

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
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TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 3, 2019

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

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

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Hon. Ralph Eichler (Acting Government House Leader):** I'd like to call Bill 200 for debate this morning.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 200 this morning, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act.

#### SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

##### Bill 200—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Norbert.

**Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member of—for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), that Bill 200, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Reyes:** St. Norbert now has a great representative in—for—as the MLA for St. Norbert.

As the MLA for Waverley, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House, and in my government role as special envoy for military affairs, on today's second reading on Bill 200, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, a bill that will exempt properties owned by veterans' organizations.

I want to thank those members from their respective veterans' organizations, who are here with us this morning. Thank you for being here.

Today, Madam Speaker, I proudly wear the Royal Canadian Legion and ANAVETS lapel pins to represent you, as we know, as Manitobans, the impact that veterans' organizations have on their communities as a hub and their role in educating young people. The legislation that we are discussing today is part of our 100-day government action plan—point No. 82, to be exact.

But, before I go on, Madam Speaker, I want to, for the record, pay my respects to Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, the Province's first special envoy for military affairs, who sadly passed away on October 15th. So, to you, Bonnie, from one Legislature to a former legislature, thank you for your service.

Madam Speaker, I still come across many who are still not aware of the position—my position as special envoy for military affairs. There never was a mandate given for the office of the military envoy until we became government. I had to learn my role with a lot of guide—with not a lot of guidance, and I called the department to—within the previous NDP government, we were left with a mess and no structure. A foundation has to be laid and I wanted to ensure the position had one so it can be sustainable and with substance.

So what did I do in the beginning when I took over as the role as the special envoy for military affairs? Well, naturally, I visited the troops, the Manitoba family resource centres, the Military Family Resource Centre, veterans' organizations such as ANAVETS of the local Legions, cadets, developing relationships, trust that they had a voice provincially.

The foundation was developing with routine visits to 17 Wing Winnipeg and CFB Shilo; visits to the Military Family Resource Centre; talking with families, getting their feedback on ways to improve the services that their provincial government could provide; feedback from veterans by visiting the Legions across our province; being part of Seamless Canada to bring the concerns of our troops and their families at the national table at interprovincial and

territorial meetings to ensure seamless transitions when they move from province to province.

So what is the current mandate of our government—under our government? Working under the guidance of the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox) and with the support from the Office of the Chief of Protocol, I am responsible for achieving improved services for military personnel and their families who need our support.

In particular, I am 'responsibling'—responsible for the following commitments: serving as the provincial government's official point of contact for military members and their families in both the regular and reserve force units; reaching out to better understand the issues of concerned military members and their families, including liaison—liaising with the Canadian Armed Forces and the MFRCs; working with colleagues to enhance provincially delivered services to deliver better outcomes for members of the military, their families, and our veterans; acting within areas of provincial jurisdiction to assist members of the military and their families to 'transition' to life in our province in a seamless matter; representing the provincial government at annual military anniversaries, commemorations, change of commands, ceremonial and awards, including the Hubbell Awards—and I thank all my colleagues on visiting their local Legions and attending military events as well, because we should always remember because we can never thank veterans enough and those who do serve; also, informing Manitobans of the Military Memorial Conservation Fund and the support it can provide for the conservation of war memorials throughout Manitoba; promoting new and innovative ways for Manitobans to learn, remember, and commemorate Manitoba's military history and the contribution of Manitobans to Canada's military history.

\* (10:10)

A couple of notable accomplishments by our PC government through the office of the special envoy for military affairs are the following: working with the Ministry of Crown Services to recognize the military ID as one of the accepted forms of ID when you are applying for a driver's licence; working with Sport, Culture and Heritage, as I mentioned to—as I mentioned already—to inform Manitoba—Manitobans of the Military Memorial Conservation Fund and the support it can provide for the contribution of war memorials throughout Manitoba; working with our current active members of the Canadian Armed

Forces and the MFRCs to help ease move and the transition to Manitoba by creating a resource page for them; pointing Canadian Armed Forces members and their families to the proper channels, health-care cards, child care, driver's licences and helpful links on our government website.

So today, Madam Speaker, so when it comes to veterans, working with colleagues to enhance provincially delivered services, to deliver better outcomes for members of the military, their families and today, we talk about veterans—on how we can service them better in our province.

I'm confident that all sides of the House have an opportunity to vote in favour of relieving veteran's organizations from the property tax burden, which will ensure Legions and ANAVETS remain on stable financial footing and continue providing services for Manitoba's veterans.

I want to thank the many veterans, Legions, ANAVETS members who I've had a chance to see Winnipeg and outside of Winnipeg, including the Legions in Beausejour, Carman, Virden, Dauphin and most recently in Arborg, Manitoba. This bill amendment will be welcome news for them, should this pass.

And again, thank you to Legion and ANAVET members for being here today, hoping that we, as legislators, can all vote in support for this bill.

**Madam Speaker:** I just need to correct the record so that it would indicate that I was recognizing the honourable member for Waverley (Mr. Reyes) to bring forward the bill under the new name of his new constituency, and I apologize for making a mistake there.

### Questions

**Madam Speaker:** A question period of up to ten minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party. This is to be followed by a rotation between the parties. Each independent member may ask one question and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I do just want to take a moment, on behalf of our NDP caucus, just to acknowledge the guests in the gallery and say miigwech so much for your service to our country.

As you know, Madam Speaker, I am the proud granddaughter of Henry Charles Fontaine, who served

in World War II and was a POW for nine months after he was captured by the Nazis. So anything, when we speak about our veterans, is very special and dear to my heart and to the Fontaine family.

I would like to ask the member: what are the anticipated annual cost savings to the average Legion?

**Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley):** I want to thank your family member for their service to our country.

On the average, each Legion in Manitoba will save, on the average, \$3,000 per organization, and it's a significant savings because it will—that savings can give back to programs within their organization for veterans and its members.

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** I'm sure everyone in this House has had an opportunity to visit a Legion or an ANAVET. I know, across the street from my home, I have the Brandon Legion No. 3 and not too far away, I have the ANAVETS No. 10, both of which I have visited recently and had some great conversations with them and thanked their members for what they do so that we can all live freely.

So my question to the member from Waverley is: why exempt veteran's organizations from this property tax?

**Mr. Reyes:** Thank you to my good friend from Brandon East for the question. We've been to CFB Shilo many times; every time that I go to the Westman area.

Organizations like the Royal Canadian Legion and Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans, ANAVETS, have always enjoyed an education tax exemption, and Winnipeg has gone further to exempt them from all property taxes here in the city of Winnipeg.

Ensuring that the exemption is applied uniformly across the province will make sure all branches of our veteran's organizations are treated fairly and receive the support they need, regardless of their location.

**Ms. Fontaine:** I'd like to ask the member for Waverley (Mr. Reyes) if he knows if there are any other Legions currently exempted from municipal property taxes?

**Mr. Reyes:** Madam Speaker, I—actually, I didn't hear the question.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Again, just to repeat, are there any other Legions currently exempted from municipal property taxes?

**Mr. Reyes:** There are veterans' organizations who are exempt. As I said, the city of Winnipeg and in some municipalities this amendment will exempt property taxes across our whole province. That's the purpose of this bill.

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** I want to thank the honourable member for Waverley for his important work on this file. I think it was Winston Churchill who said: never before was so much owed by so many to so few. And it's a common-sense piece of legislation.

My question is, what other organizations have property tax exemptions in Manitoba?

**Mr. Reyes:** The Municipal Assessment Act already provides exceptions for properties owned by other levels of government, the Convention Centre, Crown corporations, educational institutions and religious institutions.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I appreciate the opportunity to ask a few questions here this morning. I think the intent of the bill is very good.

As Municipal Relations critic, though, I do want to just get a little bit more information, if the member could just clarify. He said that all Legions within the city of Winnipeg are currently exempt, or are there—is there a number that he could give me, maybe just some more clarity. Thank you.

**Mr. Reyes:** As I said, all veterans' organizations currently are exempt in the city of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** Yes, I did want to acknowledge the member from Waverley. He's doing an outstanding job in his role as military envoy for the government. I have had the privilege of having to be at a number of events, and he's always been tremendously respectful of the military and the role that he plays, and he needs to be congratulated and recognized for that.

I know his role takes him all over the province, so would the member please explain to the House where he's visited in Manitoba on his role?

**Mr. Reyes:** One of the joys I get out of this role is visiting the rural constituencies, and I have been to, as I've mentioned: Virден, Carman, Beausejour, Arborg, and I did go to the member's constituency of Dauphin for the Billy Barker statue unveiling.

Visited the local Legion, had a great lunch; it was almost like a fall supper with perogies there just for lunch. It was very heavy, but—I've been to many places

in Manitoba and I look forward to going to Swan River, hopefully, next year as well.

**Mr. Wiebe:** So I think I've got it clear now. The Legions within the city are already exempt.

Maybe the member could just shed a little bit of light if the Legions within the city of Brandon would similarly be exempt. And the reason why I ask is because I'm trying to unpeel exactly who this bill would be applicable to, first of all, but also just understand the funding impact, of course, that we're going to see at the municipal level.

**Mr. Reyes:** Certain municipalities right now can still have control of property taxes for their Legions. Some—right now it's currently in their hands. The City of Winnipeg has taken their hands to exempt them. So what we're doing as a provincial government, part of our 100-day action plan point No. 82 to be exact, is to exempt veterans' organizations of property taxes across Manitoba.

**Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River):** I'd also like to congratulate my colleague from Waverley for bringing forward this bill.

I would like to know if he could identify how many Legions this will actually affect and how many were exempted already from the municipal tax?

**Mr. Reyes:** Madam Speaker, that's a great question. This would ensure that all 68 Legions and ANAVETS will never pay municipal taxes in our province.

\*(10:20)

**Mr. Wiebe:** I don't think the member answered my question, so if he maybe could review his notes or ask staff maybe to send in some notes for somebody else that's speaking this morning, I do want to get down to exactly which municipalities this would be applicable to: specifically, I'm asking about Brandon.

What I do want to ask further, though, Madam Speaker, is that—if he could give me an idea of what the hit would be, in terms of municipal taxes received at the municipal level, and then I guess, has he consulted with those municipalities to understand the impact that they're going to see, in terms of property taxes?

**Mr. Reyes:** The member is so concerned about Brandon. And yes, the department has consulted with the department.

And the member himself has a local Legion in his area that's already exempt from taxes, so I don't know why he would be so concerned about Brandon when

we're going to be taking off taxes of all the Legions in the province. So I think he should come up with a better question, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Isleifson:** I'm happy that talk of Brandon came up. As I said in my first question, I precluded to the fact that I have met with the Legion and ANAVETS in Brandon, and they're very excited about the opportunity of what's happening.

And I'm wondering if the member from Waverley can maybe elaborate a little bit on, not just what this saves these facilities, these organizations, but what this means to them and what they can do with the savings that they've—they're actually going to realize with this bill.

**Mr. Reyes:** Well, Madam Speaker, as I've been to many of the Legions, when I talked to the members, they're struggling with memberships. They're struggling with finances, and this is our way, as a province, to give back to those who serve, and every penny counts. And on the average, 3,000—under \$3,000, just to say, we'll give back to that organization so that they can give back to programs to help those veterans and its members.

Because not all members are veterans. Those are—members like Rosemary Towers here, who is a proud member of the ANAVETS, and is willing to help those who served us.

**Mr. Wiebe:** I think the member maybe understands where I'm going with my line of questioning and that may be why he's reluctant to, sort of, just give us a little bit more detail.

Of course, we know that funding has been frozen to municipalities throughout this province. We were just at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, where many folks came up to me and expressed that concern, and so this would impact those municipalities.

I'm not trying to be partisan or to put the member on the spot in some kind of political way; simply asking if he has consulted with those municipalities to understand the impact throughout those different municipalities.

**Mr. Reyes:** Madam Speaker, when I was, in Arborg, I met with the leader of the—of that town, and also went to that local Legion. And, when I've gone to these Legions, they welcome this. They welcome this: the RMs, the towns, the cities.

So I just want to say that providing tax relief to the veterans' association is one way we can give back

and show appreciate to our veterans, and help the Manitoba Legion and ANAVETS organizations that are facing serious financial challenges.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for this question period has expired.

### Debate

**Madam Speaker:** Debate is open.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** It's a very great morning when we can have a chance to talk about the important work that our Legions have done, to honour our veterans for the service that they have given to this country, and it is just an awesome opportunity that I am so happy to be able to take here this morning.

Of course, like, I'm sure, every member of this Legislature, I was very proud to be at my own home Legion on Remembrance Day this year once again.

I'm a member of Legion No. 9, Elmwood Legion, and at that opportunity, of course, we had an opportunity to be with the community to talk about the important contributions of veterans and to lift them up. But what I tried to do, and I make a point of doing every time I'm either at my home Legion or another Legion, I make a point of thanking the tireless volunteers at the Legions who put in so much incredible work to build up our community—not only support our veterans, but to build up community in the truest sense.

And so, for me, that is an absolute honour to do that at that opportunity and certainly here this morning. I think what you're going to hear from the speakers here this morning is, I hope, more of the same because it is very heartfelt.

We know that our Legions are so very important to our communities. As I said, it goes beyond, of course, just the work they do around Remembrance Day and making sure that that specific date is still held in every Canadian's heart, that we all respect and honour the sacrifices given on that day.

But, of course, the work they do is really year-round, and that's why I'm so very thankful for those volunteers who put in the time to organize the activities, to bring in community year round to their Legions, and it is so vital to have that as part of the fabric of our province.

We know that Legions are not only involved in just those activities, but specifically when it comes to engaging seniors, bringing seniors out of their homes,

asking them to come out, giving them an opportunity to socialize, to be with community.

It is so very important and I think it speaks to not only the active living component of a Legion, but also the mental health services—and we know, of course, that has been the primary role of Legions throughout their history, but it has expanded so much beyond just the work of supporting our veterans and now really expands to all seniors who may be feeling lonely, who may be feeling isolated and are now given a chance to come out of their homes to be with community and to have some fun. So it's a mental health service that they provide to the community.

We also know that they provide youth programming. And I get the opportunity not only to spend time with our—with my home Legion and at other Legions, but I also spend time with the young people on Remembrance Day.

And I really wish that we could—in a more—folks from the community could come in and see what the youth are doing today with Remembrance Day and with that idea of honouring our veterans because, you know, I find it very important to be at the Elmwood cenotaph to place a wreath, to listen to the bugle, to recite poetry and to be a part of that tradition in that way.

But, when I go to the high school and I see the students dancing interpretive dances—you know, they do music. They do a whole number of different activities—a drama production—and it, I think, encapsulates the future of what we hope a recognition of Remembrance Day and the work that Legions do.

And I know that Legions in my community and in northeast Winnipeg certainly support that work in the high schools and beyond that—activities such as No Stone Left Alone—and I'm looking at the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), I think he's attended those services as well—an opportunity for students to be engaged, and I think that is important work so the Legions are so very important to doing that work.

The housing, Madam Speaker—I mean, you know, how can we forget the important role that Legions have played in housing, affordable housing in our province. And I'm actually not—and I'm—you know, if others are speaking this morning, I'd love to hear more. If there's statistics or information, I don't have that in front of me.

But what I do know is that in my community Legion gardens is an important part of the housing for seniors, low-income seniors in my community, and

I'm sure that that's the case throughout the province. So, again, if there's other examples in the rural communities, I'd love to hear that.

Again, all of this happens because of the work of volunteers, and what really struck me this Remembrance Day was, again, we had the ceremony at the cenotaph. We came back to the Legion and it was great. The hall was packed, as always, and the community was very engaged.

And at the end of that the president of the Legion came up to the mic and made a simple plea, and just said we love to see everybody here. This is what it's all about, but we are a 365-day-a-year organization and we need support. We need support from the community and that often means dollars.

So when I saw this bill come forward, I thought, great. This is an opportunity that we can support our Legions and, you know, I was actually quite surprised that it wasn't something that I had seen come across my desk before, and I thought this was a great opportunity.

\* (10:30)

I will put on the record, though, I am a bit concerned that this doesn't apply to the Legions within Winnipeg—not to say that Legions outside of Winnipeg aren't equally deserving, but I think this just gives us more reason as legislators to come up with other ways to support our Legions within the city, if they are already exempt in this way.

And I'm sure the member for Waverley (Mr. Reyes)—Waverley? Waverley—has already begun to think about those. I ask him that if he would reach across the aisle at any time, obviously myself, I know the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) who's our critic—or, I shouldn't say critic—is our representative for military affairs on our side of the aisle, I'm sure would be willing to work together because this is something that we can all come together and support.

Again, I will put on the record, though, very briefly, that I think the other side of the coin here is the funding that municipalities are expecting in terms of their budgeting. And, as I said, I spent a lot of time this fall meeting with different municipalities, and then together with all of them at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities convention.

And at that time, funding was the No. 1 issue that they mentioned to me—sometimes not directly, sometimes it was a program that they were being forced to cut; sometimes it was about public safety,

which we heard over and over again across the province, not just in the city of Winnipeg; sometimes it was about transportation, it was about housing.

It was a number of issues, but it all came back to the idea that they are being asked to do more with less. They are the most direct contact in terms of level of government, and this government at the provincial level has cut funding.

And so I think it is important. And I will say that I don't think I heard from the member that he has done some of his due diligence to speak to some of those municipalities, understand the impact for them.

But I think the idea is sound, and I think it's an important way that we can hopefully push municipalities further on this to support their local Legions, because we know, as important as the Legions are in our city communities, it is probably even more so amplified in the rural communities where the Legion may be the only resource for some of these programs that I have mentioned.

So I—again, I think that there's room to move here, but I just—I hope that the member for Waverley seizes an opportunity to continue the conversation and move forward.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to acknowledge, as my friend from Waverley did, the work of Bonnie Korzeniowski. I was lucky enough to serve with Bonnie, I think for a very short time, but I actually—I think I sat next to her, or at least maybe in front of her, anyway, in the Chamber here, and had much opportunity to speak with her.

I was a bit concerned that the member, in his comments, started off really strong and then sort of went a little bit more partisan than I think is warranted here this morning, but I think at least around the work of Bonnie Korzeniowski, there's no question that all of us can come together, appreciate the work that she did.

You know, she was a great MLA, but she really was a special connection to military—as military envoy for the Province. You know, I was very proud of the work she did, and I think her memory hopefully will guide us here this morning and we'll tone down the partisanship a little bit.

And in that spirit, I hope that members all—you know, from all sides of the House will just take this time to show our appreciation, of course, to our important Legion partners and talk about the important work that they do to honour our veterans



and to understand that as legislators in this province, you know, not everywhere 'acround' the world is this the case, but certainly here in this province, in this legislator–Legislature, we come together to support our veterans, and I think that comes from all parties.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Are there any further members wishing to speak on debate?

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I just want to signal on behalf of the Manitoba Liberal Party and our caucus our support for this legislation brought forward before the House this morning.

I think it is important that we are supporting the Legions, the army and navy veterans in our province, and that this is one of the measures which, in fact, I have advocated for for some time, and I hope that it can be brought forward and passed successfully.

I know that depending on the municipality, some municipalities, I believe, have already acted, but this would make it province-wide and I think it would be an important step in support of Legions who are in some cases facing financial challenges, and this would be of help and signal our support for those who have served our country and who have helped, whether it be in wars or in peacekeeping or in fighting floods and other disasters within Canada.

So I'm—we support this bill and hope it can go through and become law.

**Madam Speaker:** Are there any further members wishing to speak on debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 200, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act.

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

**Hon. Ralph Eichler (Acting Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I'm wondering if I can ask leave of the House to call it unanimous.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to show that the motion was passed unanimously? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Eichler:** Madam Speaker, I ask that there's leave to call it 11 o'clock.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to call it 11 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

## RESOLUTIONS

**Madam Speaker:** The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions.

### Res. 1—Removing Education Tax from Property

**Madam Speaker:** The resolution before us this morning us this morning is the resolution Removing Education Tax from Property, brought forward by the honourable member for Dauphin.

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Brandon East,

*WHEREAS quality education is of the highest importance for all Manitobans; and*

*WHEREAS in January 2019, the Provincial Government announced a comprehensive review on the kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) education system in Manitoba which had not occurred in decades; and*

*WHEREAS the review will make recommendations to improve educational outcomes for students, ensure long term stability of the system, and increase public confidence in the education system; and*

*WHEREAS the recommendations can be expected to transform the K-12 system in Manitoba to effectively serve the next generations of Manitobans; and*

*WHEREAS Manitoba has one of the most complicated and uneven education property tax regimes in the country which has resulted in Manitobans paying thousands of dollars on their property tax bills to fund education; and*

*WHEREAS Manitoba's property tax system can be an impediment to future private sector growth and investment in the Province of Manitoba; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government needs to take immediate steps to encourage and promote private sector investment in Manitoba to ensure prosperity for all Manitobans; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government is committed to providing further tax relief for all Manitobans and will phase out the education portion on property taxes once the budget is balanced; and*

*WHEREAS balancing the budget will free up dollars allocated to debt servicing, allowing more investment in priority areas like health care, education, infrastructure and tax relief; and*

*WHEREAS the phase out of the education portion from taxes on property will be completed over a maximum of ten years.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba congratulate the current provincial government for its plan to remove the education portion from property taxes.

***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Michaleski:** I do want to point out, for over three years this government has done an outstanding job of managing the mess that we inherited and navigating Manitoba economy through a time of unprecedented change and disruption.

This resolution congratulates the government on yet another bold and smart decision, and it has a solid plan to remove an old, archaic and unfair education property tax from property.

I'm very proud of the government's actions up to date and the progress that we've made, and we were re-elected on a very strong mandate and a vote of confidence from Manitobans to continue the work we are doing on fixing the finances and repairing the services and growing our economy. This resolution does congratulate the government on another step towards accomplishing those goals.

We knew—and Manitoba knew—we inherited a mess, and it's great to see actions that are simultaneously and multilaterally approaching the challenges we have as a government and that the government is taking action making tough decisions on things that the NDP simply ignored.

So truly proud of the record of this government and the better outcomes that we're receiving and especially proud of the strong and responsible leadership we've seen from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the government to date.

\* (10:40)

But, to go back to the matter at hand, this resolution speaks to congratulating the government essentially on smart management. And, as legislators, our education system is one of the most important responsibilities we have, but we also have a responsibility to our economy, so we look for the government's actions that address both of these things. The education system has changed; demographics have changed. Economies are always changing, and it's important that education funding adapts to the change as well.

To say our world looks and operates the same as it has 10 years ago or 20 years ago would be wrong, and quite simply, this tax is simply not relevant to today, and our tax systems need to change and adapt to modern realities. And so the education tax is out of line with today's real Internet and communications and business disruptions; it's not in line with that, and the new competitive influences that are affecting businesses and property are something new, where the old tax system simply doesn't apply.

So, as such, again, we need to congratulate this government on having the foresight and the vision in dealing with this issue, not putting their head in the sand, taking real action on addressing this unfair and old tax system while simultaneously doing things to encourage investment here in Manitoba, and in creating an environment for investment and confidence.

Their plan to remove this tax is responsible, because it's taken over 10 years. This is something that is—and it's also going to be done once we've reached a balanced budget. We've—are making tremendous progress in that regard, and adding a 10-year window to adapt to this change is just another sign of a very, very responsible and sensitive government to the changes that are affecting all Manitobans right now. This window of change—to adapt change is most certainly a very reasonable, moderate and thoughtful approach, and it's just plain smart to manage that sort of change over that time period. It's much easier for everyone to accept.

And it's something, again, that business would look at. This is a responsible shift, and business and investment looks at governments that address issues head-on and give a concrete plan and timeline to make those changes. This is predictable, this is sensible. Business gets that, and of course, business is a huge, huge part of our economy. The private sector investment in this province is incredibly important, and it's important that they get the right signals from the government.

So, anyway, funding education must be fair and balanced, and reflect today's realities. The K-to-12 review is an important step, and goes a long way towards addressing tomorrow's education funding question. I had a great time being involved in two consultations that were held in Dauphin. And again it was—they were great to listen to various stakeholders from business, ones that work in the school, parents, grandparents, broad range of stakeholders that had a lot of—had a lot to say about the education system as it

was and what they'd like to see and what would help the education in the future. They had a lot of good ideas they—that they shared with me, and that was fantastic to be part of that—the consultation process.

But this resolution to eliminate the 'educase' tax isn't about that. There was tons and tons of good ideas—doesn't talk about the good work that's being done in our education system—the work of our teachers or the education review; it's not about that. This is about getting rid of a tax system that's clumsy, out-of-date, and doesn't reflect today's realities. So—and it's also about providing tax relief to low-income earners, to seniors, and it's also to business, and those that we rely on to invest in Manitoba.

So, again, business in—investment considers these things, and removing the tax that's out of line sends a strong signal to business and all property owners and families and investors, all of these things have—create a more disposable income for many people including our seniors, for young families. And, if you stack that up on top of our—the PST reduction that we did and also raising the basic personal exemption, you see a number of things that this government is doing to stack things up to help low-income families: to dealing with poverty; to make housing affordable for many people—and, again, many seniors living in, you know, with fixed incomes, this gives them more disposable income. Really, it's a win because it's such a broad tax relief for so many people.

We also know, again, removing education tax has many, many benefits, and probably the biggest thing is the discretionary income for everyone and—if again, if you combine those things with the layers of other tax benefits that we have done like reversing the NDP tax increase on PST, bringing that back down and raising the basic personal exemption, these are things that are all positive for many, many Manitobans. And if—again, if you're looking for steps towards reducing poverty, these combinations of things are all going in the right way. It makes first-time homebuyers much more affordable, and those things, again, are important to many, many Manitobans.

So, in closing, I do want to acknowledge this smart management of this government, the smart decision making, the sensible, measured decisions that they're making and on this—and in this case of eliminating the education tax on property, a tax that is old. It's archaic; it doesn't—it's not relevant in today's world. So winding this thing down over a measured time of 10 years is sensible. It's realistic and it's something that—again, the broad tax relief

consequences of this are stimulating to the economy, helps many, many Manitobans lead more affordable lives.

So I just got to say this is nothing but a solid example of smart, smart government decisions and I would just encourage everyone to join me in congratulating the government on this terrific plan, and I hope we can all join in support of this government's smart decision-making.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** I would just like to advise the House that since there was agreement to call it 11 o'clock at 10:37, the noon recess will take place at 11:37.

### Questions

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

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Well, I will—*[interjection]* Thank you, thank you to my caucus.

I will give the member credit for stretching out those speaking notes. Boy, it was touch-and-go there for a bit, but he made it to 10 minutes based on what has got to be one of the thinnest private member's resolutions I have ever seen.

Will this member just acknowledge that cuts to education are impacting students in Manitoba today?

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** Well, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the member for the question, and he—you know, when we're listening to the NDP's vocabulary on cuts, you know, they always associate our actions towards changing and progress, making changing to old systems and looking at new ways to do things and fund things as a cut. And I know the member is—that seems to be one of his favourite words, but this most certainly is not. This is about changing an old system into something new.

\* (10:50)

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** My question for the member is why is his resolution being brought forward today, when the idea of removing property tax—or, education tax from property tax, isn't going to be taking place for 10 years—and that's if

we're optimistic, if the government follows through with what they're saying.

**Mr. Michaleski:** Thank the member for that question.

And, again, this speaks a lot to the responsible actions of the government. I know the priority has been to work to balanced budget. This is an incredibly important signal towards investors, to bond rating agencies—just the overall economic environment of Manitoba. And once we get to that point—again we're making good progress in the efficiencies that the government is finding on doing things better, then we step into the tax relief on—and we'll tackle this one after we balance the budget.

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** It's—we started the morning off so great. It was fun. We had a great bill that passed that everybody was unanimous on. Now we have a member standing to celebrate the achievement, and the first questions we get from both oppositions are not in a happy mood.

So let's turn that around because we are talking about Manitobans, and I'd like to ask the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) if he could tell us why he thinks Manitobans deserve a tax break.

**Mr. Michaleski:** I thank the member for that question.

It is really important because—and everybody in this House should know—Manitobans work hard for their money and there was an incredible mess that this government had to clean up. We've asked Manitobans to help on our path towards balance. We're well on our way. We're making progress. And, absolutely, Manitobans deserve a lot of credit and they absolutely deserve tax relief from the period of time when we were under the former NDP, where taxes just kept 'tinully'—continually, 'contilly' going up.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Now, I understand that the member may not have had all of the foreknowledge that the PISA scores would be released just before we're discussing this, but it is telling that this member, instead of talking about education, instead of talking about enhancing education and the role that we can all play in making sure that the education system is made better, he instead focuses on the cuts.

And his government has been very successful in cutting in the education system, and certainly we've heard it. And maybe that's why his margin was just so much smaller than everyone else, because members in his own—or community in his own riding probably wanted to send that message to him.

Again, with the impact that the small class size removal has had, will he just ask his minister to reverse that?

**Mr. Michaleski:** I thank the member for the question.

And again, it gives me a chance to talk about what the government is doing in terms of education, looking at the education file. And I had a very great chance to get involved in a number of the consultations on the K-to-12 review. This is something that is going to produce a much more practical and realistic education program for the future. These are great steps this government is taking.

What the member is confusing is an old system. I know they don't like getting rid of the old; they like to keep going backwards. But this is about removing that education tax, which isn't relevant anymore.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** You know, I'm inclined to—

**Madam Speaker:** Oh, pardon me. Independent members are only allowed one question during this question period.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** I'd like to congratulate the member from Dauphin, the great representative from Dauphin, for this fantastic resolution, and, of course, compliment the government on its bold action on this removing education tax from property.

I'd like to ask the member from Dauphin: Can you please inform the House when the phase-out of the education tax on property will begin?

**Mr. Michaleski:** Yes, most certainly.

This is, again, a very measured approach to handling this removal of this tax system. We're going to be working towards balance and we're not far away from that; working towards balance. And once we get there—again that's a very important signal, because (1) it achieves balance, it satisfies a lot of the investors, the bond rating agencies and—but it also gets us to the step where going further we have the debt to worry about, but we have additional monies once we get to balance. So this government is staying focused on balancing the budget and—

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, once again, Madam Speaker, the PISA scores which were released show a very clear evidence that education is, in fact, getting worse in this province at the same time that this government has cut the funding to our education system—and that is a real cut, I will advise the member. That's a real cut

to a lot of the communities, in fact, in his own constituency. But that's a real cut at the same time that the cap for class sizes has been removed, and we see that education is, in fact, getting worse, and yet the member is only talking about what he's calling a major disruption in the education system. How will he propose to pay for education and what guarantees can he give that it won't be cut again?

**Mr. Michaleski:** I will thank that member for the question, and, of course, again, it gives me a chance to talk again about the need for review. This review is the first time, I do believe, in 40 years that we're taking a comprehensive look at what the education system needs to look like. I know the previous government didn't want to do that and—but, no. Again, it was a very productive and exciting part of the consultation, and many, many Manitobans that I've talked to are really encouraged and optimistic about the outcomes of these—of this commission's report and they're very excited about the future of education here in Manitoba.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** My question to the member relates to the fact that his government was elected on a platform of aim higher, but, in fact, now we see that they have shot lower when it comes to education. The report card is now out. Manitoba students are doing worse than they were in 2015, and it seems to me that it would be far better to put the member's efforts toward improving the situation in the education system rather than cutting education tax.

**Mr. Michaleski:** I thank the member for the question, and again, I'm going to go back and just stress the important action this government has taken to do the K-to-12 review that began over a year ago, and looking at some of the challenges and some of the problems and some of the opportunities that were in the education system. We know that the system was funded, and then that the previous government, it just—was kept getting increased and increased funding with poorer outcomes. This K-to-12 review is important; for one, it's just going to make better outcomes for all of our children.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, of course, Madam Speaker—

**Madam Speaker:** Oh, pardon me.

Am I out of—*[interjection]*

Oh. It does go back to—sorry. It does go back to the government member asking the question.

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye):** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to congratulate the member from Dauphin for bringing this important resolution forward.

Can he please tell us, the member, inform this Chamber what other tax relief measures this government has provided for Manitobans?

**Mr. Michaleski:** I thank the member for the question, and, of course our government is providing a solid fiscal management and we're making progress towards balance.

Again, another major tax relief that we're providing is the PST reduction and we made that promise in the last election and we delivered that, and probably that has the biggest, broadest impact for all Manitobans and probably the second one is raising basic personal exemption. This addresses affordability. This allows people to have more disposable income, rather the previous government who wanted to take it. We're keeping that money back on Manitoba's kitchen tables.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for this question period is over.

\* (11:00)

### Debate

**Madam Speaker:** Debate is open.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I do appreciate the chance to speak about education here this morning, as I said, an important week that we've seen the PISA scores that are coming in, giving us somewhat of an idea of where education is headed in this province. And so I do hope to spend some of my time focusing on education, some of the things that I, as critic, learned and certainly picked up from educators across this province.

But I wanted to begin just with the substance of this particular resolution, and, as I said, this is a real stretch. Now, I can understand the member, I'm sure, didn't actually write this. I hope he read it. I'm not sure that he did, but he certainly—I know he wouldn't have written it. It would have come from, I guess, down in the basement here in the Legislature somewhere—maybe the Premier's Office, maybe the Premier (Mr. Pallister) signed off on this one specifically, and he said, you know what, I need some congratulations for something that may or may not happen in 10 years, after two terms, may happen—we're not quite sure. That's kind of the substance, and that's the beginning point.

*Mr. Greg Nesbitt, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

I think it's very telling, the members who I'm sure are going to speak to this, and the ones that are present in the House, and I won't name any names, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the calibre of folks that are ready to speak to this may not be the highest on the government side. What I will say, though, is that members on our side of the House are going to speak from experience; they're going to speak as educators and people who support the education system, folks who have been in the trenches, so to speak, and will actually be able to talk from experience about the impacts that the cuts the education system have had from this government.

I think it's also telling, Mr. Speaker, that the member focused so much of his speech not only on, of course, on cutting education, and wouldn't give us any, of course, any detail. I'm sure he doesn't know exactly how they're going to make up the shortfall from receiving money on the property tax. But he focused specifically, number of times, on business. He, in fact, I think he said it—I wrote it down here—at least four times: business appreciates this resolution; I think that's what he said.

So I didn't get a chance in my questions. Maybe one of the members opposite will get up and they'll say in their remarks exactly who was consulted on this. Did they go out and they just talk to business? That's the sense I'm getting by the fact that he mentioned business that many times in his speech. But did they talk to educators? Did they actually listen to educators? Because I can certainly tell you that in the review that we undertook, as well as the government's own review, and I sat through, I think, every session of that review, and heard directly from educators, from parents, from concerned community members, I heard over and over again the impact that the cuts already being undertaken by this government are having on the outcomes that our children are—that we want for our children.

And the member mentions disruption. Well, that's a cute word; I think we've heard that a lot in the tech industry, you know. Things can be disrupted. Well, I can tell you as a parent who has a child in grade 4 and a child in grade 2 that I'm not looking for disruption. I'm not looking for, maybe, a chance for things to get worse for a few years. This is my child's future, and I'm not just speaking for my own experience. I'm talking about every parent in this Legislature who would tell you that their child's education is a very specific time period, and it's very, very important that we get it right.

So how do we get it right? Do we start from the premise that a cut is the first thing that people are asking for? I would suggest not, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest, in fact, that I couldn't, if I went across the province and I had a chance to talk to every single person, every parent in this province—would you want more one-on-one time for your child with their teacher or less? At every instance, they would say more, and they would say that they can see the impact that that has when they're—in their child's educational success.

That is a—that's a no-brainer. I haven't heard anybody from the opposition—or, sorry, from the government side, say any different, and I would invite them to argue that point here this afternoon. But the reality is is that the member from Steinbach, the minister responsible, continues to tell this House that we should listen to the review and listen to what Manitobans have told us.

Now, of course, we're going to have a great opportunity at that time to really parse through that. I'm sure he's going to give all the documentation, all the background information, complete data dump, so to speak, of everything that the commission collected, every opinion that they collected, every teacher that they talked to who said that they can't teach to their full potential because of the cuts that this government has instituted; that every parent who says that their child isn't getting that one-on-one time, I'm sure we're going to hear all of those voices.

But he says to us over and over again: Just wait for the review. We want to see what they have to say and then we will make the decisions that are best for students here in this province. However, he actually has the member, here, for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) pre-empting him and saying no, no, no, wait a minute, wait a minute; I don't want to say what the review has to say; I've got an idea right away. Why don't we cut taxes first, cut funding to education second, and then, oh, wait a minute, maybe there's some way that we can make education better on the tail end.

And I'm sure the minister will come up with a couple of ideas and say, look here, don't worry. Here's something that will make education better, but at the root of this is a fundamental cut in education that impacts at every single level. And that's very concerning.

The other thing that, and I appreciate the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) who came over and just said: Have you picked up on the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) using the phrase they over and over again—they? It's they who we're listening to. So I was

asking, well, who do you think they refers to, and he said well, in the past it meant KPMG; it meant Deloitte. It meant a room full of accountants, I would imagine. Maybe that's the case. But, you know, I've been thinking about this and maybe it actually means they as in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) office, they as in the minister.

Because I know the member for Dauphin doesn't really know what the plan is. I know he was told by his boss to congratulate us. You know, I think he asked for an exclamation mark in there. The clerks probably said, I don't think that's parliamentary, can't put the exclamation mark in there.

But they're not going to talk about the real plan. They're not going to talk about what they're actually going to do because the member doesn't know. And I would venture to guess every member here doesn't know, and I would invite them, if I'm wrong, to stand up and simply clarify exactly how this plan is going to roll out before we all get together, as we did earlier today, as a unified Chamber to congratulate the government on something, again, that they may or may not even be able to accomplish.

So, on one hand, he says, you know, we are responsible, we are going to be responsible; we're going to, you know, not be flying off the handle in terms of our fiscal policy, but, on the other hand, we're going to make this disruptive change without any knowledge about how it's going to be accomplished or the impacts that it's going to have on students in this province.

This is the absolute thinnest PMR that I've seen in a very long time, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, again, I'm open to being wrong, and I would invite members opposite to lay out the plan before us. Let's have a real debate about education and the impact that it has, and I'd love to do that.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, and I do want to give others an opportunity to speak because this is, again, we have members in our caucus who actually have experience in the education system, so they're going to tell us from their own perspective.

But what I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, is this particular resolution is focused on the wrong issues. It's focused on the wrong issues. At the time when the government came in and unilaterally, without any warning to seniors in this province, removed a tax break that was given to them—I think one of the biggest tax breaks ever in the history of this province, to seniors in our province, to say you have paid your fair

share in education; we know that the cost of living is increasing, and we want to give you a break—they unilaterally got rid of that, and that includes the seniors that were here earlier this morning.

To then, out of the other side of their mouth, talk about, oh, well, don't worry; we can accomplish this and there won't be any cuts to the education system. We've seen their record. We've seen what they've done to the education system. This is more of the same.

There's no guarantees to protecting our education system. And there is no way that our caucus, who supports education and supports educators in this province, would ever support a private member's resolution with so little detail and so little information just simply to give the Premier a pat on the back for something he hasn't even done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

\* (11:10)

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** Some might stand in the House and say that's a tough act to follow. But I have to agree with the member from Concordia on one thing: he did say they have lots of experience on their side of the House, and bar some of the new folks that were just recently elected, they have lots of experience in raising taxes, and that is very evident over their 17 years. Fifteen new taxes; there was not a tax they didn't like to hike. They hiked them all.

But I will say, though, that when we talk about one of the questions he asked in his words to the room here, he says, who did we talk to? Who do we consult with?

When this platform came out—and that's exactly what it was, it was a platform throughout the election—so we talked to 1.2 million Manitobans. Now, and a lot of times, though, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, it's not whether we talked to people; it's whether they actually listen and we listen to them. Well, I think with back-to-back majority governments, we're listening to them, and they're listening to us, so I think all Manitobans who really want to get ahead, and who enjoy the opportunity to put their money back on their kitchen tables so that they may spend it as they see fit.

We talk about a resolution here today. If you really look at the resolution, the resolution deals with celebrating the fact that we're eliminating, over time, removing the education tax from property taxes, and again, it's because we're a government who keeps our promises. It's very evident that our promises that we make are dear to us, are dear to Manitobans,

Mr. Speaker, and it's something we want to ensure that we fulfill our obligations.

As we heard, this is a phasing-out opportunity of the property tax, or the education from property taxes, and when that does come in, it certainly will save the average homeowner, even here in Winnipeg, approximately \$2,000 a year. Imagine what you could do with an extra \$2,000 in your pocket. Whether it's—maybe you want to reward yourself with a trip. Maybe it's that extra clothing that you need. Maybe it's investments for your future. Again, we look here in the House of investing in our future, and I'm sure a lot of people will do that as well. We know that good governments make the difficult decisions necessary to move things forward and to move our province forward, and I'm happy to belong to a government that's not afraid to do so.

Again, just some clarification. Once the budget is balanced, we will phase out the education property taxes, and again, as I just mentioned, saving homeowners approximately \$2,000, and as a government we are committed to making life more affordable to Manitobans.

Knocking on doors throughout Brandon East during the election campaign, when this platform came out, it was probably one of the highest talking points that I received at the door. And it wasn't just keyed to Brandon East; I joined my colleagues in Winnipeg and knocked on doors as well, and it's certainly the topic of the day when it came out is how we can make the future brighter. All we have to do is look here in the Chamber today, see the folks that are with us, and be happy knowing that more money is going to be going back into their pockets, so they can expand and they can go into future post-secondary education if that is their choice. Maybe they're entrepreneurs, want to start a business right away. Putting more money back into their pockets will allow them to make that decision on their own. Again, we promised and have made that promise to make life more affordable, and our government is coming clean and new on that promise.

So, when we look at education property taxes and we compare Manitoba to other parts of the country, we do have some of the most complicated and uneven property tax regimes in the country. It makes it difficult for people, not just to work for today, but to plan for tomorrow as well. I know with our government we certainly are encouraging and promoting private sector investment in Manitoba, and as I just mentioned with our young folks here, maybe

that's something they're looking for and this will give them the opportunity to do that.

The phase-out of the education portion from taxes on property will be completed, as we heard, over a maximum of 10 years, so again, once the budget is balanced, then we will see a gradual decrease; I believe it's approximately 10 per cent a year over the 10 years, to get down to the balanced piece of it, and again, that gives us an opportunity to move forward steady, not rushing things all at once and making changes all at once, but really moving forward at a pace that is achievable, and I think that's why we need to celebrate this bill. We need to celebrate the fact that the government is moving forward on one of their mandates and keeping their promises and making life more affordable for Manitobans.

Again, one only has to look at history and look at the last 15 years—or pardon me—14 years, when the NDP were in power, 15 taxes were raised, including the PST to 8 per cent.

Again, as a government, we came out in our first term in 2016 when I was fortunate to be elected and joined a government who thought that and felt that it was more important to put money back in the people's pockets, let them spend the money that they will. We made a commitment to lower the PST back down to 7 per cent. And, again, as a government who keeps our promises, we did so on July 1st of this year.

So, again, going over the previous years, unfortunately, with the NDP expanding the PST base to more goods and services, so again, they just didn't say, let's increase the PST and charge these Manitoba taxpayers more of their hard-earned money, they said: how do we get more money into our coffers? So they expanded the PST.

Again, I really don't believe that that's how you look at longevity of a province. You don't succeed by taking money out of folks, out of their pockets. Manitobans work hard to support themselves and they look forward to investing in themselves and their families. And, again, here's an opportunity to do so.

We believe that it's our role to help Manitobans accomplish their goals and make life more affordable. And again, with reduction in PST we started to do just that. I don't believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that one really needs to look too far to see how these—that this change is going to benefit.

I know when we look at funding coming into families, so more people getting out and working and bringing more money into their own pockets, we as a



government need to look at how we can improve their lives as well. And any break that we can give them would certainly be beneficial and go a long way. This, again, as I've said numerous times, is an opportunity for our government just to do that.

And again, let's not forget that the resolution, regardless of what anybody says, the resolution before us is about celebrating the fact that we are helping out more Manitobans year after year after year. It's a celebration. I think I mentioned just last Thursday or Friday—I believe it was last Thursday, Mr. Deputy Speaker—when I stood in the House with a private member statement, and I said, you know, we have to take the opportunity to brag and boast, but we also need to celebrate.

And I know we have the 150th anniversary coming up very shortly in January 1st, going to be kicking that off. It's a time for celebration of the past. It's a time of celebration about 150 years of where we have come as a province.

Here's an opportunity before us that gives us a chance to celebrate going the future. It's to celebrate going forward on what we can do and what better outcomes we may have because of the work that our government is doing.

I see my time is running out here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I do want to mention, though, that I had the great opportunity yesterday to be in a classroom in Brandon at Betty Gibson School, and obviously we were there for some other reasons, but I had the chance to speak to the superintendent and the director—or, pardon me, the chair of the Brandon School Division trust—board of trustees. We got a chance to speak about education going forward in the K-to-12 area. And I know I've had many conversations in the post-secondary education piece as well.

This resolution does not affect what is happening in education. This is a resolution that effectively says what we're doing as a government is working. What we're doing as a government in looking out for the future of the citizens of this province is working. We figure out how we can get from point A to point B and make Manitoba the most improved province. It's working. We're getting there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this resolution from my friend from Dauphin is one to celebrate. It's one for everybody in this House to stand up and say, great, we are all working 'togedder'—together, pardon me, for the betterment of 1.3 million Manitobans.

If anybody in this House is not working for Manitobans, then maybe they should be looking elsewhere. But this is definitely something that helps all Manitoba families and it's something that we definitely have to get behind. And, for once, let's celebrate together.

\* (11:20)

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$840 million. Let's just focus on that number for a minute: \$840 million is the amount of money that will need to be found to replace property taxes in order to continue to fund the education system at the current level, an education system that is already adequately underfunded and is one of the utmost underfunded school systems across the country.

So I don't think that I've heard anyone from this side of the House actually disagree with the shift in the taxation system, but my concern is, and I think the concern of many of us is, is that this the—this idea, this resolution follows on the heel of a year where this government made many false assertions about it, both here in the House and in the media, about education funding, assertions that showed a profound lack of understanding of what happens in our education system. And it's also—I was delighted and surprised to hear the member from Brandon East talk about meeting with a superintendent and a board chair, because we follow on a year of an Education Minister who simply refused to meet with superintendents or school boards.

We're also coming to the end of an education review, a year-long process that was supposed to make some decisions on what—where schooling, you know, where things were going to go with education in our province. But again, this government jumped the gun on their own review to make announcements during the election that are now coming in as resolutions about funding. So it's not that the education system doesn't need to transition.

What we know is that, under subsequent governments, not just the last 17 years, but under subsequent governments for the last 30 years, education funding has progressively gone higher—a higher and higher percentage to property taxes. So at one time, when the government funded 80 per cent of education, now the government funds 60 per cent in some school divisions, and as low as 50 per cent in divisions like the St. James school division.

So, obviously, this is not sustainable. Obviously, there needs to be changes to the system. But we also

need to do that in a way—with a plan. You need to be able to talk about—the government needs to be able to be very clear on where that \$840 million is coming from. Are you taking it off the kitchen table in terms of property taxes, but out of the pockets of people in terms of their paying their income taxes? We don't know. You haven't made—there's not a clear plan around this.

What I want to say is that, right now, the property tax component does pay—play an important part in how schools make local and important decisions about things that I absolutely believe the provincial government should be funding but does not. And so let's talk about some of those things.

I'm going to speak specifically about the Winnipeg School Division, because those are the numbers that I know best, and because it is also the largest school division in the province and represents a large number of—about one-sixth of the students across the province. So let's talk about what the special levy does that's administered by the City of Winnipeg every year.

Thirty-eight million dollars pays for inclusion supports. That means for—I'm sure many of you aren't very familiar with what actually gets covered out of property tax dollars, but that inclusion supports means that students who have special needs across the province and require transportation as a result, it's actually an additional \$4 million in transportation for those students.

Almost half a million dollars goes to intercultural support workers. So when we have students that are newcomers, when we had an influx of Syrian students, almost all of them that ended up in the Winnipeg School Division schools within a matter of weeks or months in one year, intercultural support workers work with the families between school and home. They work with the parents to understand the education system. That's half a million dollars that you're saying is going to be cut from the budget unless you can tell us where that money's going to come from.

We're talking about over half a million dollars for library technicians, about a quarter of a million dollars for computer technicians. Right now in the city of Winnipeg—well, sorry, just in this school—in Winnipeg School Division, there's over half a million dollars for adult crossing guards. So many schools use children as crossing guards, and they do a wonderful jobs, but some of the areas in our urban schools across the

province are simply too dangerous for children to cross without adult crossing guards.

Another really important thing that will need to be looked at by this government is the school resource officers. So we're at a time in history where the whole issue of community safety is being looked at more closely than ever. So right now there's a three-way funding agreement between the Province, the City and the Winnipeg School Division, and for the other school divisions that have school resource officers.

That—so what we're talking about is community policing, but community policing in schools where police are building relationships with the kids that they work with and keeping the schools safer. If those positions were not funded, there would be more police required on the streets in those communities. And we're talking about schools where people who are struggling, or perhaps are high or angry, may walk right into a school door, into a principal's office, into a classroom. Community resource officers have been very helpful in keeping our classrooms safer.

We have a three-way agreement, the Province with the City with the school divisions, but over the last couple of years, the Province has not kept up with the rate of inflation, so, in fact, the school divisions are picking up more that—because this government is not even doing their share of that three-way split, even though policing does seem to be important to—from the other things that I hear.

So this is, in fact, public safety, a term that I know is more comfortable to the other side of House than community safety, but I think we're all talking about the same thing. So that's a piece.

What happens to the \$289,000 of our—of that portion of Winnipeg School Division that's funded by property taxes? The half a million dollars that funds therapy programs for kids? The \$1 million that funds nutrition programs? Until this province has a comprehensive nutrition program and can eradicate poverty and starvation in the city, you can't eradicate the funding for a million-dollar nutrition program. We—the Winnipeg School Division spends \$2 million on counselling and guidance services, and one and a half million dollars to promote academic achievement and increase graduation rates for Aboriginal students. Another \$650,000 for English as additional language programs, and that actually wasn't the entire comprehensive list. That is some of the key and more expensive programs that are funded through property taxes.

So, by all means, let's update and modernize our taxation system. We're not going to stand in the way of that on this side of the House. But we need to know how those critical services are going to be paid for for children.

And, on a final note, I just want to—I think this is coming from a lack of trust, and I'm just going to give an example. In Gimli last year, another school division that I'm less familiar with, but I know that Gimli High School was scheduled for an expansion of their music room. The Province pulled out of that agreement in March of 2017, and the community made a decision to self-fund this—a scaled-down version of that renovation. That needed to happen because kids had to wear jackets in their music class.

I don't know about you, but when I grew up playing the clarinet in my music class, I can't imagine being in a space so cold that I had to wear a jacket, how your fingers are supposed to work playing the clarinet or any other instrument.

They were to create wheelchair accessibility and improve the space and acoustics for music education. But even with the support of the local community to absolutely use property tax to fund that program, this government revoked permission and refused to approve the project.

You probably remember that, those of you who are in the House, because students protested that. Students came to talk about what was wrong with that decision. The community was supporting that.

So, if this government can't be trusted to listen to the community and fund the community projects that are important in schools—a music room in Gimli, a nutrition program in Winnipeg School Division—then I don't know how you can expect us to support this resolution. It needs more information.

I think you need to go back to the drawing table and come up with a plan that is adequately going to meet the needs of students in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

\* (11:30)

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It gives me great pleasure to put a few words on the record in regards to this fantastic resolution, again put—brought forward by the representative from Dauphin, who, I must say, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, the new member from Dauphin—on his second term in his short three and a half years so far—

**The Acting Speaker (Greg Nesbitt):** Order.

I apologize for the mistake. It should have been the independent member's turn to speak. I didn't see her behind the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** You know, that's okay. I think it's—*[interjection]*

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And you know, I'm just going to put a few words on the record, so if the member from Lac du Bonnet sticks around, maybe he'll still get an opportunity to speak.

I do think that this resolution is a little or, you know, way, way, way, way, way too premature to be talking about here today. The idea behind removing the education tax from property tax is supposed to be a 10-year plan; and that's if we're feeling optimistic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know that this government doesn't often do what they say they're going to do, but for them to be bringing forward a resolution patting themselves on the back this early on, it's a little conflicting.

So let's break it down, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the Throne Speech a couple of weeks ago, government said that they would remove the education tax from people's property tax over the course of 10 years—and I emphasize—*[interjection]*

So this resolution being brought forward, as I just said, is a little premature. And you know, I am inclined to agree a little bit with the member from Concordia and the member from Wolseley and some of the comments that they made. And I actually learned a lot from the member from Wolseley today and some of her comments and working together with school trustees in the city and what little the Province has been contributing over the past couple of years. But let's be very, very clear: It was under the NDP government that education really, really started to plummet here in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you're looking to my right, if you're looking to my left, I don't know what to tell you, but education needs to be improved here in the city—in the province of Manitoba. And you know, it's kind of ironic; just earlier today, a CBC article came out. And allow me to quote it—and I also brought three copies to table.

To quote it, it says, Manitoba students scored dead last in math, last in science and second last in reading, when compared to their Canadian peers, according to new student test results released Tuesday. That's today.

To continue on with the quote, the results of the latest program for international student assessment, PISA, show Manitoba test scores are among the worst in the country. This continues a trend that has plagued the province for over the past decade. So just reiterating what I just said, started under the NDP. PCs are only worsening it.

There is another alternative. It shows that Manitoba test scores have worsened in every category since 2015, and those results ranked Manitoba second last in Canada in both science, reading and third last in math. That's the end of the quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you know, just on a very quick note, because I'm going to give the member from Lac du Bonnet just a couple of minutes here, is where the heck is this money coming from. We can't be expected to support a resolution when we have no idea where, what is it, millions of dollars—hundreds of millions of dollars. Where would it be coming from, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

We deserve to know that before we're asked to vote on a resolution. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Greg Nesbitt):** Is there anyone else wishing to speak in debate?

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** I appreciate the moments I have to speak here.

One of the things I learned eight years serving on the Winnipeg School Division Board of Trustees, and being the Chair, is that education in Manitoba is chronically, chronically underfunded. We spend less on GDP for education than most provinces in Manitoba, and certainly the provinces that are outperforming us on PISA tests.

And I think back to that great socialist Gary Filmon—20 years ago under his red reign—Manitoba spent 5 per cent of our GDP on education.

Now fast forward to the modern age and under the Pallister government, that number has dropped to less than 2.3 per cent of GDP.

And just to give some context, the provincial average in Canada is 3.6 per cent of GDP. The OECD, the organization of rich states that Canada is part of, the average is 3.6 per cent. Finland, which is considered one of the best education systems in the world, is at 3.6 per cent.

So we have a chronically underfunded education system already, and what we're hearing from this government is that they don't think that's bad enough. They think that Manitoba students have too many resources, have too many things going for them, and they want to cut that back.

So now they're talking about cutting a further \$840 million out of an education system that's hemorrhaging. And we're seeing the chickens come home to roost. We have the PISA results here that this government, when they were in opposition, dined out on for several decades.

And, of course, they have done nothing since becoming government in 2016. There has been no new educational programs or initiatives in Manitoba. We have an Education Minister that I think you can only politely say is, maybe a little disinterested in the portfolio, and there has been nothing new that's been offered Manitoba students. And we're seeing the results today in these PISA results. So—and that's what's going on, Deputy Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Greg Nesbitt):** Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have eight minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 o'clock p.m., the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, December 3, 2019**

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