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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
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COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 25, 2021

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

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, can we resume debate on Bill 213?

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 213—The Reporting of Supports for
Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act
(Trained Health Professionals and
Evidence Collection Kits)**

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will resume debate on second reading of Bill 213, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, who has three minutes remaining.

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Again, I would like to thank my colleague from The Pas-Kameesak for bringing this very important bill forward in the Legislature and raising this topic. I'd also like to thank her for sharing her story.

You know, I know that bringing a personal lens to an issue makes us vulnerable, but it also raises awareness, and it's important.

This matter that we are discussing today is one that deserves action, and I can say from a personal, you know, point of view, when I talk about my brother's death by suicide, it's difficult, but I do it

because I want to raise awareness. And I want others to know that it's not something that affects just people from one certain walk of life. It affects everyone. So I thank her for bringing this forward.

I think that everyone in this Chamber does agree that child victims of sexual assault should not be required to travel to Winnipeg for care during such traumatic times in their life. And our government is committed to providing greater access and treatment for all sexual assault survivors, Madam Speaker.

Children, though, who are sexually violated are not only physically traumatized, but also mentally traumatized as well.

And when a child or youth has been violated in such a horrific manner, it's normal to want to wash away the reminder of this traumatic event, to change their clothes, to take a shower. But by doing so, they are removing the evidence or DNA necessary to identify the perpetrator and charge them to the fullest extent of the law.

And waiting days to receive care adds to the anguish the victims and their families are already experiencing, anguish that none of us can ever, ever understand, Madam Speaker. These victims, whether they be children, youth or adults, need to be provided the care and treatment in their home community, when they need it. They deserve it.

And I know that our Health Minister has already put on record that change is necessary to address, and look at providing these individuals, these victims, with care in their own community.

So I look forward to working together with the Minister of Health and our Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) to bring forward positive change.

Madam Speaker, I also want to share with this House that expanding sexual assault supports in rural Manitoba, including forensic nursing services, is a component of our gender-based violence framework.

I'd also like to thank the members of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners team for the care and the compassion that they provide to survivors, who are children, our youth, and all victims of sexual violence. This is not an easy job but it's essential. And seven days a week, 24 hours a day, they assist our most vulnerable.

So, Madam Speaker, my heart goes out to the member from The Pas-Kameesak, and I look forward to working together with her to address this very important issue.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Yes, good morning, Madam Speaker. Our government is committed to protecting our most vulnerable populations. We believe all sexual assault survivors need and deserve prompt access to care and treatment.

Our government recognizes that there is a need to ensure that children living in other parts of the province—besides southern Manitoba—who require a forensic exam are able to get one without having to travel to Winnipeg.

Sexual assault or sexual abuse and violence is a long-standing problem in Manitoba, but our government is committed to addressing the problem with long-standing action. Our government believes all survivors of sexual violence and abuse deserve prompt, compassionate care from trained experts.

Like my colleague just said, it's heart-wrenching to hear that someone who has been the victim of a terrible and life-altering crime would have any delay in accessing care. As I've said, this is a long-standing problem in Manitoba, one that dates back many, many years.

However, my colleagues and I believe that this is a very important issue. And I thank the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) for bringing this bill forward and giving us another opportunity to discuss it in the House today.

I would like to provide some additional context for the House about the resources that are currently in place to support survivors of sexual assault. The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, or SANE team, includes specially trained nurses who conduct examinations for injuries and provide testing and treatment for sexual assault survivors.

SANE offers a comfortable and safe location for patients to meet with their care team. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and is for people of any age or gender who have been sexually assaulted.

The SANE program has a streamlined approach to intake of pediatric patients for acute sexual assault. When a pediatric patient presents to any hospital or health-care facility and there's a concern of sexual assault, the facility will page the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner on call. The SANE on call may triage the

patient over the phone and assess the need for, and timing of, an acute sexual assault exam.

Currently, the Health Sciences Centre here in Winnipeg has 15 nurses on the SANE team who are trained to perform forensic exams for children. However, our government recognizes that there is a need to ensure that children living in other parts of the province who require a forensic exam are able to get one without having to travel to Winnipeg.

Again, this has been a long-standing and chronic problem in Manitoba—one that dates back to the previous government. Our government has looked to other jurisdictions who have a broad provincial model for this type of care to learn from their best practices.

In some provinces there are successful models of care for sexual assault victims in rural and remote areas using telehealth. In these cases, you would have local nurses trained to administer sexual assault evidence kits using a trauma-informed approach, paired with a telehealth consult with an expert Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner.

This devolved approach would eliminate the need for sexual assault survivors to travel to Winnipeg for the treatment and care they need. There may also be other opportunities to improve access to treatment and care for sexual assault victims.

* (10:10)

Madam Speaker, I believe all members of the House are genuinely concerned for the well-being of those who have been the victim of a sexual assault. I think everyone in this Chamber would agree that child victims of sexual assault should not have to travel to Winnipeg for care at a time when they are particularly vulnerable.

Our government wants to address this long-standing problem with real action. When faced with difficult problems, taking action is what this government does best. In health care, for example, we've taken bold action to address a number of pressing issues.

We have hired over 1,600 nurses since June 2019. We've taken action on wait times: average emergency room wait times in Manitoba have decreased from 5.6 hours in 2015 to 3.8 hours this year; wait times for an MRI, which were 21 weeks in 2015, we're down to 15 weeks in 2019.

Prior to the onset of COVID, we increased surgery volumes for a number of priority procedures, giving Manitobans access to the care they needed.

In 2019, we increased the number of annual MRIs performed by more than 20,000.

More than 62,000 additional CT scans were performed. Manitobans have had over 1,700 more cataract surgeries, and nearly 1,200 more hip and knee surgeries in 2019 than under the NDP.

We've also increased investment in personal-care homes. Since April 2016, we've built 257 PCH beds, with another 253 under construction. Last year we spent \$50 million more on personal-care homes than the NDP did in their last year in office. And last summer we announced a historic \$280-million investment in safety upgrades to personal-care homes.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would just ask the member that—he's moving beyond the actual bill that is before the House and he needs to make his comments relevant to the bill that is before us today. So I would ask the member to bring his comments back to speaking about Bill 213.

Mr. Nesbitt: Thank you for your guidance, Madam Speaker. I certainly will bring it—my comments back to Bill 213, which is a very important House on this bill.

I just want to make a few comments here on what we've done on a number of pressing women's issues. We all know that sexual assault victims are more apt to be female than male, although it certainly crosses both genders. So, we've taken bold action to address a number of pressing issues.

The Employment Standards Code: we've passed legislation to amend support to victims of interpersonal violence. The Residential Tenancies Act: we've certainly introduced and passed amendments to enable victims of interpersonal violence to terminate their leases early when needed. Siloam Mission: we've invested \$3 million in. And the clinic in Laurel Centre: we expanded mental health services and offered \$2.4 million to expand drop-in counselling. We've introduced a 24/7 text line and toll-free crisis line for women experiencing domestic violence.

I could go on and on with all the things that we've done; these are just a few examples, Madam Speaker. But as a government, we certainly know there is more work to do.

And I would just, again, like to thank the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) for bringing this very important issue forward again today so that we can talk about it here in the House. We certainly all appreciate her passion for the issue and we certainly

agree that anyone in the North who has been a victim of sexual assault should not have to travel to Winnipeg to get the services they require. They need prompt access to compassionate care delivered by trained experts.

So, Madam Speaker, as a government here we're looking to hear more from the NDP today on this issue and encourage them to put this bill forward for a vote in the House when they believe they're ready to do that.

And, again, I will defer to further speakers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Good morning. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to Bill 213, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act. I want to thank the member for The Pas-Kameesak for bringing this very important bill forward.

There is some things in life that can never be undone, unseen or forgotten. People who have experienced trauma, lived within a certain circumstance or have, unfortunately, felt impact of a loss, have a lasting imprint which is unshakeable and unforgettable. This can be amplified when we are talking about a child, a young person who has had their personal space and safety jeopardized by another individual.

The offensive actions and behaviours of others leaves a life-altering effect on children, one which will follow that child for the rest of their lives. Children are a gift. They're our future, an extension of ourselves, and when they have been violated and hurt, we also hurt. There is no undoing or going back to prevent the horrible event.

That is why this bill is so important. If we don't look at what our children need or take steps to ensure children receive the care and attention needed under these horrible circumstances, then who does. Again, children are our future.

As a former social services worker, I would advocate for the safety of children and their families. Too many times, I would be sitting with a woman and listening to these events which had brought her to me. There would be confusion, tears and a need to seek out supports that would assist her and her children as they would move on with their lives.

The pain and impact from having their life turned upside down is undescrivable. How do you pick up pieces when the world you know has been shattered through the actions of another person? How can a

family continue to look at their home and still see the same safe and warm place they could relax in? How do you go out into the community knowing that a person outside has taken away your freedom and you are scared to walk the same path, visit with friends, knowing that there may be someone else out there who is waiting for an opportunity to upset your world and remove or tear your security apart?

Madam Speaker, children and their families should not have to experience the challenges and losses at any age, especially a young one. Children need to feel protected and families need to know there are supports in place when an unfortunate incident happens.

The number of children who have been exploited has increased over the last year. With COVID, there has been an increase in the use of technology. Technology is great to advance skills and to facilitate work. The problem with technology is not the equipment, but the people who actively look for victims. These perpetrators access online programs as a way to target children and exploit individuals.

There are—this has resulted in an increase in the number of people who have called the tip line. Over the past year, there has been an increase of over 88 per cent in the number of calls that the online sexual exploitation of children line has received.

The member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) has brought forward a bill to support children who have been assaulted. These children need to know that there are supports they can access, supports that can deal with the medical and emotional impacts of the violation. Physical scars will heal and disappear, but the emotional scar will be with this person as long as they are alive.

And these children need to know that they don't need to travel outside of their community to have the necessary professionals take care of them, to look, to sit down with them, to offer them the supports. They need to have that close by so they don't have to endure what they've gone through longer than what they are doing.

A child who has been traumatized may live with the memory for years. The ability to reach out and speak to a professional, a parent or peer may take years, if it ever happens at all. To those who struggle with the assault and are faced with the memories, there are supports in place to help this person.

The sexual assault and nurse examiner team can be 'eccassed'—sorry, accessed through the children or

adult emergency room at the Health Sciences Centre. The team consists of a nurse, who is trained in examining individuals for assault. The nurse, in this setting, offers a comfortable and safe atmosphere to help reduce the stress and anxiety the person may be feeling as they begin to talk about the incident. The nurse and team are on duty 24-7 to assist individuals who they meet or anyone who needs to access this service, unfortunately.

* (10:20)

Madam Speaker, there are more facilities which offer support to those who have been victims of abuse. Snowflake Place has a team of professionals who assist you. The facility offers a safe place for children who are being interviewed as part of a formal investigation. Police, Child and Family Services and Victim Services professionals offer support to assist in these investigations.

Snowflake Place offers the security that a person who has experienced trauma needs. Professionals can interview with the child or the youth and seek out information needed to investigate the incident further: information that may not necessarily come easily if it's an individual who is not trained in sitting down and speaking to individuals who have just experienced a horrible event.

Training local nurses to administer sexual assault evidence kits through a trauma-informed approach will help with remote or more isolated cases. The nurse will work with a telehealth consultant who is an expert Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. Together the team will be able to develop an approach that will offer support, medical attention, and eliminate the need for sexual assault survivors to have to travel to Winnipeg to have the assault tests or kits completed.

This service will offer victims the same medical supports they would receive in Winnipeg, but in their home environment. This would take hours off of a person's time having to sit and wait for an examination, taking care of the individual, which is the primary safety and health concern for everyone in an incident such as this.

Medical professions can offer further medical support to the sexual assault. There may be internal injuries, infections, pregnancy concerns that need to be discussed. Victims may not know they have an infection or are pregnant from an assault, and the options and counselling available for the victim will help them deal with any of the medical issues that will happen if anything comes from it.

Klinic has been and continues to offer supports to many who are dealing with health issues. Programs support mental health, counselling, medical needs, and a 24-hour crisis line that supports many people struggling through various medical conditions.

Klinic also offers a sexual assault line. Trained professionals will meet the police and the victim at the hospital and help them until they have completed all the necessary tests. The support extends to follow-up with counselling if the person chooses to. The emotional support at a time like this is essential to help an individual who is experiencing the trauma that's just happened. Klinic has been a leader in this field.

Another facility, Laurel Centre, offers supports to victims of sexual assault. Laurel Centre has been counselling individuals for many years. Laurel Centre offers counselling services to older individuals who have experienced assault as a child or abuse when they were growing up, and they have been a key component when it comes to having them assist—or sorry, to deal with the emotions that are now coming up as an adult.

Through Klinic and Laurel Centre, they have worked with many youth and adults and they—who have been traumatized either in their youth or as an adult, sorry.

Madam Speaker, again, I thank the member for bringing this bill forward. Our government supports this bill but wants to strengthen what is being brought forward. Manitobans shouldn't have to travel outside their community to seek the necessary medical support they have. And children, especially, shouldn't have to leave their environment, the comfort of family, to get this support, and they need to know that when they are needing the support most, it is available to them.

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): It is a—I do appreciate the opportunity to put some words on the record regarding Bill 213. I do want to thank the member for introducing this legislation. And, of course, we know sexual assault is an issue that unfortunately affects many Manitobans. And it's even more unfortunate when it happens to children.

I know that everybody in this Chamber understands the gravity of sexual assault, especially when it comes to minors. This is an unfortunate reality than many in the province face, but when it comes to children it is especially horrific. I know many of us are parents and grandparents in this Chamber, and just

thinking about the mental, physical and psychological damage done to the children, victims of these horrendous crimes, is just unimaginable.

In another life, before I was elected, I actually worked for former Member of Parliament, Joy Smith. I know we have the same last name, but we're not related. But, at this time, Joy was a strong advocate as many have—familiar with her work on fighting human trafficking, and often these victims of heinous crimes are, unfortunately, children. Perpetrators tend to target young, vulnerable children who are looking to get out of a bad home situation and only turn and find themselves in an even worse situation.

So, although human trafficking involves many forms of exploitation, it tends to involve sexual exploitation, and it often targets children and those under the age of 18. As most of us in the Chamber are parents, I get—we could only imagine how difficult that would be, to imagine our children or grandchildren being caught up in such a horrible situation.

Having talked to former trafficking victims myself, I know that they've never properly recovered from their experiences. Although many have worked terribly hard to move on, it's very difficult to heal some of the emotional and mental scarring that occurs.

With—the problem of exploitation, certainly, isn't uncommon in Manitoba, and unfortunately here in Winnipeg we have seen in recent years police take-downs of massage parlours and online exploitation, often involving minors. And in—one particularly horrible situation was in Winnipeg just a few years ago, was a massage parlour in south Winnipeg that was raided, and it was found that minors were brought from Asia. And these young women—they're young girls—they thought they were coming to Canada seeking a legitimate job opportunity, when in fact they were brought over for more nefarious reasons.

And you know, these kind of things happen in our own backyard. Many Manitobans may not necessarily be aware of how profoundly damaging this is and certainly how—unfortunately, how common it can be. So, I think we, as Manitobans, do have the opportunity and the responsibility to at least understand what's going on in, often, the dark seedy parts of our communities.

Our government is committed to protecting our most vulnerable populations, and we believe that all sexual assault survivors need to—and have—deserve prompt access to their care and treatment—some of those folks that I had mentioned just a minute or two

ago. Our government recognizes that there's a need to ensure that children living in other parts of the province who require a forensic exam are able to get one without having to travel to Winnipeg, and if that's of course very important if you're living in some parts of rural Manitoban—even northern Manitoba.

I know there's particularly—human traffickers tend to target young girls, and sometimes boys too, in communities in northern Manitoba—Indigenous communities. And it's very unfortunate that that's the case, but it is a reality that we as Manitobans have to come to grips with and decide how to address the situation as best we can.

Sexual abuse and violence is a long-standing problem in our province, but our government is committed to addressing this problem with long-standing actions.

Our government believes survivors and—of sexual violence and abuse deserve prompt, compassionate care from trained experts who can help deal with—and I think some of my colleagues have mentioned the physical aspect of it, but there—and the mental aspect, and I think the mental aspect is, unfortunately, the harder of the two to come to grips with and to heal from.

It is heart-wrenching to hear that when someone has been a victim of a terrible and life-changing crime that they'd be denied access—or any delay—in accessing their care. However, my colleagues and I believe that this is a very important issue and certainly thank the member for bringing this up and bringing this to the attention of the House today, and really appreciate her sharing some of her personal stories—I believe it was—the last time this was brought up in the House.

First, I think I can provide some additional context to the House for the resources that currently are in place to support survivors of sexual assault, and the sexual assault nurse examiner or SANE, S-A-N-E, team includes specially trained nurses who conduct examinations for injuries and provide testing and treatment for sexual assault survivors.

SANE offers a comfortable and safe location for patients to meet with their care team, and this service is available 24 hours day, seven days a week, and is for people of any age or gender who have been sexually assaulted—as we know that it is often young girls that are sexually assaulted—and women in general—but, you know, men and other folks of

other genders can be, certainly, victimized. And it's unfortunate that happens.

* (10:30)

So, we—but it's nice to know that this service is available to everybody 24 days—24 hours a day, rather, seven days a week.

The same program has a streamlined approach to intake of pediatric patients for acute sexual assault. When a pediatric patient presents to any hospital or health care facility and there's a concern of sexual assault, the facility will page a sexual assault nurse examiner on call. The SANE on call—or—may triage the patient over the phone and assess the need for a timing of an acute sexual assault exam.

Madam Speaker, currently, the Health Sciences Centre has 15 nurses on the SANE team who are all trained to perform forensic exams for children. However, our government recognizes that there is a need to ensure that children living in other parts of the province require forensic exam are able to get one without having to travel all the way to Winnipeg.

Our government has looked into other jurisdictions who have broad provincial models for this type of care, to learn from the best practices. In some provinces, there are successful models of care for sexual assault victims in rural or remote areas using telehealth. In these cases, you would have local nurses trained to administer sexual assault evidence kits using a trauma-informed approach paired with a telehealth consult with an expert sexual assault nurse examiner.

This developed approach would eliminate the need for sexual assault survivors to travel to Winnipeg for treatment of the care they need.

There may be other opportunities to improve access to treatment and care for sexual assault victims as well.

So, Madam Speaker, I believe all members in the House are generally concerned about the well-being of those who have been victims of sexual assault. And I think that, as I mentioned earlier, everyone in this Chamber would agree that child victims of sexual assault should not have to travel to Winnipeg for care at a time when they are particularly vulnerable.

So, while I applaud the members opposite to bring this attention, I think we can still do better, of course, as a society in recognizing the needs of sexual assault victims, particularly children, who are the most vulnerable of our—of this heinous crime.

We—in health care, for example, we have taken both actions to address a number of issues facing Manitobans. In, you know, 2019, alone, we hired 1,600 hundred nurses, and we've taken action on issues such as wait times. And we've increased—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The member is straying a bit now away from the actual bill that is on the floor for debate right now. So I would ask him to bring his comments back to debating Bill 213.

Mr. Smith: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate your guidance on that. I will stay on topic of this particular proposed legislation.

Well, as far as some of the actions we—our government has taken in the past here, I know that women tend to be more represented in—as victims of sexual assault, but—certainly not exclusive, but typically more likely to be a victim of sexual assault. We've taken a number of bold actions to address pressing women's issues. One in particular: expanding the mental health services at Klinik and Laurel Centre—so, \$2.4 million for drop-in counselling at—the extension of its trauma-based counselling and new centralized trauma intake and referral service—

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

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): Madam Speaker, it took me a while to decide whether I wanted to speak to this particular bill, but I know that, as a survivor myself, it's important to use this platform and opportunity to share from the experience of someone who has walked this path.

Madam Speaker, in school we were taught to learn the signs of inappropriate behaviours, we were encouraged to speak up if you knew something was wrong, or you, yourself, were the victim of these horrible actions. But what you weren't taught in school is what to do after, if you happen to be one of those unlucky few who had to walk this path. There were no lessons on how to heal from trauma. Parents, even today, are ill-equipped to understand fully what goes through a child's mind when they've experienced these awful situations.

So, Madam Speaker, I'll share a few thoughts from my perspective, and it's a lifelong process working through trauma and learning to heal from that trauma: catching a perpetrator doesn't erase any of the trauma. And I think that the focus—you know, in our

judicial system, rightly so—is to hold people to account for their wrong decisions, for their awful actions that cause this hurt and pain. But what's missing, a lot of times, is how to support those who are innocent, who didn't ask for the situation, but found themselves in it.

Madam Speaker, I was 11 years old. The person who harmed me was not known to me; he was a stranger. There are many things about my experience that I still, today, look back on asking, what could I have done differently, when logically, I know there was nothing. There was nothing I did.

Playing on a playground does not in any way, as an 11-year-old, invite this kind of action from a total stranger. There are people out there who think that this is normal behaviour, that they have every right to violate other people and children.

And this, as I said, has been a lifelong process for me. And in those initial few moments following the assault, I knew it was wrong. I was taught this was wrong. I was taught to speak up and to share with a trusted adults, which happened to be my parents.

There was no way for me to predict what would follow sharing that horrible experience.

Because it's not one time you share it. The first person you tell reports it. And then you share it again with complete strangers who happen to be police officers.

That was the first time that I'd ever felt numb, that I have felt that somehow, the spirit inside of me was separate from the body which inhabited it. There is that numbness, that I can go back and I can remember every single moment of that. And although some of those memories may not be the exact, I can remember how I felt. That stays with you your entire life.

When my parents called to report the assault, we were promised that a female officer would come to the house and would allow me to share my story. Two male officers came.

Every single moment where something happened that I was not expecting to happen eroded my trust in the world around me.

And then the nightmares started. I didn't control the nightmares.

And that was one thing that I think have to highlight, is that a child who has experienced an awful violation of their body loses control of many things. They don't control who they have to tell their story to.

They don't even control the decisions that are made following that.

I know that there has been a lot of progress in the years since I've had to go through this journey, and I appreciate all the work that is done by many advocacy groups, many mental health care groups that have supported children through these awful, awful journeys. And I hope—and pray—that that support means that they won't necessarily hurt as deeply as I do, but logically, I know, no matter how much support is out there, nobody can erase those memories. Nobody can take away your life experience.

So Madam Speaker, speaking specifically to this bill that focuses on a point in time of an awful occurrence—and it is important, very important, to offer as much support to those who are going through this as possible in the moment.

There is so much more that is required in order to set this path for these children—for these innocent people who didn't ask and didn't deserve this—to seek that healing. And I think that it's incumbent on all of us to be a part of that healing process.

* (10:40)

Madam Speaker, the experience that I had to live through, and I continue to deal with and I continue to work through, it changes not only how you view the world, but it changed how I parented my children. No longer do I—did I see playgrounds as a safe place for them to explore the world and learn independence, because I never viewed playgrounds as a safe place anymore.

How did that impact my children? I won't know the full impacts. There were probably multiple decisions I made that I just couldn't trust that the outside world was going to be good to them because the outside world was not good to me.

And I spent many years trapped in my own prison of I didn't know who to trust because the person who harmed me, you wouldn't look at them and say that person's untrustworthy, that person is showing signs that they're a monster or a predator. They don't. And they're very good at what they do so that they aren't caught and held to account.

Madam Speaker, the person who harmed me was held to account. We went through a whole court process, and he was found guilty and a judgment was placed on him. I thought that I would somehow be freed of that prison of fear that I had been going through because it took a full year for this process, and

in the interim this person was out on bail and out in the community, the community I lived in. So, again, nowhere was safe.

And I imagine that many of these young children who are living in rural areas and on reserves who are experiencing this awful, awful, unfair situation, live with that fear as well. And it only compounds if it's somebody you know. And likely, in these smaller communities it is someone you know, possibly someone you're related to.

And compounding all of that trauma and confusion is, am I doing the right thing by telling? I know that I struggled, even after the court process was done. If I had known what the process was going to entail, would I have told anyone? And those are completely normal feelings to have.

And it wasn't until I was roughly 18 where I heard someone speak to me and say, you didn't deserve it. Up unto that point, you know, people were saying how horrible this other person was and, you know, the—what are these scenarios, we should've protected you more. But I didn't hear the words, you didn't deserve it. So I spent so many years wondering, did I do something bad as a kid, that this was just a lesson I had to learn in life, and was the universe against me?

Those are the struggles that children go through because they can't comprehend what has happened, why it has happened, and we're always looking for answers. And part of that is trying to get back control that we have lost and control over our own thoughts.

I think there's a lot to do and there's a lot left to do. And I think that we have a lot of learning to go because the most effective support you can get is by talking about your experience with others who have walked that path, to assure those who are still struggling right now, regardless of the outward behaviours, that everything they are feeling, experiencing and acting on is completely normal but it was an abnormal situation that they were put into.

So, Madam Speaker, I just want to say that as a government and, personally, myself, I am absolutely in support of more actions and more initiatives to help support those who are walking this path. And I want them to know that they are loved and they are lovable, always.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Such a heavy topic. I just—I think may be appropriate to start with some thanks.

I want to thank the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) for bringing this bill forward.

I think, you know, so often in the Legislature we engage in debate without necessarily, you know, having our heart in it in the same way each time. That can't happen this morning. Sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children is something that should not be. It should not be happening in our society. We know that it is wrong, we know that it needs to stop, we know that it causes unspeakable damage.

I want to thank my colleague, the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard), for sharing her own story. I think—so difficult to hear, and I can assure that member that no one ever deserves this, ever.

You know, when I think about these kind of topics as a legislator—because I have, you know, through the years, been given the opportunity to support people who have been sexually abused, who have been assaulted, and—you know, and then I hear the member for Fort Richmond sharing her own heart-wrenching story, and yes, it just brings back a lot of memories.

And I don't want to forget, quite frankly, so I appreciate the stirring of the memories, because I think it's really, really important for us to not ignore and to pay close attention to what's happening in our society on this front. Because I think the really sad thing is that sexual abuse, sexual assaults, sexual exploitations, they're not—not only are they not going away, but I think in many contexts they're increasing and there's more, not less.

You know, I think I've spoken here about—in this Legislature, about, you know, my concerns about the—when, you know, children are used to promote pornography. And where, you know, sexual assaults are—on minors are recorded and distributed, it's just—it's sick. And it should not be.

But I think, you know, my first instinct—and maybe that's because I'm a man, I don't know—my first instinct is to crave justice, to want these perpetrators to feel the full weight and wrath of the courts, of society, to know as fully as they possibly can know that their behaviour is not acceptable; that their behaviour is beyond anything that we would even consider tolerating in our society; that, the sexual assault—sexual exploitation, sexual abuse of children is condemnable at such an incredibly high level.

* (10:50)

So—but my tendency, like I said, to focus on justice, in a sense. You know, I need to never forget

that even more important than that, even more heart-wrenching and more vital for us as a society, is to remember the victim and to support the victim, and to make sure that that victim knows that they are loveable, that they are special, that they are precious, that they don't deserve this.

And so, you know, I can thank the member for The Pas-Kameesak for bringing this matter, I—once again to our attention. I think, you know, the ideas that she brings forward, they're practical, they're simple, they're helpful. I'm convinced we should do them; we should do more. We should, not just as a government, but as a society make it clear that our commitment to these most vulnerable members of our society, those who have been assaulted, those who have been abused and exploited, that they are supported in ways that we might, you know, never otherwise consider.

And you know, I think part of the tragedy—and this wasn't the case for the member for Fort Richmond, but is so often a case, that—and certainly in the ones I was speaking about earlier, that I'd had the opportunity to support—so often the assault comes at the hands of someone they know, of someone that they thought they should be able to trust, and you know, were in an environment where they thought they were safe, where they thought they shouldn't have to worry.

You know, I want to share with the member for Lagimodière (Mr. Smith), his gratitude to Joy Smith. I haven't had the opportunity to work for her, but I've certainly have worked with her. And you know, when she tells about what her son, who worked in the RCMP, what he had to see as part of his work—I don't remember the name of the unit, but it was dealing with child sexual exploitation—you know, what he had to see, and how that even traumatized him, and he's not a perpetrator or a victim, and he's traumatized.

And then you think, well, the—what the victims go through is—it's not one and done. I mean, so often not only is the assault not a one-time assault, so often does it turn into a long-term abuse relationship or a, you know—human trafficking or sexual exploitation on an ongoing basis. But it's more than that. It's—even when it stops, the memory of it, the impact of it, affects that person in ways that they may never really fully understand.

And I—you know, I think about the cases that I'm speaking about. It's—you see it coming into their relationships with their parents. You see it coming

into their relationships with, you know, their boyfriend or girlfriend, or husband or wife, and in dating—that space, in ways that should not be.

So I guess, wrapping up, I think, you know, I do thank member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin). I've always respected what she brings to this Legislature and the way she brings it. And I think that's true again today. This is a difficult topic, a necessary topic, and one that I think we can all be very—you know, we might not enjoy talking or listening about it, but we need to do this. And so I thank the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) and the member for The Pas-Kameesak.

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): So, we're all thinking strategy this morning: we're going to support this; when should we support it, how, and all that stuff. But I think there's another piece, there's another thing going on here this morning.

Because in this place we quickly compartmentalize each other as those New Democrats, those Conservatives, those Liberals. And there's something about that that's not humanizing. Sometimes we slot each other in and we feel fine. Maybe we're too comfortable with some of the back-and-forth in this place.

And this is a rough-and-tumble place, there's no question. It should be. But I think the last hour's been very special, very unusual. We've paused that stuff. This isn't about that. This is about something much, much deeper—much more human.

I think it's good to park here for a moment and remind ourselves that we're all people. We've heard some heart-wrenching stories; we've heard some testimonies; we've heard about the experiences of people who are here.

We're not just members; we're people. And we've also not heard even more stories. But all of us come to this place with a history and a life and family and friends and all kinds of other things. And I think the reason this hour has been pretty somber and there's been a quietness in this room that's very rare is because we agree.

I don't know that there's anything more damaging to a child than what we're talking about this morning. I don't know if those scars are—if there are deeper scars than what we're discussing today. I've seen people

weep in this Chamber, I've seen people stop their work and listen, and that's a good thing.

Thank you to the member for The Pas for raising this. Thank you to that member for alerting us to something that needs to change.

What we're talking about is children. Many of us here have children. And those who don't have their own children, I'm sure have kids in their lives who mean a great deal to them.

The thought of a child being abused is beyond comprehension. Whatever your beliefs, whatever your background, whatever your culture, on this we can agree: these things should never happen. And when they do, we need to do all that we can to help those children. Not to prolong the pain—as has been, unfortunately, the case—but to find ways to help and to alleviate.

And I would like—I'd like to say my full piece, and I appreciate the clock is where it's at, and I'll continue next time if that's what needs to happen.

* (11:00)

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member will have five minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 16—Calling Upon the Provincial Government to Respect Working Manitobans

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Calling Upon the Provincial Government to Respect Working Manitobans, brought forward by the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from Wolseley,

WHEREAS Manitoba's skilled workers deserve a government that will respect their rights and protect their health and safety both on and off the job; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has repeatedly disrespected workers and their rights through regressive legislation, excessive layoffs, and unconstitutional wage freezes; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government's Bill 16—The Labour Relations Amendment Act, will make it easier for unions to be decertified and for employers to punish employees who participate in job action; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government continues to interfere in labour negotiations and freeze wages even though its Bill 28—The Public Services Sustainability Act, was deemed unconstitutional and draconian; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government threatened layoffs of hundreds of Manitoba Hydro workers, forced unpaid days off, then demanded their wages be frozen; and

WHEREAS the Premier and his government have repeatedly interfered in labour negotiations with teachers, bus drivers, hydro workers and nurses, leading to strikes at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg School Division, and Manitoba Hydro; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government repealed the one to one ratio, meaning the loss of good jobs, less supervision and more risk for apprentices on the job; and

WHEREAS Bill 55—The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2021, currently before the house repeals The Apprenticeship Employment Opportunities Act (Public Works Contracts), which ensured apprentices can get work experience on public projects; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has a plan to undermine The Construction Industry Wages Act, an Act that ensures skilled tradespeople are properly paid.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately withdraw all of its anti-labour legislation—legislative agenda and reinstate the one-to-one apprenticeship ratio.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), seconded by the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor),

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately withdraw all of its anti-labour legislative agenda and reinstate the one-to-one apprenticeship ratio.

And I would just ask the honourable member for Flin Flon if he could just lower his camera a little bit. There is a need to be able to see more of him in debate.

Thank you.

Mr. Lindsey: I agree with there needs to be more of me in debate.

This particular resolution revolves around the attack on working people that this government has perpetuated since they first became elected. Every session, we've dealt with any number of pieces of legislation that were harmful to workers in this province, and we continue to see this going forward with this government. Bill 16, for example, is anti-worker, anti-labour.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

It makes it easier for employers to fire workers on picket lines. Once upon a time you had to commit a criminal offence on a picket line in order to be discharged, but now all you have to do is do or say something that upsets the boss and you can get fired.

It's an attempt to muzzle workers. It's an attempt to muzzle unions, all to keep Premier's (Mr. Pallister) corporate buddies happy. It's not about levelling the playing field. It's about completely tipping the balance in favour of employers and threatening workers again.

We see Bill 55, the reducing red tape and improving services act, which strips the requirement for public works projects, infrastructure building projects that are funded with public dollars; it strips the requirement to employ apprentices, which now will limit Manitobans' ability to get ahead.

We see that they've repealed, in the dark of night, just before Christmas, when they thought nobody was paying attention, the one-to-one ratio, which ensures that apprentices get the training they need, the hands-on experience while being properly supervised, while being properly mentored, which is the whole point of the apprenticeship, is the passage of knowledge in the hands-on environment.

Now, I recognize that many of the PC members opposite have probably never done any hands-on work in their lives, so they don't understand the concept. They don't understand the risks, but this is a very dangerous move in that apprentices won't get imparted all the knowledge they need to do their jobs safely.

The other thing it does is, by changing this ratio, it means that employers don't have to have as many certified tradesmen on the property. They'll get away with apprentices because now they can have twice as many apprentices as they could previously.

The other thing we see with this government—and particularly this Premier—is his constant unrelenting interference in free collective bargaining. A previous session he introduced bill 28, which froze workers'

wages unconstitutionally—and that's been proven in a court of law, that this bill is unconstitutional.

And yet, this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) dogged ideological approach, he refuses to repeal that and still to this day interferes in things like Manitoba Hydro and the IBEW negotiation to tell Manitoba Hydro, you cannot and will not offer any kind of wage increase; the Premier won't allow it.

That's led to not just the IBEW strike that we see going on—and certainly we heard yesterday from the honk-a-thon—but it led to charges of unfair labour practices in the University of Manitoba strike a couple of years ago, where it was proven, again, that this Premier interfered with free collective bargaining. Collective bargaining: that's a guaranteed constitutional right.

This Premier doesn't respect workers. He doesn't respect the constitution. He does not respect Manitobans.

Presently, there's a law in place that allows either party in a labour dispute to seek binding arbitration. And yet, what we know is that the Premier continues to interfere to the extent that some of those labour disputes have—labour negotiations have carried on for a couple of years and the Premier refuses to allow them to go to arbitration. And why is that, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Well, it's because every time one of these disputes does go to arbitration—that the Premier has meddled in, that the Premier has stuck his nose into where it doesn't belong—every time, the arbitrator's ruled that the workers were entitled to an increase in wages, based on the facts as presented, based on the economic conditions as presented.

But this Premier and all of his caucus—make no mistake, they're all guilty. They're all guilty of interfering in free collective bargaining because while their Premier does it they sit quietly in their chairs and say nothing.

The part that's particularly galling is how this Premier and this government attacks young upcoming workers. We saw yesterday where the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) completely washed his hands of any part of protecting Manitoba workers: nothing to do with him, nothing to do with his government.

Providing safe workplaces and making sure that employers are doing that is a role for the government, and yet this government has washed their hands of it

with the project labour agreements, which provided an opportunity for both unionized and non-unionized workers to get proper safety training on the job so that they could work safely, so that they could understand the rules.

This Premier has tried since 2016 to rip that up. Why? It's a good question. Because it worked. It worked since the days of Duff Roblin. It worked through several Progressive Conservative governments and NDP governments, and yet, this Premier's narrow ideological attack on working people is the only reason to introduce that particular piece of legislation.

And it—again, it attacks the ability to have apprentices, to have young people getting the opportunity to have a future in the trades. It means that Manitoba workers will lose out on opportunities to get employed. And everything that this government has done has been along that whole attack, attack, attack on workers.

* (11:10)

We saw this Premier and his government lay off government workers. We saw them, on one hand, thank Hydro workers, and the next hand, demand they take pay cuts. And then he interferes again and forces a strike—a strike, I might add, that not one worker ever wants to go on strike.

Contrary to what this Premier and his caucus may believe, working people want to go to work. But there comes a point in time where they have to stand up to the bullies, whether it's their employer or the government or, in this case, both. So kudos to those members who are standing up for themselves.

Now the Premier needs to get out of the way and do what's right: allow the natural, legally binding process of collective negotiation to take place. This Premier and every one of his caucus members needs to stop attacking workers and actually support workers so that we can build a better future for everyone.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Questions

Mr. Deputy 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 addressed by a member from another party;

any subsequent questions must follow rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Can the member explain how their party is respecting the rights of workers by interfering in the current negotiations with Hydro and IBEW?

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Well, I thank the member for the question.

Clearly, he doesn't understand the concept of free collective bargaining. Clearly, he doesn't understand how his Premier (Mr. Pallister) stuck his nose into that collective bargaining process by demanding zero increases, stopping Manitoba Hydro from actually entering into free collective bargaining with its workers.

So the one that's actually interfering in the process is his Premier. We, in the NDP, support working people. That's not interfering. The Premier is interfering and has interfered in so many collective bargaining agreements—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for Flin Flon for bringing this resolution forward.

I strongly agree that Manitoba should keep our one-to-one apprenticeship ratio, as it is so important, and I actually believe it's why our tradespeople are so sought-after.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the member use this opportunity to share with the House—and I'm hoping that government members will hear this—why that one-to-one apprenticeship ratio is so critical?

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the member from Tyndall Park for that very important question.

The one-to-one ratio is important because the whole point of an apprenticeship is for the certified tradesperson to pass the knowledge—not just what they learned in school, but the hands-on knowledge that they've acquired in the process of becoming tradesmen.

Without that one-to-one certification or one-to-one ratio, one tradesperson sitting in an office somewhere may be supervising two apprentices out in the field. By the time they find out that they shouldn't have done something, it's too late.

And this is particularly true when it comes to electricians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I really want to thank my colleague, the member for Flin Flon, for bringing forward this very important resolution.

I wonder if the member can tell me, what has been the impact of the Premier's interference in labour negotiations?

Mr. Lindsey: Well, I thank the member from Wolseley for that very important question. And as I said in some of my opening remarks, this Premier interfering in collective bargaining processes has led to several strikes—University of Manitoba, for example. Professors were forced to go on strike, and it was determined that the Premier had directed management, had interfered exactly.

And now we see the same thing with IBEW and Hydro. The Premier sticks his nose into places where a Premier of Manitoba has no business. Crown corporations—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for—the member's time is up.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I am quite confused by the member's assertion that the Premier is somehow meddling when he actually hasn't. There's no evidence of anything like that. In fact, he's made it clear that he wants to stay out of the negotiations and allow them to happen, whereas, you know, his own leader and his own party has been very active in interfering in the negotiations and taking the side of one party.

I just—I'm really having a lot of trouble understanding how the member kind of holds that logical contradiction up in his head. Maybe he can help me understand why he's contradicting himself.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the member for that question because, quite clearly, it points out the confusion on the part of not just that member but of the entire PC caucus, that when the Premier interferes in free collective bargaining, as he's done with bill 28, for example, which has been proven to be unconstitutional, and yet this Premier refuses to withdraw and, to this day, still demands that Crown corporations follow it. That is truly and clearly interference.

Standing in support with workers that are on strike is clearly not interference. We didn't go to—I—Manitoba Hydro and tell the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up. The member's time is up.

Ms. Naylor: I want to ask my very knowledgeable colleague from Flin Flon why he thinks this government wants to end binding arbitration for subsequent collective agreements and, thereby, allowing employers to drag out the collective agreement process to force union workers either into a bad collective agreement or into breaking the union.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the member from Wolseley for that very important question.

The whole point of the binding arbitration process is it was fairer to employers and to workers. By trying to do away with that provision, what it means is strikes will get dragged out for longer and longer and longer, with the intention, by this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Cabinet, of breaking unions so that employers can get better deals, as they call it, which means lower wages, lower standards, more contracts coming in from elsewhere.

It—the whole point of what this Premier's doing is his attempt to aid his corporate buddies in breaking unions. This isn't fair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): You know, I'm not really convinced the member who claims to understand labour and the union members really knows and fully understands the issue.

Can the member explain why they would rather support the leaders of unions rather than the union workers by opposing Bill 16 and continuing the lack of financial transparency surrounding unions?

Mr. Lindsey: Well, I find it odd that the member from Dauphin has found his voice to ask questions. When his community was under attack by his Premier, when they shut down the job—Dauphin jail, he sat very quietly, said nothing, said, well, you know, that's the way it's got to be.

But now, all of a sudden, he wants to enter into a debate about what's best for working people. What was best for working people in Dauphin was to keep the jail open or to build a new one, to expand it, not to shut it down.

So this member has no credibility when it comes to talking for either his constituents or working people in this province.

* (11:20)

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): I'm wondering if the member can advise me, just given his comments about his opposition to secret ballots, why his own political party, in December of 2014, as a result of complaints to NDP anti-harassment officers, they allowed a secret ballot vote for their—whether or not Selinger could stay on.

And the reason they argued that was because they were intimidated. And so your own party allowed a secret ballot vote.

Why are you not extending that to workers in general, or is that exclusive to the NDP?

Mr. Lindsey: Well, here we go again. This member knows not what he's speaking about. Nobody ever said we were opposed to secret ballot votes. What we were opposed to was lowering the threshold and demanding that there was always a secret ballot vote when it came to certification votes, because when 65 per cent of the workers had signed union cards, it was very clear what their intention was.

So now what this government has done is reduced the threshold to decertify to 40 per cent. So the member opposite clearly, as his Premier—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister—member's time is up.

Ms. Naylor: I'd like to ask the member if there's any additional ways that the Pallister government demonstrated that they don't care about working Manitobans.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, there's so many ways that this Premier and his gang of—what do they call them, the get-along gang?—that are afraid to stand up and support their constituents or Manitobans as a whole: bill 28, Bill 55, Bill 16, previous bill 7—the list goes on and on.

Every time we turn around this government is introducing another anti-labour right-wing piece of legislation, and I'm sure they get some of this stuff from their friends down in the deep south in ultra right-wing states.

Every time we turn around—project labour agreements worked fine for many, many years. This government, with no evidence whatsoever, does away with project labour agreements just because—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up. The time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate is open.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Just incredible, I guess, how snippy the member opposite gets and the members opposite get when we put forward legislation that introduces more accountability, greater transparency, greater protections for workers, greater support, more democracy in the whole process of certification and decertification.

And obviously this attacks—this gets really at the heart of the NDP, and so that's understandable that these efforts by our party to stand up for Manitoba workers and provide greater support and transparency and democracy are antithetical to the interests of the opposition parties, particularly the one that the member is a part of.

So we're going to continue to move forward with this—with our efforts on these fronts with regards to Bill 16, Bill 20—Bill 16 and the supports that we have provided to workers. So I just want to get into that a little bit as well.

So, obviously, our government is very thankful for the efforts of all workers in Manitoba, for the countless hours and effort that they've put in before and during this pandemic. And we know that this has been a challenge greater than anything Manitobans have faced before, and yet Manitobans were ready to work to keep our province moving even when the pandemic arrived in our province.

So we've done a number of things, Deputy Speaker, and I just kind of want to highlight them a little bit in terms of supports for workers. So we've opened up several means of support to recognize the hard work and sacrifices of front-line workers.

As the member is well aware, the \$120-million Risk Recognition Program, which provided a one-time payment to eligible essential front-line workers who took extraordinary risks to keep Manitobans safe; we also introduced a \$31.3-million wage subsidy program, and this included the Back to Work This Summer and Back to Work programs, and these were incredibly successful programs.

Manitoba led the country in unemployment last summer and the economy really came back and, particularly in my constituency, we had a really good summer, economically, with a lot of projects being

started, a lot of businesses being started, people being hired, a lot of people going back to work.

And the programs introduced by our government, particularly these two that I just highlighted—the Back to Work This Summer and Back to Work programs—put a lot of youth and a lot of Manitoba workers back to work, gave them jobs and a really good summer.

Deputy Speaker, the quick facts show that nearly 80,000 Manitobans received the \$1,500 Risk Recognition payment. Our government provided 9,325 Risk Recognition payments for a total of nearly \$13 million invested in our front-line social service workers, including \$4.9 million for 3,584 people serving Manitobans with disabilities; \$3.1 million for 2,304 Manitobans working in CFS agencies and group homes; \$1.4 million for 1,053 child-care workers; \$9,030 for 630 front-line Manitoba Housing staff.

And so we've provided significant supports to workers. This party understands the importance of jobs and creating jobs and protecting—standing up for Manitoba workers, and so that's why we've moved forward with things like fixing the finances.

The previous governments under the NDP left Manitoba finances in shambles, and we know that this isn't good for workers. And they did things like raise hydro rates by 40 per cent over the 17 years that they were in power. They increased taxes on—particularly, the PST, which was just one of the many reasons that led to their downfall in 2016.

And so these are all harmful to Manitoba workers, and we've turned that around, and after three years of heavy—four years of heavy lifting, we delivered Manitoba's first balanced budget in over a decade. And we did that while reducing taxes, which, critically, I think, helps to put more money back on the kitchen table for Manitoba families, for Manitoba workers.

And essentially, you know, I think that's the biggest ideological difference, is our government recognizes the efforts of workers and wants to reward them by allowing them to keep more of their own hard-earned dollars.

The members opposite believe that your paycheque really belongs to the government, and the more of it that they can skim off the top—a little bit here, a little bit there, a couple fees here, a couple—a little bit more—Deputy Speaker, somehow their view of economic growth and development involves giving more money—taking more money from hard-working

families and workers and giving that to the government and allowing the government to spend that at will.

And we've seen the shameful record of the NDP and the destruction that that causes to the economy, to morale, the damage that does to attracting capital and to the entrepreneurial dynamism and spirit of our business people in our province and our workers. So we've moved forward, as a government, with reducing taxes, with reducing red tape, and we're going to be moving forward with Bill 16, which, Deputy Speaker, includes several important provisions.

The changes to The Labour Relations Act will carry out an election commitment on union financial transparency, better encourage voluntary negotiation of collective agreements, improve alignment with requirements in other Canadian jurisdictions and balance rights between employers, unions and workers.

The changes proposed by Bill 16 are long overdue and will better balance the rights of unions, their members and their employers. These changes will make unions more accountable and transparent. Manitoba is the only Canadian jurisdiction that has provisions in their labour relations legislation that allows one party to force another into binding arbitration for subsequent agreements.

Now, we know that adaptability during the pandemic is important, which is why Bill 16 will allow for the Manitoba Labour Board to conduct electronic votes and allow the board to dismiss cases deemed to be frivolous, vexatious or repetitious.

* (11:30)

It's obvious, Deputy Speaker, that the members opposite don't like this legislation because it would require secret ballots so employees can't be bullied into joining or staying in unions. And I think that's incredible.

I have family members—my mom's a bus driver, as well, and the frustration with the union—not only can she hardly—her colleagues hardly afford, on the wages they earn, to pay the union dues, that the entire process, there was a lot of bullying. It was really hard on my mom and her colleagues.

There's a lot of division, a lot of anger and that—but that union had to come in. They had to bring that union in. And there was a lot of bullying that went on, and it wasn't democratic process.

So, personally, I'm very happy to see this measure undertaken. I think it's shocking, it's just crazy, as a young person, to think that you go through the school system and they teach you about civic rights and responsibilities and you learn a lot in social studies about Canada's democratic system and how we can take great pride in it and our democracy, and yet, when it comes to Manitoba workers and union certification, when it comes to unions and their—and the way they operate, Deputy Chair, it's just night and day.

There is nothing democratic about it, nothing democratic about the current process. So secret ballots are absolutely critical, and I'm very happy to see that that's part of the legislation.

They also—it's clear, that the members opposite also don't like Bill 16 because it would stop taxpayer support for full-time union executives. And I don't know how the member opposite could oppose not only secret ballots, but how the member opposite could oppose greater transparency that allows members of unions to be able to see where their full-time union executives are spending their money and— or what they earn.

So we've heard of sunshine lists—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I'm very pleased to stand and put a few words on the record today about this very important private member's resolution brought forward by my colleague from Flin Flon.

This government has proven time and time again that they care more about the bottom line than the well-being of workers in Manitoba. During the pandemic, over 10,000 workers lost their jobs, and 6,250 civil servants were forced to take unpaid days, keeping millions of dollars out of the pocket of our local economy.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) laid off nearly 8,000 educational staff, over 375 post-secondary staff and over 1,300 municipal employees and over 1,700 Crown corporation employees during the pandemic. The Premier publicly shamed those same people he forced out of work by saying that he was fighting against a federal program that is actually paying people to stay out of the workforce right now.

Thousands of these layoffs were in school divisions because this government wanted to save every cent it could, no matter what the human cost. And then in the summer, the government touted all the savings

they had as a result of firing thousands of Manitobans who work in our schools, instead of investing more money to keep kids safe.

And if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) would've had his way, he would have laid off thousands more employees from Manitoba Hydro and post-secondary schools. He threatened 800 layoffs at Hydro, and 200 people ended up taking unpaid days.

Instead of protecting good-paying Manitoba jobs, this Premier has cut more than 2,500 positions from the civil service since 2016.

Manitobans work hard, and they deserve a government that will respect their rights and protect their health and safety, both on and off the job. Unfortunately, this government has repeatedly demonstrated that they don't care about protecting workers. In fact, this government goes out of its way to make the lives of working Manitobans more difficult.

Just a few moments ago, we heard the member from Borderland openly complaining about the lack of wages—the low wages—for bus drivers, for example, the low wages for Manitobans. I think the member's confused about why that is. This is a government that, you know, has over and over refused to consider a \$15 minimum wage. If we had a \$15 minimum wage, bus drivers' wages would subsequently be higher.

I think that member is also confused about understanding the history of labour and where things—where these good things come from for working Manitobans. Without unions—without the history of labour in this province—many, many working Manitobans would be much poorer, much worse off, wouldn't have the kinds of important benefits and safety features on the job that we have today.

So I think the member from Borderland for pointing out that very important discrepancy—that we still have unpaid workers—but I hope he can learn to appreciate that without the union that his family member is a part of, that job would pay a whole lot less and the hours would probably be a lot longer and there would be many, many things missing in terms of health—sorry—workplace health and safety.

So I hope that he's having those conversations within his caucus, because I think there's some important learning to happen there. Unfortunately, this government—sorry—the Pallister government has repeatedly disrespected workers and their rights through regressive legislation, excessive layoffs and

unconstitutional wage freezes. Their legislative agenda says it all.

Bill 16, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, will make it easier for unions to be decertified and for employers to punish employees who participate in job action.

Bill 55, The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2021, currently before the House, repeals The Apprenticeship Employment Opportunities Act, which ensures apprentices can get work experiences on public projects.

The Pallister government continues to interfere in labour negotiations and freeze wages, even though its bill 28, The Public Services Sustainability Act was deemed—sorry—unconstitutional and draconian by the courts.

The Premier threatened layoffs of hundreds of Manitoba Hydro workers, forced unpaid days off and then demanded their wages be frozen. And now, today, those very workers are on strike, some of them right now outside this building, honking and protesting. They're within their rights to protest and to strike because of the Premier's interference.

The Premier and his government have repeatedly interfered in labour negotiations with teachers, bus drivers, Hydro workers and nurses, leading to strikes in recent years at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg School Division and Manitoba Hydro.

They also repealed the one-to-one ratio, as we've heard—meaning the loss of good jobs, less supervision and more risks for apprentices on the job. And on top of all this, they have a plan to undermine The Construction Industry Wages Act, an act that ensures skilled tradespeople are properly paid.

And that is why we're calling on the Pallister government to immediately withdraw all of its anti-labour legislative agenda and reinstate the one-to-one apprenticeship ratio.

An NDP government would respect the rights of workers by prioritizing their health and safety and respecting the rights of unions to advocate for their members.

We know that unions and the dedicated people behind them have brought about many of the employment rights we take for granted today. Manitobans value those rights and deserve to be able to continue to unionize to ensure they are treated fairly by their employers. We understand that employers inherently have more power in collective bargaining

situations and that workers and unions must also have sufficient power to advocate for themselves.

The Pallister government is attacking workers' rights with Bill 16. They call this an attempt to level the playing field. But in reality, they're stacking the deck further in favour of employers to the detriment of workers' rights.

* (11:40)

The Labour Relations Act currently allows either a union or employer to get binding arbitration hearings after a certain time period of stalled contract talks, a strike or a lockout, and this encourages both sides of a labour dispute to work towards settlement. This very reasonable mechanism has helped Manitoba avoid the lengthy lockouts seen in other areas, such as the seven-month lockout at the Co-op Refinery in Saskatchewan this year.

Bill 16 would only continue the binding 'arbitration'—arbitration requirement for initial collective agreements when workers unionize, not for any subsequent collective agreements. This would allow employers to drag out the process and starve the union workers either back into a bad collective agreement, or starve them into breaking the union. This change is not conducive to bargaining in good faith.

This current legislation has a clause that says employers can refuse to reinstate workers due to strike-related misconduct if the action constitutes just cause for termination and resulted in a criminal conviction.

This bill removes the requirement for a criminal conviction. This makes it far too easy for employers to go after employees for almost any reason. Strike leaders and outspoken workers who are bravely standing up for the rights of their colleagues will most certainly be targeted by their employers if Bill 16 passes.

Currently, the threshold that triggers a vote on whether to decertify a union is 50 per cent. This means that if the provincial Labour Board felt that 50 per cent of represented workers wanted to leave the union, a vote would have to be held. Bill 16 lowers this threshold to 40 per cent, making it easier for the power of unions to be undermined, and it's certainly an undemocratic way to pursue this.

Bill 16 would allow some people who buy unionized business to not be bound by existing collective agreements. The Labour Board could grant an exemption if a buyer substantially changed the character of the business, and this is unfair to workers who have no choice in whether the company that employs them is sold.

All of this anti-labour legislation is bad legislation. I'm happy to put that on the record today, and to stand in strong support for this private member's resolution from the member from Flin Flon.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I'm not even really sure where to start. There's so, so much material. I think the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) just said that holding a vote is undemocratic. I—I'm kind of at a loss as to what she thinks democracy is supposed to look like if holding a vote is somehow perceived as undemocratic by her.

But, you know, I shouldn't be surprised. I really shouldn't, because that's consistent with the same kinds of nonsense that are put forward by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey). You know, he claims to be respecting working Manitobans and promoting safe workplaces, but he has two sets of rules.

How safe of it—how safe is it, in today's environment, for you to gather together with a whole bunch of people and get nice and close to each other? It's not, and yet that's what his own leader did and doesn't even apologize for it.

It's two sets of rules. The NDP, in this matter, are so myopic. I don't—I just can't even understand it.

Now, I will give the member for Flin Flon some credit. He said that the NDP keep turning around, and every time they turn around, you know, they discover something different. Now, I mean, they've been spinning a lot. I'll give them that. You know, so I guess that's a form of turning around.

But, clearly, what they've been doing is three-sixties, because they're dizzy. They're not coherent. They're not really thinking straight and they're certainly not changing their overall direction.

If you want to change your direction, three-sixties are not the way to go, because when you come out of that spin, you're still headed the same way. And the NDP are still headed the same way.

Now what they need to do is pull a one-eighty. And I'll just, you know, I wish I had another opportunity to ask the member a question. Question periods are, sadly, not nearly long enough to have good interactions here. But, you know, I think about respecting working Manitobans and then I think about, you know, the NDP themselves.

And, you know, it's not too many years gone by yet since, you know, we had brave and courageous women come forward. And we just spent this morning talking about sexual assault, and then this comes as the next thing on the agenda.

We have brave women who've come forward who've described the way that they were sexually harassed and sexually assaulted within the NDP political organism, how they were disrespected, how they were told to—how did it go, now—you know, shut up and suck it up, I think, is the way that it was put.

The member claims to be respecting working Manitobans, and yet not only is that their legacy, but I don't think there's been any real resolution. I don't think there's been any compensation offered by the NDP party to these women who suffered in this way under their watch, who were victims of exactly the opposite: the disrespect of their work, the disrespect—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. I just want to remind the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) if he—the relevance to the resolution that's at—that we are debating right now. So if the member can go back to the relevance of this resolution.

Mr. Teitsma: Absolutely, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mean, talking about respecting working Manitobans is certainly the topic for today, and that's a topic that deserves a lot of attention and a lot of time could be spent on it this morning, I think.

You know, you just also look at the two sets of rules that the NDP pretend to apply. They say that, you know, somehow the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is interfering with union negotiations, but when they're actively involved on camera and in writing and verbally, broadcast media of every sort, that they're actively interfering in a negotiation, suddenly that's—no, no, no, that's not interference, that's standing up for workers.

Well, the problem is, is that the NDP actually rarely do take the opportunity to stand up for workers. They might think they do, and the reason they think

they do is because what they will do is stand up for union leaders.

And, you know, I mean, we just had, I think, we just debated my bill the other day, and this was another opportunity to say, okay, what is—when you have an opportunity here to understand that some things—sometimes when you're in a position of leadership—actually, all the time when you're in a position of leadership—you need to be able to put the interests of the people who are under you in that position of leadership first.

And a respectful workplace, a safe workplace, has that, that when you are in a position of leadership, that you show that respect. You actually sacrifice your own interests for the sake of those—the interests of those who work for you.

So, you know, we had a chance with the lobbying bill. We have a chance today, I think. We have a chance with Bill 16. We've had all sorts of opportunities, and we even spelled it out.

Like, that's—I mean, it's one thing if we were as—politically trying to trick the NDP into—ha, ha, ha, we're going to deceive them into forgetting that they shouldn't be standing up for the interests of union leaders. They need to be standing up for the interests of union members, because that's what we do on this side of the House.

And so this is—this—it's not a—it's not—there's not slight of hand at all. We're spelling it out for them. We're describing it in painful detail of how the—you know, Bill 16, for example, what does Bill 16 do? It provides accountability to union members for how their dues are spent and how their union leadership is spending their hard-earned dues that they have to pay and essentially taking money away from working Manitobans.

Now, I have no issue with paying of union dues. I've paid them myself in my day. And the question is, well, what are you doing with them? What do you do with that money, and should you be accountable to the people who gave it to you? And I fundamentally believe you absolutely should. That's what Bill 16 speaks to.

I think when you talk about bills about, you know, or measures to enable secret ballot voting, to encourage democratic processes, you know, time-honoured democratic processes, somehow the NDP

stands against—they stand against holding a vote. They even are so bold as to call it undemocratic.

* (11:50)

They stand against secret ballots. They stand against transparency. They stand against accountability. They stand against any measure of respect for worker interests. What they're interested in is leader-union leadership interest.

I mean, it even goes with—if you take a look, a quick gander at the bills that they've—I believe the word is selected—to hold over, kind of feels like they were told by union leaders which ones they were supposed to hold over. That's—I mean, that's just the sense you get.

But I think, you know, when we give them these opportunities—we give them over and over again the opportunity for them to turn that one-eighty, not the three-sixty turns that they seem to be inclined to, but to turn that one-eighty turn and take a different tack, take a different course—and that course, you know, I think it would be great if the party on my side of the House and the parties on the other side of the House all would be willing and interested in standing up for the rights of Manitoba workers.

But apparently that's not the case, because what the NDP do is they reject the interests of Manitoba workers, and instead promote the interest of the union leadership.

And if you really want an understanding of how protecting the interests of workers looks, well, how about making sure that the money that you accept from them—whether we're—if you're talking about union dues, I've already covered that.

How about hydro rates, which went up, I think, 40 per cent under the NDP. And which, likely, have to rise further. Why? Because we're carrying \$10 billion of debt that we should not be carrying because of the NDP. You want disrespect for workers? That's disrespect for workers.

Setting them up with high hydro rates, not just for the 17 years that they were in government where they cranked them up by 40 per cent, but on the way forward too. Because, you know what, if interest rates rises, Hydro is in a world of hurt.

And then how about accountability on the tax dollars that they pay, and when the NDP just runs deficit after deficit to the point where now we've got

interest payments making up, what is it, the fourth largest department in government, right. Where did that debt come from?

It came from the NDP. More than half of it was under just Selinger alone. That is disrespect for working Manitobans. Working Manitobans deserve to be—deserve to have the money that they're handing over for union dues, for taxes, to be used wisely. That's what respect looks like.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) for bringing forward this resolution, Calling Upon the Provincial Government to Respect Working Manitobans. And I do not have a whole lot of time this morning, especially because I want to see this resolution come to a vote before 12 o'clock.

And I want to spend a little bit of time focusing on labour, specifically. But I think this is one of our first opportunities to also spend a bit of time talking about some of the incredible work Manitobans, in many fields, have done in such unpredictable and extremely difficult times.

So I really want to use this as an opportunity to focus on my constituents in Tyndall Park. And I thought a way I could do this is by first tabling four letters that I had the opportunity to send to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) back on June 8th, August 17th, November 30th and December 7th, all in 2020.

These letters were written throughout the pandemic when I was hearing from my constituents with respect to their jobs and many concerns around ineligibility from programs, including the Risk Recognition Program and the Manitoba Bridge Grant.

And through having my constituents reach out, I was able to compile a list of jobs that really need to be—and some have been—recognized and acknowledged. And these jobs, although shared by Manitobans throughout the province, have been brought to my attention specifically from the individuals living in Tyndall Park.

So, in the spirit of the resolution to respect working Manitobans, let's acknowledge our outstanding health-care workers who continue, with no

defined end date, to work and keep us healthy. These health-care workers have picked up shifts, worked overtime, sacrificed times with their families by isolating and continue to risk their own health daily.

Some of these jobs include nurses, medical assistants and receptionists, dentists and dental assistants, front-line lab workers, lab technicians and technologists, pharmacy employees, home-care workers and attendants, residential support workers, dietary aides, care-home nurses and support staff.

And, Deputy Speaker, it was last month I had the opportunity to participate in I Love to Read Month, as many MLA colleagues did, and it allowed me first-hand to talk with lots of teachers and students and experience just how incredible, adaptable and flexible they have been.

So this resolution to respect working Manitobans also needs to acknowledge educators, child-care workers, special education staff, administrators, EAs, tutorial centres and custodial staff.

It is also extremely important that we properly recognize all of the jobs that have not stopped through the pandemic, that has—have been and continue to be absolutely critical here in Manitoba.

These are also jobs that are not often thought of when we use the term essential. However, they are 100 per cent essential and really deserve the proper recognition and respect, as Manitoba has never stopped depending on them through the pandemic.

If we take a moment and think about the transportation industry here in Manitoba, I've heard from our truck drivers, who continue to drive our essential items across borders to ensure we have what we need. It is our truck drivers who ensure our grocery stores are stocked for us, and I know I'm sure grateful for this.

I also think about our taxi drivers, and I want to personally thank so many of them who have reached out to me over the pandemic as they have continued to work, risking their own health to ensure that people who need a taxi as an alternative form of transportation can access it.

This has resulted in many trips to doctors appointments and grocery stores and to service those who have had to travel during this time.

It is also important we acknowledge and recognize our airport screening officers and all employees at the airport, because even though travelling has been highly discouraged, airports have not shut down and employees continue to work in a very high-foot-traffic atmosphere.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to better acknowledge our bus drivers and driving instructors. Even with a pandemic, life doesn't stop, and our bus drivers continue to risk their lives every day, servicing Manitobans who are still going to work and depend on public transit. And our bus drivers have gone above and beyond to keep people safe by enforcing masks and distancing on the bus.

Lastly, Madam Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, under transportation we should acknowledge our driving instructors because, similarly to bus drivers and taxi drivers, people continue to live their lives, and that often means training and learning how to drive. And our driving instructors have been accommodating and have adapted their services so people can learn safely.

There are a few more businesses and jobs that I would like to acknowledge because they are hard-working Manitobans, specifically from Tyndall Park, who have reached out to me and demonstrated how they have stepped up during the pandemic: everyday services from bank employees, grocery store employees, bakeries, legal assistants, and civil service, security guards, retail workers, workers in manufacturing, meat plant workers, hospitality staff, cleaning businesses and fogging businesses.

And, again, I want to reiterate these are specifically jobs of individuals living in Tyndall Park who took the time to reach out to me over the last few months, and I really want to personally thank them for doing their part throughout this pandemic.

And my wish for everyone in Tyndall Park and all Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that they know how much we appreciate them and we are incredibly grateful for all they have done. And they have gone above and beyond during this time.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to allow time for a vote here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare).

An Honourable Member: Question. Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare)?

If not, I'll move on to the honourable member for Dauphin.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the chance to say a few words on this resolution.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member from Flin Flon, on a point of order.

Mr. Lindsey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question was called before you recognized another speaker to stand up and speak, so—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. I can't put a question if a member wants to speak, so the member from Dauphin wanted to speak and he has the right to speak.

And the member from Flin Flon does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Michaleski: Thank you, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Dauphin has basically 10 minutes remaining—10 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 25, 2021

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