again, miigwech to everybody.

Bill 6 will enshrine the rights of Manitobans to access adult education that is appropriate to their personal circumstances in the fulfillment of employment and income assistance, EIA, program requirements.

I was very pleased to see broad support for Bill 6 during its second reading on March 7, 2024. I want to thank my colleagues for their comments, particularly respecting their acknowledgment of the importance of education and training for individuals on EIA who are trying to achieve financial independence and stable employment.

The development of the bill was informed by consultations with Manitobans with lifelong expertise in adult education, including Mrs. Fran Taylor, the

director of the Seven Oaks Adult Learning Centre, and Dr. Jim Silver from the urban and 'inny'—inner-city studies of—from the University of Winnipeg. There will be no requirement to amend regulations because of the passage of this bill, as the participation and employment-enhancement measures, it's currently a requirement for many Manitobans participating in the EIA program.

A few concerns were raised after Bill 6 received second reading this spring. One concern was that EIA caseloads could increase as a result. I want to emphasize that this bill does not change the eligibility framework for EIA, nor does it substantially change current practice. It simply enshrines adult education as an option for meeting program requirements in legislation.

I am pleased we have some presenters that agree with us, and we are looking forward to royal assent of Bill 6.

Miigwech.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Yes, thank you very much, and I also want to thank all the presenters for coming today and sharing their expertise and their thoughts, and I look forward to diving in some of the reports that were provided to us, at a later date. I know how important it is to give vulnerable Manitobans as much opportunity, free of barriers, not just to survive, but to thrive in our society and move towards financial independence.

We know that we do have a labour shortage across our province, and we know that skilled labour is one of the most pressing challenges facing sectors like health care, manufacturing and trades industries. It's important that we do protect our adult education system, as it will ensure adults can develop the skills needed to participate fully in the community and contribute to a growing economy.

Any sort of adult education has its benefits that stretch far beyond a person's immediate environment or situation, and we need to ensure that we do have the right investments in adult learning and skills training to ensure people in Manitoba have the right skills, talent and knowledge at the right time to support economic resilience and growth.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until other all—until other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 8—The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act
(Continued)

The Chairperson: We will now consider clause by clause of Bill 8.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 8 have an opening statement?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity): To say that I am excited about committee tonight, and Bill 8 making it through one more obstacle, or one more process to receive royal assent, is an understatement.

As many folks around the table know that I started introducing this bill, I believe, in 2017, this is the sixth iteration of the bill that I've attempted to have passed. It's never gotten to this point; it's never reached past second reading.

So I am very, very excited and very, very pleased that we're finally here. The purpose of this new act is to protect access to abortion services and to uphold the dignity, security and fair treatment of patients, health-care providers and other health workers.

* (19:00)

Bill 8 will achieve this by providing safe access zones to prohibit protests and activities meant to harass or influence a person from accessing abortion services or a health-care provider who provides those services.

No one—no single Manitoban—should be subjected to intimidation or invasion of privacy based on their personal choice to access a legal health service. I was very pleased and grateful to see the agreement from the opposition on that point during second reading, and I appreciate my critic for her comments.

We've received some comments on the bill, and I would just like to take a couple of minutes to address some of them.

There was concern that the legislation would unfairly restrict the right of freedom of thought, belief, opinion or expression. We conducted extensive legal and constitutional reviews to ensure that Bill 8 strikes a justifiable balance between protesters' rights and

protecting access to essential health service as a basic human right.

I would add Bill 8 is modelled closely on legislation in five other provinces and—which have all withstood charter challenges.

I also want to emphasize Bill 8 does not remove the right of anti-choice Manitobans to protest abortion services. They are welcome to protest as long as they do so outside of an established access zone, and as I have said for the last six or seven years, they are also more than welcome to protest at the Manitoba Legislative Building.

Opposition members have asked: Why not make the legislation more comprehensive so access to all health-care services are protected from protests?

We explored extending access zones to cover all health services. Our legal advice was very clear: focus only on measures that are backed up by evidence justifying a reasonable limit on charter rights.

It is evidence—it is evident that Manitoba facilities providing abortion services are being targeted by anti-choice protesters. We know anti-choice protesters have engaged in verbal harassment, intimidation, obstruction and more, which impedes Manitobans' access as well as their safety, security and privacy. Applying access zones to all health facilities and services where targeted anti-choice protests are not occurring regularly would be an overreach and leave our legislation open to constitutional challenges.

As a result, like other provinces, we are taking a narrower approach to create access zones where there is a clear need to do so to ensure that restrictions on freedom of expression are minimized.

I also just want to take a quick moment to say miigwech to all of the abortion activists that have supported this, not only here in Manitoba, but certainly across the country, and all of the abortion providers and those that are on the front lines ensuring that Manitobans have access to abortion. This bill is dedicated to you.

Miigwech.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mrs. Cook, please proceed.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I just have a few comments.

Initially, my intentions were to amend this bill. I wanted it to be more comprehensive in terms of protecting all Manitoba patients and all Manitoba health-care workers at all Manitoba health-care facilities. And I worked with Leg. Counsel over an extended period of time. But it became clear that an amendment such as what I would like to propose would be considered out of scope.

I still—I want to put on the record that I think it's still possible to take a more even-handed and different approach to this bill. I don't believe the government should be picking winners and losers when it comes to who can access health-care facilities without wading through protesters or which protests are acceptable or who can protest where. I still believe that that should apply evenly across the board.

I think all Manitobans should be able to access all health-care facilities, no matter what they're going there for, safely, comfortably, and that goes for health-care workers too.

And I said this during second reading, and I want to repeat it here so that there's no opportunity to misconstrue my contents—my comments—or my intent.

I believe that abortion services are health-care services, and I just—I really believe that it's not government's job to decide which protests are acceptable and which ones are not and that they're—I wish that this bill was more even-handed and took a more fair approach to protests across the board at all health-care facilities.

I appreciate the minister's comments and her explanation and, you know, attempting to address those concerns in her opening statement.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the preamble, the enacting clause and the titles are postponed until other—all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clause 1—pass; clause 2 and 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5 and 6—pass; clause 7—pass; clauses 8 through 12—pass; clauses 13 and 14—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 11—The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act

The Chairperson: We will now begin clause by clause of Bill 11.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 11 have an opening statement?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do.

The Chairperson: Please proceed, Minister Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And good evening to the members of the committee here this evening.

I'm pleased to be here to present Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act, and bring it—bring us through the committee stage.

As you will recall, this bill brings forward amendments that are related to keeping the statute book in Manitoba in good order. As previously discussed in the House, the bill deals with three matters primarily:

(1) Gender neutrality: Amendments will provide two legislative tools for updating the language of acts and regulations to achieve gender neutrality. The Lieutenant Governor-in-Council is provided with the regulated—regulation-making power to make amendments to achieve gender-neutral style in Manitoba's regulations.

Amendments also provide the Chief Legislative Counsel with revision power to replace the exclusive use of masculine or feminine nouns and pronouns or binary pronouns with equivalent gender-neutral nouns and pronouns.

(2) Minor amendments and corrections in regulations: These amendments give the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council a restricted, limited regulation-making power to make minor or administrative amendments to regulations, allowing for efficient updating and corrections of Manitoba's regulations; and

(3) Proclamation commencement dates: Amendments to the interpretation act will allow for proclamations that bring an act into force be amended or revoked before the coming-into-force date set out in the original proclamation.

I'd like to note that all statutes and regulations will be reviewed by Legislative Counsel for general—gender-neutral presentation.

* (19:10)

As a snapshot of the scope of this project, and in response to members of the committee's questions previously, there are 512 acts and 1,128 regulations in Manitoba that will be reviewed.

For example, 94 acts and 34 regulations contain only references to he, and 239 acts and 238 regulations contain references only to he or she.

Planning is under way in respect to organizing the review of the project, which will be completed using existing resources with no anticipated additional costs. And I want to thank our Legislative Counsel team for doing this work.

I'd be happy to answer any questions. I look forward to passage of this bill.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Well, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this bill that's before us today at committee.

I had the opportunity to speak with the Leg. Counsel staff that were at the bill briefing, and I would like to thank them for their dedication and the time that will be put through this. We just heard over 500 acts, over 1,000 regulations that they will go through meticulously to make sure that the gender neutrality is brought forward in this bill.

I would also like to note that I appreciate this government continuing on the work that our government had started on neutrality on these bills.

So, with that, those are my opening comments.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 14—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024

The Chairperson: We will now begin clause by clause of Bill 14.

Does the 'minner'—minister responsible for Bill 14 have an opening statement?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to briefly speak to Bill 14, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024, better known as MACA, and have it proceed through the committee stage.

As you know, there is an annual omnibus bill that is primarily concerned with correcting typographical, numbering and minor drafting and translation errors in Manitoba's statute book.

This bill also contains minor amendments to several acts. Amendments in the bill—in this bill deal with matters that are identified throughout the year by Legislative Counsel, government departments and other users of our legislation.

The tracking of amendments suitable for inclusion in MACA is continuous. As soon as the MACA for the current year is introduced, amendments suitable for inclusion in the next MACA are being prepared by Legislative Counsel.

This year, MACA deals with the amendments in three separate 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. These particular changes were requested by the judiciary to change the French version of the term from juge puiné [*puisne judge*] to juge adjoint [*associate judge*].

Part 3 makes amendments to statutes at the request of the Law Society to reflect the new French name for the Law Society of Manitoba, to be known as Barreau du Manitoba.

I would like to thank the committee for their time and look forward to the passage of this bill.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Well, once again, thank you for the opportunity just put a few quick words on the record for this as the official critic.

As we know, this is an annual omnibus bill, and we appreciate the fact that this will go year after year.

And again, I would like to reach out and thank the staff from legislative services again, because people in the viewing audience and people that are in

attendance don't realize the significant work that gets done by this core group of people. So thank you on my behalf.

I think it's also important to note to our hundreds or thousands of viewers tonight and our audience here that I learned at the bill briefing and during discussions that it's very important to me is that no substantive changes can happen from this omnibus bill, and therefore, I have no concerns with moving this forward.

So again, thanks to the Leg. Counsel, and I look forward to further discussion on this bill at committee.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to parts and pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Part 1—pass; part 2—pass; part 3—pass; part 4—pass.

Shall part—oh, sorry.

Schedule A—pass; schedule B—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 19—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act
(*Continued*)

The Chairperson: We will now begin clause by clause of Bill 19. [*interjection*]

Does the minister responsible for Bill 19 have an opening statement?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm getting too eager here, Madam Chair. I appreciate you reining me in.

Bill 19, the driver vehicle—driver and vehicles act, currently does not allow Manitoba Public Insurance, or MPI, to designate a trailer as salvageable, irreparable or rebuilt.

With the proposed amendments to The Drivers and Vehicles Act in Bill 19, the provisions dealing with written-off, salvageable and irreparable motor vehicles would now apply as well to heavy trailers, those with a gross vehicle weight rating over 4,500 kilograms.

Based on the definitions used in The Highway Traffic Act, the vehicle—The Drivers and Vehicles Act and their regulations, anything that references motor vehicles does not include trailers because they are not self-propelled. Currently, trailers automatically receive the same normal status designation after they are repaired or after they are reregistered.

This means that trailers that have been written off can be purchased at a salvage auction and reregistered without being subject to an inspection to verify that they are roadworthy.

It also means that consumers who subsequently purchase these trailers have no record of their claims history or an accurate estimate of their true value. This situation can also happen to trailers purchased from other jurisdictions and brought to Manitoba, where they receive normal status upon registration.

With these proposed amendments, MPI will be authorized to designate trailers with the status that accurately reflects their roadworthy condition and claims history upon registration.

The bottom line is that this bill is all about road safety, consumer—and consumer protection. These are two things that I'm sure that we can all be in support of.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

* (19:20)

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Turtle Mountain): Yes, it's important that we become consistent when it comes to—especially when there is actually claims with certain vehicles, that trailers are a part of that consistency of knowing exactly the status of any kind of—if that trailer has been in an accident.

So it's an—very important coming from an MPI background myself, having been insurance agent, I think it's very important to also enhance the, basically, consumer protection; to make sure that buyer beware of what they're buying is actually classified properly.

And just one of the questions of making sure that CARFAX is also part of this whole opportunity to give the buyer beware to the consumer.

And that's something that I would like to just clarify through—with this minister, just to make sure that that's included in the—in this bill.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; clauses 3 and 4—pass; clauses 5 and 6—pass; clauses 7 and 8—pass; clauses 9 and 10—pass; clause 11—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 20—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

The Chairperson: We will now begin clause by clause of Bill 20.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 20 have an opening statement?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do.

The Chairperson: Minister Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to bring forward Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act. This bill amends The Highway Traffic Act to support the implementation of The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Alternative Measures for Driving Offences), which imposed the requirements for individuals dealt with through alternative measures to have an interlock—ignition-interlock device in addition to completing an out-of-court impaired driving education and awareness program.

The Highway Traffic Act already present—prevents people from appealing against the ignition-interlock requirement itself; however, it does not prevent people from appealing the decision of their licence if they refuse to comply with the ignition-interlock requirement.

Allowing these appeals would enable these individuals to delay the installation of the interlock—ignition-interlock device, with potential public safety implications.

The amendment will address the appeal loophole in the alternative measures by allowing Manitoba Public Insurance to immediately implement the ignition-interlock requirement for individuals undergoing the alternative measures program, without the possibility of renegeing on their obligations for full compliance.

In this way, the amendment will also keep the Licence Suspension Appeal Board from hearing frivolous appeals filed by individuals who have agreed to participate in alternative measures to avoid criminal prosecution, but then do not comply with that agreement, and then have their licences suspended as a result.

I hope that there is unanimous support of this bill moving forward, and appreciate the committee's time.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I appreciate the opportunity to speak a little bit about this bill, because it is something that I am quite concerned about and quite passionate about, being a former law enforcement officer.

I spent many years of my career in the traffic section and on general patrol, and would certainly target impaired drivers, because I feel that they cause great dangers on our roads and a very irresponsible act by individuals, putting life in jeopardy.

So I think this is a very important act to close any loopholes and, as we heard from the minister, prevent any frivolous appeals coming before the board.

I think this robust program that is often sponsored by Manitoba Public Insurance to have police officers dedicated to what's called road watches and ensure that impaired drivers are taken off the road.

Oftentimes, the less serious offences are put through alternative measures. And the acts are very similar. The—sorry—the punishments are very similar to what would happen if they went through court, but it does save the court time in deferring these cases through the court.

So closing up any potential loophole certainly helps to ensure that the administration of justice is not put into disrepute and people cannot simply thumb their nose an alternative measures program that is meant to divert them from the court.

With those words, thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

**Bill 24—The Intimate Image Protection
Amendment Act
(Distribution of Fake Intimate Images)**

The Chairperson: We will now begin clause by clause of Bill 24.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 24 have an opening statement?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to offer a few comments with regards to Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act.

The bill—this bill amends The Intimate Image Protection Act, which requires the government to make supports available to assist people who have had or believe they are about to have an intimate image shared without their consent.

In addition, the act established a new civil remedy by allowing for a person whose intimate image was distributed without their consent to sue the person who distributed it.

The emergence of AI-generated so-called deepfake images, which can be hyper-realistic, are a growing concern. It's deeply concerning that someone acting with malicious intent can create a fake intimate image of another person that appears to be genuine.

Currently, The Intimate Image Protection Act is limited to actual photographs or actual film or video recordings. Bill 24 expands the definition to include visual recordings that were created or altered using electronic means including software, machine learning and other types of AI. The amendments extend access to civil remedies for those who have had these fake images of them shared without their consent.

Changes are fully supported by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and the Uniform Law Conference of Canada. They align with changes made

in other jurisdictions including New Brunswick, BC, Saskatchewan and PEI. By supporting survivors and giving them additional avenues of recourse, they also align with the priorities of the MMIWG2S and Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet.

This is about supporting women, children and all those who are victimized by the sexually exploitive—exploitative images, increasing protections for, and empowering victims of, these heinous acts.

I look for unanimous consent and support of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic for the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Thank you, and I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record as it relates to this bill.

And, you know, it is of utmost priority for our side of the House that we expand and strengthen and enhance our existing legislation and laws to protect children, women and vulnerable individuals from sexual exploitation.

And I also had a very similar bill on the Order Paper. And I know that the minister and I have the same end goal in mind, and that is to protect individuals from sexual exploitation.

* (19:30)

You know, as we've seen, AI-generated images are moving at a very fast pace across the world, not just here in Manitoba or in Canada but globally, and law enforcement has said that, you know, it's expanding at a rate that our laws aren't keeping up with, or necessarily keeping up with.

We've certainly seen this happen to, you know, stars like Taylor Swift globally; very, very public, but also even within our schools.

And so I think it's really important that we have the tools necessary for our educators to not only enforce but to educate students, staff, educators about the challenges, and about the repercussions of sharing AI-generated sexually explicit images. So it's important that we keep that in mind as we move forward.

You know, we—it's important that, on all sides of the House, that we work together, and this is a non-partisan issue; this is about protecting individuals

from sexual exploitation, and I look forward to this moving into the next legislative process stage.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 through 3—pass; clauses 4 through 9—pass; clauses 10 and 11—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes our bills.

The hour being 7:32, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

The Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 7:32 p.m.

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