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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
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PROCEEDINGS
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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 26, 2022

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.

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Good morning, everybody. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Would you please call for third reading and concurrence, from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. or sooner, Bill 228, the eating disorders awareness week; and, from 10:30 to 11 a.m. or sooner, Bill 227, The Turban Day Act, for third reading and concurrence.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider concurrence and third reading of Bill 228 from 10 to 10:30 or sooner, and then followed by concurrence and third reading of the Bill 227 from 10:30 to 11 a.m. or sooner.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 228—The Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call concurrence and third reading of Bill 228, The Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I move, seconded by the MLA for Union Station, that Bill 228, The Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Ms. Naylor: I'm grateful to stand in the House today for the third reading of Bill 228. It is an honour to stand here knowing that I'm representing so many people from across Manitoba who want eating disorders awareness week to be recognized.

At second reading, I had guests in the gallery from the eating disorder program at Women's Health Clinic, as well as Elaine and Rick Stevenson, and some of them have joined us again here today along with some additional guests.

I have also read petitions into the Legislature representing about 250 Manitobans who want to see a recognized eating disorders awareness week. Given the stigma and secrecy that often surrounds eating disorders, I have been humbled and pleased to receive so many private responses and messages on social media and by email with people sharing their stories or telling me why this issue matters to them.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned on second reading of Bill 228, it was 1986 when people from Canada, the US and the UK gathered to talk about organizing an international Eating Disorders Awareness Week, or EDAW. Two years later, the National Eating Disorder Information Centre became the national co-ordinator for EDAW and various advocacy groups in Canada started recognizing it yearly during the first week in February.

Here in Manitoba, the Women's Health Clinic has been hosting EDAW events since 2010 and community education on eating disorders for many years before that. However, EDAW has not been formally recognized. Bill 228 will bring Manitoba in line with seven other provinces and territories that formally recognize February 1st to 7th as eating disorders awareness week.

At the time of second reading, I outlined why eating disorders awareness matters and how this bill can help. Subsequently, I heard support privately and

publicly from members on all sides of this House for this bill. I want to thank my colleagues across this House for that support.

I also want to thank the speakers who attended the standing committee on Tuesday evening this week to speak about why Bill 228 is important to them. Some of these speakers are guests in the gallery today. I'm going to recap a little of what each of them shared on the public record on Tuesday evening.

I'll start with Elaine Stevenson. Elaine and Rick Stevenson have been advocates for eating disorders awareness and access to treatment for 32 years. Their daughter Alyssa struggled with her eating disorder for 12 years before dying at age 24. That was almost 20 years ago.

Elaine and Rick have never wavered in their efforts to increase awareness locally, provincially and federally. At the time that Alyssa was ill, there was no adolescent treatment program available to her in the province. While services have increased since—and improved since then, we know that the wait-lists are far too long and that the need has only increased during the pandemic. But even prior to the pandemic, the wait-lists were more than a year long at times.

Elaine spoke so eloquently and with a great deal of passion about the importance of expanded services and why awareness is so critical. She described what happens when families are struggling, as so many families reach out to her all the time. They need to know why; they need to know where to go for help and to know how to sort through the misinformation on the Internet. She already has big plans for community education forums to take place during future EDAW weeks.

Committee members have spoken to me today about how moved they were by—or sorry, spoke to me yesterday about how moved they were by Elaine's words on Tuesday night and their recognition of why Bill 228 matters.

I also want to thank Lea Neufeld La Rue who spoke on behalf of the community-based treatment program at Women's Health Clinic. Lea is one of a team made up of counsellors, a social worker, a nurse practitioner and dieticians. It's a small team delivering comprehensive care that includes individual counselling and dietetic support, support for families as well as group therapy for clients. Clients are supported long term with an ongoing monthly post-treatment group. Lea reported to the committee that 193 people are currently on the wait-list for services.

She noted that this bill could lead to greater awareness about what is an eating disorder, which she described as a mental health disorder drastically underreported and continuing to be fatal in some cases. She stated that this growing awareness would help parents, doctors, teachers, coaches, even individuals themselves be better able to identify eating disorders, knowing that early intervention is key.

She also stated that it would mean expanding the prevention conversation at younger ages, which is usually when eating disorders begin. Lea also talked about how Black and Indigenous people and other racialized individuals have had their relationships with their body disrupted due to racism, colonialism and other factors that contribute to disordered thoughts and feelings about food and their bodies.

* (10:10)

These socio-cultural impacts need to be better understood, and I was grateful that a professional in the field took the time to speak to our committee about how The Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act could help that to happen.

The third speaker was Kristen Bauman who bravely shared her personal journey with an eating disorder and how important it is to her as a parent of four children to ensure that awareness grows and services exist.

Kristen so eloquently spoke about the fear and shame that accompanied her own 15-year journey with her eating disorder and how grateful she is that the wait-list was only a few months long when she reached out for help 12 years ago.

She told the committee that she sometimes wonders if she would be here today if she had had to wait longer for service. She stated that Bill 228 would bring more awareness and that people would feel seen, less alone and more likely to seek help. She also hopes that it will bring more awareness to professionals and more opportunities for them to train in the field.

Madam Speaker, eating disorders awareness week creates an opportunity for Manitobans to increase their understanding of this life-threatening illness. Awareness is the critical first step in helping families identify when someone they love is at risk.

There are a lot of misconceptions and stereotypes about eating disorders, but they affect folks of all genders, from all backgrounds. Most people have heard of anorexia or bulimia but there is a continuum of behaviours related to food and exercise that qualify

as diagnosable eating disorders and behaviours that qualify as early warning signs.

Eating disorders arise from a complex combination of behavioural, biological, psychological, interpersonal and social factors. EDAW provides an opportunity for education about how eating disorders impact people across the gender spectrum, people of all sexual orientations. They impact disabled folks; people with other chronic illnesses or addictions; Black, Indigenous and other racialized people; and they impact people of all sizes and all body types.

Eating disorders develop within a context of society and media portrayal of an impossible and very narrow, limited idea of what a healthy, acceptable or attractive body looks like.

As Lea indicated to the committee, systemic oppression affects how people view their own bodies. This includes experiences of racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, sexual harassment or exploitation. Eating disorders awareness week can be a tool to bring attention to the socio-cultural determinants that contribute to the development of an eating disorder.

Eating disorders awareness week may help medical professionals become more knowledgeable. Medical training includes a very limited amount of education on this topic, and what that means is people are often misdiagnosed or medical professionals don't always feel equipped to deal with this illness.

EDAW is also important to bring awareness to the lack of services and supports, especially in rural and northern communities. Lack of Internet access, local supports and culturally relevant services are all factors. Manitoba's treatment services are centralized in Winnipeg and our wait-lists are very, very long.

I will conclude by saying that we can all do our part to help prevent eating disorders by treating all people, all bodies, with dignity and respect, regardless of body shape, size or abilities. In our own lives, we can speak up and we can challenge assumptions that equate any type of body with any degree of inferiority.

As one of the citizens who addressed the committee stated, we can all do our part to support those suffering by passing this bill today.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to the unanimous support of this House. Thank you.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): It is an honour to rise in the House and put a few words on record in regard to Bill 228, the eating disorders

awareness week. I want to thank the member from Wolseley for bringing forward this important bill.

Eating disorders are an illness that many do not talk about or do not recognize the seriousness of that they are.

More than 1 million Canadians are diagnosed with an eating disorder each year. Those most impacted by the disorder are women and girls, although men make up about 10 to 15 per cent of those who suffer from this disorder.

What is an eating disorder? Individuals who are affected by an eating disorder experience severe changes in their eating behaviours and mental, physical and emotional well-being. There are many signs that a person is suffering from an eating disorder, such as huge weight loss, avoiding meals, refusing to eat certain foods—and these are only but a few examples of what the outward or visible signs are.

What would be the reason that a person would change their eating habits and worry about their diet? Eating disorders are a range of psychological conditions that cause unhealthy eating habits to develop. The disorder could start with an obsession with food, body weight or body shape. The cause can have long-lasting and serious side effects on those with an eating disorder. In some cases, people could die. Their health is affected and they could see liver damage, kidney failure, electrolyte imbalances and other severe impacts to their mental and physical health.

There are many factors that could impact a person's self-esteem and cause them to not like their body. Culture has a huge impact on young girls and women. It portrays the perfect body as petite with few or no curves. The social media sites, movie stars and models in magazines are all tall and slender. They are the image that sells, and young girls strive to be like the many faces they see on TV and in the glossy fashion magazines. Missing is the fact that these women are on restricted diets and not representing the average size and shape of girls today.

The pressure from the outside world and what presents as a perfect life can create an environment where these young viewers are looking at their own bodies and beginning to critique their size. A person's view of themselves, with respect to the world around them, can impact their self-esteem and how they view their body image.

With the reach of social media and online access to many shows, children are being exposed to this world at a younger age. Some children are 12 or

younger when they begin to not feel comfortable with their body image. This is scary and creates huge concerns for the health of our children. Perfectionism, impulsivity, personality traits and genetics all play a role in how children view and interpret the world around them. Children need to learn that the world is not what is portrayed on a TV or social media site and to love the body they were born with.

Madam Speaker, I want to touch on a few facilities which offer support to those who are seeking support for their illness. In-patient and outpatient programs are offered at the Health Sciences Centre, the women's clinic; and in Brandon, at the Westwind Eating Disorder Recovery Centre, counselling, therapy and dietitian support is offered to individuals seeking the services. Family support is further provided through community workshops and consultations with professionals.

I want to close my comments by saying, it is great to have a week in February that will offer education and support for individuals, families and communities. Listening to the professionals and family members and guests speak to the damage and impact this disease has on relationships and community supports the need for a week that offers support and education to dis-eating–eating disorders. Through education, we can offer assistance to those who are seeking support.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'll keep my remarks short. I just want to share a few thoughts with respect to Bill 228, the eating disorders awareness week. And I want to thank the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) for bringing this important bill forward and gathering the support, doing her diligence in bringing the bill forward.

Lastly, I want to thank the presenters who came out to committee the other night and for sharing some very personal stories to them. I think that that really speaks to what this Legislature is all about and committee is an opportunity for all Manitobans to come and share their stories and their perspectives on legislation, inside the Manitoba Legislature, here.

And they did such a wonderful job at providing the different perspectives and backgrounds. We know more and more, as we continue to learn about eating disorders, that it is far and wide and it does—the member from Wolseley spoke to this—it extends beyond anorexia and bulimia. It goes—it affects people of all ages, of all cultures, of all genders, Madam

Speaker. And I think that's why it's extremely important that we do continue to build this awareness, and that maybe today, through bringing an official day through passing legislation. And I think there is more we still need to do, as well, whether that be investing in more of the resources here in Manitoba.

* (10:20)

I know one of the really big things we need to be doing is regulating therapy, ensuring that those who are practising therapy are competent and qualified therapists because they are giving mental health advice and suggestions and guidance. We also know by regulating therapy, it would ensure that those who want to attend therapy can afford to attend it and have access to it.

So, very happy to be supporting this bill moving forward through the House today, and thank you for the opportunity to share a few remarks.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 228, The Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act.

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

Bill 227—The Turban Day Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to concurrence and third reading of Bill 227, The Turban Day Act.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: And prior to going further with that, I would like to introduce some members who have arrived in the gallery. I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today members of the Sikh community who are the guests of the honourable member for Burrows.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here to the Legislature today.

* * *

Madam Speaker: So, in calling concurrence and third reading of Bill 227, The Turban Day Act, I will now recognize the honourable member for Burrows.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I move, seconded by the member from The Maples, that Bill 227, The Turban Day Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Brar: Bill 227 proposes to recognize April 13th as turban day in Manitoba. It's an honour, pride and blessing for me to bring Bill 227, The Turban Day Act, in this Chamber.

I can't thank all members of the Manitoba Legislature Assembly enough for the support this bill received. I owe a big thanks to all the members who spoke and listened about this bill—turbans, Sikhism and Punjabi culture—during second reading.

This bill got a very good support from the community. I welcome community members in the gallery today.

Today, during the third reading and debate, I want to put a few more words on record regarding this bill.

Before that, let's talk a bit about Sikhism. Founder of Sikhism, Baba Nanak, advocated to earn by honest means, meditate and share our wealth and food with other human beings. I would encourage all those listening to read about Baba Nanak.

The concept of langar—it is also called community kitchen or free food—anyone attending congregation or visiting holy places called gurdwara is offered free food. Food is prepared and served by volunteers. Dishwashing and cleaning is done by volunteers. The concept of langar lets people cook together and eat together sitting on the floor, which means all humans are equal irrespective of their social status, financial status, caste, religion, skin colour or gender.

Many members from this Chamber have already visited gurdwaras. I request all others to visit and learn more about Sikhism. People of all religions are welcome to visit, attend congregation and eat together at gurdwaras while maintaining their own religious faith.

When you read about Baba Nanak, you would see his advocacy for our natural resources, land, air and water; his advocacy for women's rights; his advocacy for social justice and freedom of faith. I would encourage you to read about the 10th Sikh guru, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. He is known as a saint soldier who meditated a lot, wrote a lot, fought many battles, including the battle of Chamkaur when he lost two older sons aged 14 and 17 years in the battlefield,

fighting for human rights. The other two younger sons, aged seven and nine, were bricked alive by the king of the time. He lost his mother during the same time, after being imprisoned on top of a tower in winter. He himself left for his heavenly abode at the age of 42 years.

Before I get back to Bill 227, I would encourage everyone to read about the ninth Sikh guru, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji. This will tell you a lot about Sikh philosophy and human rights. Having said that, let's feel the pain the Sikh community continues to experience through racism, discrimination and oppression on the basis of their religious identity, appearance, attire and turban. In our own city, Winnipeg, turban-wearing people are being yelled at, bullied and hated for being Sikhs.

I have heard from people being insulted at workplaces because of systemic racism. Here are a few examples worth sharing. In 1984, the Sikh genocide in India: thousands of Sikhs were brutally murdered, raped, burned alive. In 1982, a private school headmaster refused to admit a Sikh student unless he removed his turban and cut his hair. In 2002, Jasjit Singh Jaggi, a Sikh traffic policeman employed by the New York police department was forced to leave his job because he insisted to wear his turban on duty.

In 2004, France introduced a new law prohibiting displays of any religious symbols in state-run schools. Four days after 9/11, Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh American businessman, was shot to death in a spree of racist shootings. In April 2009, Captain Kamaljit Singh Kalsi and Second Lieutenant Tejdeep Singh Rattan challenged a US army order that required them to remove their turbans and shave their beards.

In Ottawa, a turbaned international student was assaulted at his workplace. The assailant attacked him and removed his turban. We all know about Quebec's bill 21 that banned religious symbols at workplaces, and the list goes on.

Not only Sikhs but other minorities also face racism and oppression. We still fail to stop racially motivated mass shootings, attacks on people of colour, murders and police brutality in various parts of the world. There are always two ways to address such issues: education and enforcement. Bill 227, The Turban Day Act, is a tool to educate people and create awareness not only about turbans or Sikhism but also about the value of inclusion, diversity, social justice, human rights, harmony, love and peace.

I look forward to unanimous support to this bill on my 47th birthday, today.

Sat Sri Akal. *[Truth is God.]* Shukria. *[Thank you.]* Salaam alaikum. *[Peace be unto you.]* Meharbani *[Translation unavailable]*. Salamat po. *[Thank you.]* Miigwech. Thank you. Merci.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On behalf of this House, we wish the member happy birthday.

Recognizing the next speaker, the honourable member for Brandon East.

* (10:30)

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): As I always start, it is a privilege to rise in the House and put a few words on the record. And I know I did speak to the second reading. I believe I spoke for almost 10 minutes during second reading, so I'm certainly not going to take that long today.

I appreciate the member's passion to help stamp out racism and hatred, and we're on your side. If this bill can do a—even a little bit of that, I applaud the member and I also—want to also wish him a happy birthday. So we can certainly say we could give you a present today by supporting this bill in a speedy fashion.

Because, again, I believe in my comments during second reading, Madam Speaker, I talked about the importance of identification and trying to understand myself the meaning and the importance of a turban. And I listened very carefully to the member's words in his description. I have reread the bill itself to talk about what—why this—the turban is an important symbol.

And so when I had an opportunity during our constituency week, I reached out to our Sikh community in Brandon, had a conversation with them so that I could get, again, more understanding.

I will never rise in this House and say I know everything, because it is a great opportunity for us to learn from each other. And, again, with that, I want to thank the member for that.

I do stand in the House quite often, and I talk about my heritage. I was very fortunate—and thanks to all the support of everyone in the House—of passing The Filipino Heritage Month Act. So I understand what it's like to promote within and to promote the diverse communities that we have throughout Manitoba.

We have a new consul general from Iceland that was introduced to us the other day, and I have an excellent relationship with the ambassador's office and meeting because it's my heritage. And I certainly celebrate anybody in this House who will rise and discuss and praise those who helped build our community.

We have our First Nations, our First Peoples of Canada that kind of set the way for us, and we all come together and we need to come together.

So, again, I applaud the member for that. I look forward to any celebration they may have on April the 13th, so that we can, again, get better connected with our communities and have a better understanding and knowledge that we are all Manitobans. Manitoba is open for business. It is open for immigration. It is the success of Manitoba because of the people that belong here, and we want more to come here.

So, again, with that, Madam Speaker—that's more time than I was actually going to stand and talk because I do want to see this passed this morning as well, and I want to allow others to speak.

So, again, congratulations to the member on the bill and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Sat Sri Akal *[Truth is God]* to all the guests in the gallery.

Madam Speaker, it's—I'm kind of emotional right now. First of all, happy birthday to my friend, MLA for the Burrows.

When we—it's my honour to put a few words on Bill 227, The Turban Day Act. Madam Speaker, when we talk about the turban and really want to know how the turban really became—like, it used to be only few people were wearing the turban. It was the kings were wearing the turban or people with a status who are wearing the turban. So it's—you can call it the rich people were tearing—wearing turbans.

So Guru Nanak Dev Ji said, you know what, that's not good enough. So he said we are all equal, and we are all royal, so everybody wear turbans. That's how it started, from Guru Nanak Dev Ji, who was the first Sikh guru, and he was born in Nankana Sahib.

My father had a special connection to Nankana Sahib. He was born in Nankana Sahib. He really wanted to go visit one time to his native village before he passed away, but he couldn't do it because his health reasons. He did apply when he was okay to visit Nankana Sahib once, but his visa was refused.

So yes, Nankana Sahib was the same as Mecca and Medina for the Muslim people. It's—Nankana Sahib is the Mecca and Medina for the Sikh community. Each and every one of us in our lifetime wants to visit there once.

Madam Speaker, I'm probably about to talk about—a little bit about myself, too, when I came to Canada in 1989. Around 1991, I went to Maples Collegiate. We had only four students who were wearing the turban at that time. From there, we came a long, long way, promoting the turban, especially when we passed The Sikh Heritage Month Act in 2019.

Recently, students from the Maples Collegiate were wearing turbans and they have a—they were celebrating Sikh Heritage Month. So it was nice to see that we came a long, long way from where we were in 1989 or earlier times when I came to Canada, and to now, where, proudly, even the school divisions want to show this; we are including everyone in.

So we would really—don't want to keep this in The Maples or in the Seven Oaks School Division. We want to have this kind of education across Manitoba. So this bill will do that. You know, I'm sure there will be a—more work to do. I'm sure the member from the Burrows are willing to do some more work and maybe go to other schools and promote the turban. I have seen him visiting Elwick school, tying turbans.

And it's not only the turban. We also want to—because when we are talking about turbans, we are also talking about Sikhism. We are talking about Khalsa. So this is all the education around Sikhism, around the turban that people will learn and people will understand. So, and even—I wore a turban too up to grade 10 when I was in India.

When I came to Canada, I said, this condition wasn't really the way I want to be; started working and didn't wear a turban. And, recently, I tried, a couple of Vaisakhis ago, and it was that the turban was tied by my friend, I couldn't do it myself, so I'm totally lost on the turban side.

But again, this a good way, when we pass this bill. It's going to be every year we will promote the turban, we will promote Sikhism and it will tell us, like, what is the meaning of the turban? What is the meaning of Sikhism?

So with those few words, I'd like to congratulate my friend, the MLA from the Burrows again, and happy birthday again.

Thank you, very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Thank you to the member from Burrows. Sat Sri Akal [*truth is God*—I can't see everyone up there, but Sat Sri Akal [*truth is God*] to all the people up there watching.

I want to speak quickly to Bill 227, the turban act day, and get a few words on the record in support of this historical and monumental and just fantastic bill moving forward as a province and as a community.

We are not a province of division. We are a province of a rich culture, diversity and a source of pride and strength for Manitobans. Diversity is our strength. I was honoured a few years back in the CFL when I played with the Bombers, that they did Diversity is Strength campaign. And in that campaign, they recognized all of the great Canadian CFL—I don't know how I made the list, I would—definitely not great—but the diversity that made up this great league, the Canadian Football League.

And with the season just around the corner, you know, I thought it would be, you know, important or relevant now to bring it up that they recognized names like Buono, Haji-Rasouli, Singh.

* (10:40)

Bobby Singh was a very good friend of mine, the first Punjabi Sikh CFL player, his name was Bobby Singh, and he played right guard. And I was the first Muslim CFL player, and I was Obby, so it was Bobby and Obby playing next to each other. He was way better than I was. Kwong, Poplawski, Sanchez—all these great legends in the CFL that makes diversity a strength.

Diversity is our strength. And this recognition and this passing and support of this turban day is recognition of that diversity as strength. As someone who is a visible minority, someone who grew up with racism, someone who grew up being picked on and, you know, harassed for being different when my family immigrated here in the '80s and my father had a big beard, we faced all that. And to go forward in this Chamber today recognizing how far we have come, that our cultural, religious, sexual differences make us stronger, they unite us as a people.

I'm so honoured and I'm proud to support this bill with my colleague and member from Burrows. You know, the turban, I love the turban. I love the Punjabi community. I love the faith. I love the food. I love the music. I love everything about it, as I am Punjabi

myself. Now, I'm Punjabi Muslim, but we are brothers. We're not cousins, we are brothers.

Speaking of langar, the community kitchen, I'm actually doing a langar in the Winnipeg Sikh community centre in June. I would love for everyone to attend that langar as well. This is what we do by bringing together.

So I will sit down now so we have enough time to pass this bill forward, but I'm very proud and happy to support this. Happy birthday, my friend. And let's move forward together, united as a people in Manitoba and Canada and the world.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm happy to rise to speak to Bill 227, Turban Day Act, and I want to just begin by thanking my friend and my colleague, the MLA for Burrows, for bringing this bill forward and to welcome everyone who has joined us up in the gallery today.

Hello and Sat Sri Akal [*truth is God*]. It's so good to have you all here at the Manitoba Legislature. I know you've come oftentimes over the last few months here, and it really does make our jobs as Legislature—legislators more fun when we have guests up in the gallery and participating in legislation like this.

I want to speak a little bit about the symbolism of the turban, Madam Speaker, and just what it means to Sikhism and to the Khalsa. And I don't want to spend too much time repeating what my colleagues have already shared but, you know, my colleague from The Maples, he talked about the history of the turban and how it actually originated and came to be.

And, Madam Speaker, I think one thing I want to add, too, because it hasn't been said yet this morning, is turbans are actually for women as well. We have many women, Sikh women, who wear turbans, and children as well. It's not only for men, and I think it's important that we put that on record here this morning too.

The turban carries an immense amount of respect, and I think it is a beautiful thing in the Sikh religion to be able to talk about the turban and have it more widely recognized, not only in Manitoba, but all over the world, Madam Speaker.

And one thing I did want to mention, too. It's been now raised by the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar) and the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), but we talk about langar, and it was triggering memories for me,

Madam Speaker. One of the most amazing experiences I personally have ever had was when I went to the Golden Temple.

I had the opportunity to participate in langar, and it is this amazing—I don't know how to explain it, where you walk in and you can't see the end. And it's just rows and rows and rows of people all sitting down, and they're sitting on the floor. It is a very humbling experience and communal experience. And then there are volunteers working endless hours of the day, and they come and they bring you food.

And it's for everyone, Madam Speaker, because Sikhism takes care of everyone. It's all about the heart and it's about respect and it's about ensuring that no one goes unfed, no one goes hungry because they take care of absolutely everyone. And that's one of the most beautiful things of the Sikh faith.

And in this experience of langar, you then—you finish eating. And I remember I actually went with my Uncle Mali and my dad. And once you're finished eating, you then get up and you have to walk—it's like a kilometre—to go put your dishes away. And again, it is just the most amazing—it's kind of like a contraption where it's like a massive steel bowl, and this is actually where they wash the dishes and it goes on 24 hours a day, Madam Speaker, and it's because literally thousands and thousands of people are rotating through, participating in langar. And we do it here in Winnipeg, as well, at the gurdwaras, and I just—I think it is such a humbling experience and just such a cool part that we get to talk about this here inside of the Manitoba Legislature as we celebrate legislation like The Turban Day Act.

So with those few words, I am very excited to be supporting this legislation. I want to thank, again, my colleague for Burrows for not only bringing it forward, but for doing it on his birthday. How cool is that? So happy birthday, and we're going to remember this. Maybe that's a new trick of ours. If we bring legislation forward on our birthdays, the member from Brandon East said, it might get supported. So, we're going to remember this.

With those few words, though, Madam Speaker, I'll cede the floor and hope for the success of this legislation.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 227, The Turban Day Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Is there leave to see the clock as 11 a.m.?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to see the clock as 11 a.m.? *[Agreed]*

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 18—Calling on the Provincial Government to Immediately Increase Minimum Wage to \$15/hour

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is—*[interjection]* The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Calling on the Provincial Government to Immediately Increase Minimum Wages to \$15/Hour, brought forward by the honourable member for Point Douglas, and I would indicate as we are starting at this point, the House will recess in one hour at 11:47.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member from St. James,

WHEREAS Manitoba had one of the highest minimum wages in the country before the current Provincial Government took office; and

WHEREAS Manitoba, as of October 2022, will have the lowest minimum wage in the country; and

WHEREAS no minimum wage workers who work full time should live in poverty; and

WHEREAS many minimum wage workers are forced to work two or more jobs just to make enough money to live; and

WHEREAS currently 31,000 Manitobans of all ages work for minimum wage in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the current Provincial Government has made it clear it has no plans to increase the minimum wage above a poverty wage; and

WHEREAS the current Provincial Government has demonstrated a lack of commitment to front line workers by indicating that Manitoba having the lowest minimum wage in the country was not an important priority for the government; and

WHEREAS increasing the minimum wage to a living wage would help attract workers to industries that are currently experiencing labour shortages and would ensure no worker who works full time will have to live in poverty; and

WHEREAS the rising cost of living means that the minimum wage loses its purchasing power as the cost of everyday essentials like groceries and gas continue to increase; and

WHEREAS no Manitoban should have to live in poverty, including those who are working full time.

THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and ensure that it becomes a living wage so no Manitoban who works full time lives in poverty.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Smith: We've been hearing from lots of Manitobans who have really been struggling to make ends meet.

Thousands have—are working minimum wage jobs in this province and are having to work more than one job just to make ends meet, and even then, they're having difficulty for paying for a cellphone and have had to let their cellphone go; have looked for apartments where utilities are included; have had to, you know, not follow the diet that they're supposed to follow, if they're a diabetic. They've had to make really tough choices in this province, mainly because this government has, you know, made piddly increases to the minimum wage that has really put Manitoba behind the times.

We used to be the second highest minimum wage in all of Canada. In October, we will be the lowest minimum wage province in Manitoba, and that's shameful for us.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

We have, you know, a country like Australia that has a minimum wage of \$20. And to buy a Big Mac in Australia is only 90 cents more than it is here. And yet, they have almost \$7—well, they have more than \$7 more an hour for their minimum wage. So, you know, I hope that the members opposite will listen to Manitobans and see the struggle that is incurring on them.

* (10:50)

You know, a lot of it has been brought on by the increase in, you know, food costs, hydro costs, you know, fuel. You go to the pump now, it's \$1.87-point-nine. We don't know if that's going to change every day. You know, it's—went up 5 cents and it went up another 5 cents.

Hydro, I just got, you know, my hydro bill last month and it increased by \$50. And that's a lot. I help support my daughter and I help support my son—well, my granddaughter through daycare. So I have extra expenses that I'm helping my family, so it's difficult as well, for me that makes a good wage, let alone someone who is making, you know, \$12 an hour.

And we've been calling for this now for three years. This is one of our—this was one of our election promises, that we would, you know, increase the minimum wage to \$15. It's past due, and you know, if this government wants to stand with Manitobans and really help support Manitobans, especially those who are struggling.

You know, we have, you know, a property tax rebate that just went through and, you know, folks like corporate, you know, landlords are going to be receiving cheques of up to \$1 million, while someone who is struggling to pay their daycare bill is, you know, probably not going to receive anything because they don't own their house.

Many constituents in Point Douglas, I can tell you, are not going to be receiving a rebate because many are renters and many are on EIA, which excludes them.

So we haven't seen an increase in EIA benefits as well. Many, you know, that are on EIA would like to work, but again, you know, if they go into a minimum wage job, they're not even making enough to pay for their rent and, you know, take care of their kids. And then daycare fees on top of that.

So this government is making it really difficult for those that want to get into, you know, the employment field, because the minimum wage is so low.

When we look at—you know, we've seen this PC government continue to reject the need for a living wage for working people and refuse to address the challenges experienced, especially by women, by BIPOC and other marginalized groups, to fully participate in the pandemic recovery.

Deputy Speaker, I know that I've had several women reach out to me that are really struggling because they're single parents, and you know, a lot of

the jobs that are out there are minimum wage jobs, and for them to get into, you know, the jobs field at \$12 an hour, when you have two children that have to access daycare, and say they're paying, let's—\$200 a month under subsidy per child, that's \$400, and if they're only bringing home eight, nine hundred dollars every two weeks—and that's full time. So \$400 of that goes to daycare. They're left with \$1,200.

Rent in this province is astronomically high. We've seen this government approve 100 per cent of above-line increases. And, you know, it's not helping the everyday Manitoban: \$1,200 for rent, if you have two children and you want to, you know, have a bedroom for each of them or even if they share a bedroom. It's \$1,100-plus for a two-bedroom.

So often what we're seeing is mothers, single fathers giving up the bedroom to their children, sleeping in the living room because they're working a minimum wage job. And a lot of them are actually working two jobs, and that's what this government has forced Manitobans to do. They've forced them to, you know—they've taken away family time; they've taken away, you know, things that they would have done for their mental health because now they're having to work, and, you know, the only time they have is to get sleep and go back to work.

Often families are supporting other families and, you know, helping with kids and daycare, and like I told you myself, my son is in a carpentry program. You know, he's making \$1,200 a month. That just covers his rent. And we're helping with other, you know, things like daycare. So this government is really, you know, missed the ball on this one.

And I'm sure members opposite have heard from Manitobans as well, that they're suffering, that they need some support, that they need an increase in minimum wage in this province, and that we don't want to be, you know, last in October. We were the second highest, you know, six years ago before this government came into government. They're continuing to deplete, you know.

People are leaving our province because minimum wage is higher in other provinces. They're leaving because this government is failing to support them and see the real struggles that they're having—you know, increasing hydro during a pandemic when, you know, folks are struggling in so many ways, you know, not just financially, but mentally.

You know, lots of people have—I know myself, you know, I'm someone who likes to be around

people, I get energy from people and, you know, being isolated was really hard. And I've heard from other Manitobans that that was hard on them as well. But it's also hard for them to go back to even a job where they're not making a lot of money. And, you know, it depletes the morale in a job when, you know, you're not making a lot of money. It's not stimulating the economy because they don't have enough money to spend and put into the economy.

And certainly, you know, I think about, like I said, other provinces and what they're doing to support, you know, their folks and their province, and this government has a real opportunity to stand up, to be leaders, to support those who are struggling and boost the minimum wage to \$15, you know, and look at increasing that later to a living wage, you know, where no Manitoban has to work a full-time job and live in poverty.

We saw this government increase milk prices in this province. I remember going to the grocery store and, you know, four litres used to be under \$5; well, it's over \$6 now. I was kind of shocked, I was like, wow, that's, you know, and that's a necessity for our children; growing bones, you know, make sure that they're healthy. And some families have had to decrease, like I said, their, you know, their grocery list, and that might be one of the things that they can't buy because it's become so expensive.

So, you know, I say to members opposite that they need to stand and support Manitobans in their struggle, especially coming out of this pandemic; increase the minimum wage to \$15 to ensure that no Manitoban has to work a full-time job, live in poverty; and, you know, support those who are struggling and do the right thing. You know, we have a real opportunity as legislators here to make sure that those that are working hard in our province are appreciated, especially with, you know, boosting their wages and ensuring that they have the supports that they need.

And, you know, we don't want to be last in this country, as I said before. We want to be leaders, and six years ago, we were the second highest, so we need to really look at that and not be proud of being the lowest in the country, with the lowest minimum wage, and stand united in supporting Manitobans.

Miigwech.

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—

[interjection] How about I put the mic on, let's try that again. Sorry, everybody.

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

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I want to thank the member for bringing this topic forward for discussion in the House. I think it's something that is—certainly merits our attention.

Now, one of the, I guess, factors that you need to—that we all need to be considerate of is the impact that raising the minimum wage might have on employment and on businesses. I know a business where, essentially, the business may have to shut down if they have such a very, very sharp rise and increase to minimum wage.

So I would ask the member, what would she say to a business that is hiring, you know, students for the summer or over the entire course of the year and their business model just simply won't allow them to function. Is it—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

* (11:00)

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Well, I know businesses don't want to be last in the country. They want to, you know, have good morale in their businesses. Morale boosts productivity, you know, produces more. And certainly, you know, employers want to support their employees.

I know a lot of companies have actually increased their—without legislation, boosted their minimum wage or boosted their wage past minimum wage because they recognize and, you know, want to appreciate the employees that work in their employment.

We also don't—we also want to make sure that we're supporting those workers so that, you know, that they're appreciating the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I know that people who are working minimum wage often have to work two and three jobs, and it means that they don't have time

to spend with their family, helping their kid with, you know, homework, or time to educate themselves with different things, or time to deal with mental health issues they might be facing.

I want to ask the member, what has she heard from community in terms of how they deal, living in—with—earning minimum wage?

Mrs. Smith: I thank the member for that question.

So, a lot of folks are—and, as I indicated in my speech, that folks are struggling with, you know, supporting their families, with supporting their children. Often, kids are in sports. You know, they have to give up going to maybe watch their son or daughter, you know, play soccer, whatever it is, or not even have them in sports where they used to be in sports, but because of the inflation we've seen in this province and this government not supporting that inflation in terms of increasing, you know, the minimum wage higher than they've increased so far.

And like I said, many of them are working two jobs, going home to sleep and then going back to that job. So, not having family time, and it's taking a toll on their mental health, definitely—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I want to thank the member from Point Douglas for bringing this up. This is a very, very important topic.

As a small-business owner myself, you know, I'd be curious to know if the member has considered different sectors in employment, such as the hospitality sector where the margins on average are between 2 and 7 per cent profit. And you are now proposing—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan:—proposing—can see the members opposite are heckling me for answering a question about minimum wage, thank you.

You're proposing a 25 per cent—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan:—increase in minimum wage and yet the margins in a lot of small businesses are between two and seven, especially in the hospitality sector.

I'd like to know if the member has given that some consideration with a 25 per cent increase in minimum wage.

Mrs. Smith: I think, you know, the member is, you know, a business owner himself and I would hope that he is paying his employees above minimum wage because, you know, workers work hard. And, you know, for them to—you know, to have staff retention, for employees to appreciate the people that they work for, it shows appreciation when you are valuing the work that they're doing.

And, certainly, we would hope that businesses don't want their employees to be living in poverty, because this minimum wage is certainly putting people in poverty. And people aren't able to afford to live. And they might choose to go on EIA because they're getting more from EIA than they would on a job—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Just a question about—to the member, and thank you very much for bringing this forward.

Roughly how many people in Manitoba work at—on minimum wage, and has that—and what's the—been the trend? Has it been going up or going down?

Mrs. Smith: I thank the member for that question.

So, thousands of Manitobans are working in a minimum wage job, and that trend actually is going up because more employers, you know, more businesses are opening at entry-level positions. And certainly, you know, we have young people going into these positions, many students, you know, and we want to support them with this growing increase of tuition that we're seeing from this government and we want to ensure that they're not having to live in poverty and make difficult choices as well.

So I thank the member for that question, and, you know, definitely, we need to be moving in the direction where we're supporting people that are working minimum wage jobs so that they don't have to live in poverty and they can, you know, have a supportive government that actually values the work that people are putting in to make our province—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): The—and I thank the member for the resolution.

The resolution and the member used the terms, minimum wage and living wage, interchangeably. I would—I'm just curious if the member could confirm that she believes that \$15 an hour is a living wage.

Mrs. Smith: I actually didn't use that interchangeably. I said that we should start at minimum wage and move towards a living wage.

Minimum wage at \$15, if you look at that, that still would, you know, not support, let's say, a family of three that has two children. So we could even go beyond that, you know, but I'd like this government to at least start at \$15, show the employees of Manitoba that we appreciate the work that they do, and that we retain staff, we retain people in Manitoba so people aren't leaving our province to go work in other provinces and other sectors.

You know, we have the child-care sector, for instance. They do amazing work and their wage is so low—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Moses: Some members opposite raised issues around business concerns. Well, a lot of business owners I know don't want their employees living in poverty. So I think that's a great reason for us to raise the minimum wage.

Additionally, for retail businesses, people earning minimum wage having a boost to their income means that there's more disposable income to be spent at those retail businesses, and therefore they should have a better opportunity to run their business.

So I ask the member this question: In what ways can the PC government help those who are struggling to make ends meet by raising the minimum wage?

Mrs. Smith: I hope—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —the member from Fort Whyte that actually employs people in Manitoba doesn't want his employees to live in poverty, because he's sure speaking up over there and, you know, I wish he would speak up to his government and tell his government that they should be raising the minimum wage to \$15, unless he agrees that people that—should be living in poverty, which is shameful as a business owner. So I hope he values his employees and doesn't want them living in poverty.

So, back to the member's question. You know, this government can appreciate the Manitobans who work hard to make this a great province. You know, under this government the last six years, the—we're almost the last in all of Canada in minimum wage—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Teitsma: In Point Douglas, I think, there's a lot of small businesses in that area. There's certainly a lot of small businesses in my constituency as well.

And I'm just wondering, did the member opposite have an opportunity to consult with those—some of those small businesses before bringing forward this resolution?

Mrs. Smith: As I indicated in my speech, I did talk to quite a few business owners, and many of them actually indicated to me that they pay their employees above minimum wage and they actually would support legislated increases in minimum wage because they want to retain their staff. They want to increase—they want staff morale and they certainly don't want to be the bottom in all of Canada.

And they want a government that supports Manitobans and wants to keep them and retain them in Manitoba as well as spend in this province: you know, contribute to the economy; spend money in their businesses. And, you know, I don't know what this government thinks, you know, in terms of—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Moses: So, unlike the opposite—the government's approach of giving a tax break to corporations and hoping it trickles down somehow to small business, and then, again, hopefully it trickles down to workers, the idea of increasing the minimum wage directly puts more money into the hands of the folks who need it the most.

So I want to ask the member this: Why is it so important that we establish that living wage in Manitoba, especially as we get out of our pandemic and go onto the post-pandemic economy in Manitoba?

Mrs. Smith: I thank the member for that question.

Well, we want to see Manitobans spend money in Manitoba. And, you know, when we have such a low minimum wage, people aren't going to put money back into, you know, the economy because they're spending money on rent, as I indicated.

If you're working a minimum wage job right now, you're making around \$900 every two weeks, if that. And that's full time. Our rents in Manitoba are around \$1,200. Actually, you can find one for maybe \$900 if it's a one-bedroom, and that's not even in a good part of town. You know, if you want to live in the south

end, it's probably more like \$2,000. So that's even above what you're making at minimum wage.

* (11:10)

So, you know, we need to make sure that we're stimulating the economy, supporting the businesses, especially coming out of this pandemic, and the more money that we're paying employees, the more money that they're going to spend in this province. And certainly—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Time for questions has ended.

Debate

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

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): It's a pleasure to be here together to discuss this topic. I think it's certainly a reflection of our current national reality. Minimum wage is again back in the national conversation, and it's something that merits discussion, and, certainly, I think the time of this House is going to be well spent this morning talking about minimum wage.

Now, if the member maybe has just gotten into the House before having to present her resolution, so I might want to invite her to turn to page 12 of the Order Paper. And if you turn to page 12 of the Order Paper, it's the very last page, right in the middle if you're using the bilingual version here, you'll notice that the honourable Minister for—of Labour has given notice of Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage).

So is that a happy coincidence, I'm not sure. I guess we'll find out this afternoon when we get to see the bill and read the bill and see what's in it—or it—is that tomorrow, I'm not sure of the legislative procedure here, but there it is on the Order Paper—

An Honourable Member: It's Monday. Monday.

Mr. Teitsma: Or Monday, yes.

An Honourable Member: Got to wait all weekend.

Mr. Teitsma: We'll wait the weekend, I guess, to find out what's in that bill. But certainly, it—you know, interesting that a resolution is being brought forward at the very same time as legislation has been placed on the Order Paper.

You know, and I know that the members opposite are seeking some form of disagreement with the members on this side of the House. I think some of

that is fabricated, quite honestly, and some of it may be real. That's—I'll give you—I'll grant that.

But I think, you know, what we would have in common, certainly, is that our hopes for our own children, our hopes for newcomers, our hopes for our friends, our neighbours, our family, is that they not be stuck in a job that pays minimum wage, that minimum wage is only the way that they can enter the workforce. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not saying—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —anything controversial here.

That the idea is that minimum wage is an entry to the workforce, but certainly not a destination, and I think that's what our hope should be. That's what our hope should be and that's what we should want for our society, for our province, for our nation.

And I know for my own children, when they first entered the workforce, indeed, they were making minimum wage. Myself, when I first entered the workforce, was making minimum wage. But that passed and a few years into my working career I was making more than that and then well more than that.

And that's what we hope, I think, for anybody who's entering our workforce. So I do share the concerns of the member. When she brings forward examples of families that are relying on minimum wage, I share those concerns. I don't dispute that that's a very difficult position. That's a very difficult position for a family to be in.

Now, maybe just relate a little story. The last time that I can remember earning minimum wage is kind of an interesting experience. I had a job that summer and I worked for about three and a half months driving forklift, making more than minimum wage, because it was a skilled—level of skill required to operate the forklift, and that came with a higher than minimum wage salary.

But for the last two weeks of the summer, as a university student, they shut down the plant and left me without employment for two weeks. Now, I grew up with—I—what some would call the Calvinist work ethic which said that no, don't just take those two weeks as holiday, you work, you find a way to work.

And so down I headed to—I can't remember the name of the centre anymore, but it's a place where you

just show up at 5:30 in the morning or 6 a.m. in the morning and you get yourself a job for the day. And you're going to make minimum wage, that's the—just the way it is. So first day I went there, I had a job that was moving books off of library shelves, moving the shelf over one inch and then putting the shelves—the books back on the library shelves: back-breaking work. The next day, however, I got a call from Union Centre.

So Union Centre—just down the street, I think—I mean, we just did the march starting in that place. And I was reminiscing as I stood on the parking lot, talking with union leaders there that when this was not paved, and when it was bare grass, I had been hired by Union Centre to come and to do some work on their property. And at first I was excited. I didn't really understand fully at that age that unions—that the priority that they place on ensuring that their workers receive fair wages—wasn't fully appreciative of that, but in any case, minimum wage was all I was going to get.

And so, after sweeping out both stairwells in the building, from top to bottom, the property manager handed me a pair of hedge clippers and proceeded to direct me. I thought, maybe I'd trim some of the shrubbery in the front, but no, no, no. There was a vacant lot next door with grass, and the grass had grown to a height of about a foot, foot and a half, and it was tough and weedy. And she asked me, well, you need to get on your hands and knees and you need to cut this grass, and with these hedge clippers that I have purchased for you.

And I, you know, asked back and I said, well—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —wouldn't you just rent a weed whacker? To which her response was, you're cheaper. And so there the Union Centre, I guess, made their mark on me, and passed me the hedge clippers. I got on my hands and knees and I cut the grass for what was then minimum wage, \$5 per hour. And got a couple of dents in the knees from the gravel. Got a few offers from people coming by on the sidewalk offering to—I should've maybe set out a hat, or something. I probably would have made a lot more money with donations than I would have with my wages, but that's not the way I was brought up. So, there I was—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —I worked very, very hard, and the irony of that occurring at Union Centre has never been lost on me.

But I'm going to go back to the beginning, right? When I talked about our hope is that most workers—in fact, the vast majority of workers—don't make minimum wage, and that, for those who do, it's temporary. It's a transition. It's a way to enter the workforce and to move up. And so, you know, I just found it interesting that nationally—maybe the members opposite are unaware. I was unaware, so I was—I found it very interesting to learn: 10 per cent of all workers nationally are earning minimum wage.

I was kind of astonished that it was that high, because my gut would tell me that it wasn't quite that high, and, in fact, I had good reason for that, because it turns out that Manitoba—in Manitoba, it's not 10 per cent, as it is nationally, it's only 5.6 per cent. I think that's a reflection in many ways of the thriving economy. The member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) herself brought forward examples where she talked to business owners who were like, well, I don't pay minimum wage. I need to keep my workers. I need to incentivize them to come here. I pay them more. Or, I care about my workers so I pay them more.

And I think of the jobs that I, myself, have created through the businesses that I've owned or partially owned. We pay—I mean, these are software development businesses, starting salary is minimum 40,000 bucks a year. There ain't no minimum jobs in those kinds of economies, and when we see Ubisoft and so many other businesses coming here to town and creating these high-end jobs, that's great for our economy, and, certainly, those are the kinds of jobs that we hope that all Manitobans can get.

So I do want to just—if I can give some advice to the member, I would say that fast changes to the minimum wage carry unintended consequences. And it's hard to know what those consequences are going to be. So we need to be careful. Unexpected changes—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —unexpected changes also bring—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: Changes that are unanticipated can also bring—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: –unexpected outcomes. And so it's important to be deliberate about changes to–
[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: –it's important to be deliberate about changes that you're going to make. It's important to be consultative; to speak, not just to your political ambitions, but rather to what's going on in our–in the national economy, what's going on in our provincial economy, to ensure that small-business owners and others are prepared for changes that are coming. I think that's–that would be the right approach to increasing the minimum wage.

You're not going to get dispute from me about that it should be increased. I won't dispute that. And I–we can have a conversation about how fast and to what level. That's, I think, where the conversation needs to centre. And that's what I've wanted to bring to the House today, along with the–I personally think–amusing story of working on my hands and knees. Not too proud to do that and still happy to take out the trash or clean the bathroom or whatever else needs doing in PC caucus or anywhere else, quite frankly, because I just do what needs to get done.

* (11:20)

Now, I thank the member for bringing it forward. I do want to give other people an opportunity to speak and I appreciate the collegial nature of this discussion and the low level of heckling that I endured.

Thank you.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Wow, just wow. That member from Radisson is such a beacon of what's wrong with this government. Because he doesn't have a clue what's going on in reality: people working two, three jobs at the present minimum wage can't afford to feed their families. They can't afford to send their kids to university. Contrary to what that member says, a lot of those people, that is where they're going to be forever, is in those minimum wage jobs.

And he's beaking off now that they don't want members–[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: –working at 'winimum' wage jobs, and yet, everything they've done since they came to power has been to try and decimate unions that lift people out of poverty. They've laid off people in good-paying jobs with the civil service–[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: –simply because they wanted to make cuts, putting more people–[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: –in jeopardy of being able to earn a living to feed their families. And the member's fear mongering is simply, simply just unacceptable. He's saying, oh, if we raise the minimum wage, all these small-business men will go out of job–will go out of business. We are the last jurisdiction to raise minimum wage to a decent wage. BC, it's been at \$15. Guess what? Small businesses didn't go out of business. Alberta has a higher minimum wage. Guess what? Small businesses did not go out of business.

So it's time for members like that member from Radisson to quit the fear mongering and admit the fact that paying people a decent wage to support themselves and their families is in fact the right thing to do and it should have been done six years ago.

This member talks about, well, they think raising the minimum wage is a good idea. Where have they been for the last six years? Where have they been for the last six years when they've made sure that things like minimum wage got a nickel increase, when they made sure that they froze it for several years before they tied it to the rate of inflation? Where have they been when they thought minimum wage was a good idea? They're kind of late to the party. You'd almost think there's an election coming.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, raising minimum wage to \$15 is a good start. But let's really look at what people who have to survive on minimum wage really need. One of the studies I read recently said that for Manitoba, particularly for Winnipeg, the actual living wage was \$19 and some odd cents per hour. And that's for somebody working full-time hours. And let's make sure we understand that there's a pile of minimum wage workers that don't get full-time hours. They work part-time hours at this job, and if they're lucky, they work part-time hours at that job. And maybe they work part-time hours at another job, in order to try and survive.

So let's really look at what the right thing to do is. What is the right thing to do for Manitoban citizens? Well, the right thing to do is make sure that they can live–and not in poverty–make sure that they can actually contribute more back to society because they're not always scrambling, trying to find their next meal.

And let's be very clear that that's happening a lot. We see the increase in homelessness just in Winnipeg. I see it in my own community. Because people can't afford to own a home, for sure. They can't afford to pay rent. They land up on the street, which further disadvantages them from even getting one of these minimum wage jobs because they don't have access to things like showers and bathrooms. So then, these very same employers that the government opposite seems to want to support won't hire folks like that, which is very unfortunate.

So by increasing the minimum wage to a decent living wage, it will actually help all Manitobans. Because unlike the elite, who take their money and hide it in tax havens and do various thing with it to make sure it doesn't go back into society for the betterment of all—

An Honourable Member: Talking about Obby?

MLA Lindsey: Well, we could talk about that, for sure, but we won't. Out of respect, we won't—for now.

But people, working people—whether they're people that are getting by on minimum wage or trying to get by, whether they're people that have managed to secure a job that pays a little better wage—they put their money back into the economy. They buy food. They buy furniture. They buy the necessities of life. They don't hide it in some tax haven or put it in some business and write off everything they get as tax deductible. They actually keep the economy of Manitoba going, and going stronger.

We talk about economic recovery, and the last few economic recoveries that have taken place in this country and in this province have left a pile more people behind. Businesses recovered, working people did not. And this, this would be one small step that this government could make towards ensuring that working people in this province don't get left further and further and further behind.

Now, I heard the member talking something about, well, they're going to introduce a bill. They won't tell us what's in the bill, of course, and that'll be next week some time before they get it introduced. Will it increase minimum wage to \$15? Hope so. I wouldn't bet the farm on it, though. Will it increase minimum wage so that we're not dead last in the country? Yes, maybe. Maybe we'll try and get ahead of whoever's second last now, which I think is Saskatchewan.

You know, a lot of times we talk about doing the right thing, and supporting this resolution and actually

raising the minimum wage immediately to \$15 is the right thing. Businesses won't go out of business because history has shown us that. Jurisdiction after jurisdiction after jurisdiction has raised the minimum wage. They didn't go out of business. The businesses didn't go out of business.

Lots of them actually prospered because, guess what, some of those people now that have a little more disposable cash actually shop at those businesses, buy products that those businesses sell, eat at those restaurants that are struggling for customers. It actually helps businesses, contrary to the fear mongering of some members opposite.

Raising the minimum wage to a living wage, at the end of the day, will be good for all Manitobans. It will be something that this government could stand up and be proud of rather than everything else they've done, which has been to destroy this province.

Whether it's health care or education, infrastructure, pick one. This could be a positive step forward if they raise the minimum wage. It could show Manitobans that maybe there is someone new in charge over there, as opposed to a lot of the same old tired, worn out policies that Pallister left behind when he escaped. They could take a bold new path to show Manitobans that they actually care about them.

But I'm pretty sure they're going to show that they care very little. I guess time will tell, and I would certainly encourage them, if they have a bill coming forward that's going to raise the minimum wage, that they take the advice of the member from Point Douglas and others who have raised this issue previously in the House, that \$15 becomes the starting point, not the end point.

* (11:30)

And I just want to make sure that we understand: people working minimum wage jobs are not just part-time jobs for kids trying to raise money to go to school. It's families, it's mothers, it's people that that's where they are in their life and that's where they're going to be, is working in those service sector jobs that deserve the respect that this government has never shown them.

It's people that work as cleaning staff. It's people that work making beds. It's people that work with their hands, that support—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I want to thank the member from Point Douglas for bringing up this conversation. This is a very important conversation. I'm glad that we're having such a lively debate today on this resolution. It's a very important one.

As a small-business owner, I take this very seriously. And I agree—*[interjection]* If the members opposite will let me speak here without heckling 30 seconds into my conversation, that would be appreciated. I firmly agree with you that we do need to increase the minimum wage.

We need to significantly increase the minimum wage. So I'm going on the record saying that, so you—*[interjection]* Again, the members opposite can please stop heckling me. We need to in—however, we need to do more. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: A member from—fellow member from Radisson said the same thing, and we—*[interjection]* The members opposite continue to heckle. They don't want to hear the fact that we have heard from employees, and we agree, the minimum wage needs to be increased.

But we've also heard from business owners, suppliers, community leaders, that this is not a one-sided issue. It is not as simple as saying we're going to increase the minimum wage by 25 per cent in one go and say, that's it.

Again, I'm going on the record saying we need to increase the minimum wage significantly. An important issue that needs to be 'devated,' conversation and consultation. I have lots of employees that work for me and I'm proud to be a small-business owner and I'm proud to go on the record that I pay them significantly more than minimum wage. The vast majority of my employees make more than minimum wage, far more than minimum wage. And I'm proud to say that.

I will ask the members opposite, how many do they employ? How much do they pay them? How many jobs have they created? How much money do they bring into the economy? None. This is more than a simple one-sided issue. There is more to it than that. There is more to it than just simply saying, we want to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and that is that.

We have lived—we now live in a time where 'inflamma'—inflation—not inflammation—inflation, cost of living, economic and social pressures are making it

very hard for the average person to get by. We need to increase it.

I—again, I can't say this anymore on the record, we need to increase it. We are now coming out of a time, pandemic, one of the hardest times in modern history we've had to live through. It has been tough on everyone: on families, on communities, on employees, on employers.

We, as a government, need to do more. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Khan: I appreciate the member from Radisson heckling me as I am trying to speak to a resolution in support of an increase in minimum wage. *[interjection]* Sorry—member from Point Douglas—sorry—member from Point Douglas heckling me while I am speaking in support of an increase to minimum wage.

This is how divisive the other side of this Chamber is. I am speaking in support of increasing the minimum wage. We as a government need to do more, and I'm excited to see all the Order Papers say, as my fellow colleague and member from Radisson pointed out, No. 44—who's not heckling—the Employment Standards Code amendment, minimum wage. I look forward to that discussion.

We need to have more discussion, debate and consultation on this issue. It's not a one-sided equation, as the members opposite like to think. It is not a knee-jerk reaction to simply say we want to increase minimum wage. It's—they want to play copycat media politics to get in the headlines, and that is what is happening here.

The title of the resolution itself, calling it—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —the provincial government to immediately increase the minimum wage to 15 hours, is one that is obviously—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —not planned out; is obviously one that does not have proper consideration of what that really means.

Members opposite want to talk about small businesses and how they support small businesses. And they want to heckle our side for actually creating jobs. They want to heckle us for supporting our economy.

They want to say small businesses are a vibrant part of our local economy and our backbone, and yet, they want to, overnight, increase it by 25 per cent. What is that going to do to the backbone of our economy? What is that going to do? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: The members opposite—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —want speaking points. The members opposite want media points. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: A responsible government has to look at everything: safety, viability, economics—which I know the members opposite struggle with—impact, and the future of people and all people, employees and employers. Again—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —I want to be very clear—*[interjection]* I want to be very clear—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, order.

The member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) has the floor, and that member is the dominant speaker. That's how this place works and we should respect that.

Mr. Khan: The increase in minimum wage does not simply happen in a silo. You cannot simply say we want to increase minimum wage and everyone else has to deal with it. I am simply stating that we need to look at many factors when we are going to increase the minimum wage and that's what a responsible government does, and that's what our side of this Chamber does.

You cannot understand someone until you walk a mile in their shoes, and I ask the members opposite: Have they done that? Have they had to put payroll on their own personal credit cards? Have they had to take tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars in loans to make it through this pandemic? Have they had to borrow money to make payroll? Have they had to clean toilets or take out the trash and work 80 hours a week?

Now—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: I know the member from Concordia wants to heckle me and insinuate that I haven't done that. I have done that for 10 years. And I have done that. I

have cleaned the toilets at my restaurants and my businesses. I have—take the garbage out. I have worked 80 hours a week. And I continue to do that because that is important for our economy, for our province and the members opposite, you know, don't want to hear that.

I asked the member opposite, who did they consult with? Did they talk to employees only, or did they actually talk to small-business owners? Did they reach out to local business leaders? Did they reach out to the chambers? Did they reach out to local small-business groups and ask them what they thought of this and what this impact would be to small businesses?

Again, I want to be very clear, because the members opposite don't want to hear me: I am in support of a—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: So, you know, again, you know, I want to go on the record to say the member from Union Station, the member from Fort Garry, the member from Concordia, member from Point Douglas constantly heckling me because they don't want to hear that this increase in the minimum wage, which I am speaking in favour of, that we need to 'significantly' increase it, does not happen in a silo. We have to take into account small businesses and many other factors along the way to make sure we have a sustainable, thriving economic future. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: This is what we need to consider—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: I don't understand why the members opposite are heckling when I'm speaking in support of a significant increase in minimum wage, as a small-business 'owver.' They don't want to hear this. They don't want—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —to operate under the dark days of the NDP—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I'm calling the—I'm calling all members to order and giving warning that I'll name people if things don't pipe down. I'll, you know, call out individuals who are worst offenders.

So let's do this respectfully. This not a prohibition on heckling. It is a prohibition on incessant heckling

that essentially shouts someone down to the point that they can't be heard.

Mr. Khan: Nobody wants to go back to the dark days of the NDP where they raised the taxes, offered less services, less jobs and more uncertainty under the NDP. This side of the government has a plan and we're going to move forward thinking of all the factors of our economy, not just one.

* (11:40)

Now, again, an increase in minimum wage—you will see a small increase, as members opposite want to say. You will see a small increase in purchasing power, you will. However, if anyone on the other side understands economics and reads, they will know that this is shortly lived as it quickly leads to considerable increase in price of consumer goods. Businesses will pass this on to the end-user to cover the increased wages. They will charge more for their products.

Has the member considered the problem resulting from potential job losses? Many economists point to the major job—labour is one of the major costs for doing business. Has the member considered—I'm not saying this is all going to happen, but have they considered this with a blind resolution of 25 per cent increase? Have they considered what this will do to people on fixed incomes, seniors on fixed incomes? When the cost of goods go up, they have a fixed income. How are they going to live? How are they going to provide for themselves?

If the member opposite—I'm simply saying that we need to look at this in a complete ecosystem, not just a blind knee-jerk reaction to get the headlines of \$15 minimum wage.

Our government is committed to working with our businesses, with our community—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It's a pleasure to speak in favour of this motion.

In the 2019 election, I believe, that we committed to raising the minimum wage to \$15 effective last year. So this is overdue. And, fundamentally, this is a question about whether we're going to live in a province where the economy is based on exploiting workers who can't afford to feed their families or pay rent.

As to the member from Radisson's questions, I know he did some googling and did his own research

and he's surprised to find out that it's not just teenagers who work in the minimum wage. It's not. It's families, it's seniors, it's grandmothers, it's mothers and fathers who are trying to raise their families and they can't afford to feed them, even working full time.

And look—and there are also some references for people who haven't—whether they've suggested that they've even read or read economics, well, Adam Smith, who's the alleged father of capitalism, said, when it comes to regulation, if it's in favour of the workman, it is always just and equitable because he recognized that there's a power imbalance that means that cartels of business owners like to exert their influence on government and suppress wages. And even then—even then—Adam Smith talked about the fact that when people only ever whined about wages going up, but never about profits, never about excess profits.

And when we're talking about inflation right now, there's been a bunch of blaming of the Canadian government: it's a global problem. It's not just—the last time I checked, the Canadian government does not run the global economy and we have global inflation and part of the reason for that is price gouging—massive, massive increases in profits. So there's plenty of money for profits.

There's plenty of money to add to the wealth of Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk, but we can't find the money for the workers, apparently. It's just, you know, maybe multi-billionaire owners could take a smaller profit. And look, we are concerned about small businesses, but the fact is, there's lot of people working minimum wage in Manitoba who aren't working for a small business. They're working for a big business or they're working for a big multinational chain. They could pay.

And, you know, I'll take—give the example of Tim Hortons. It's owned by a hedge fund company in Brazil, owned by billionaires. And they're squeezing people in Manitoba. And they don't want to see it because, you know, could we raise the cup of—the price of a cup of coffee by 5 cents or 10 cents in order to actually be able to pay people properly? Well, we should.

And when people have actually studied minimum wage and actually measured what happens, based on evidence and not just right-wing mythology, it shows that it works. There are studies. They just looked: here's Pennsylvania, here's New Jersey. One state raises the minimum wage, one doesn't. One's at a gas

station; they're across the street from one another. It makes no difference. It makes no difference.

And the mistake that people are making is thinking—of only thinking of people as their workers. Because if a business owner is really serious, they shouldn't just ask themselves, how many people making minimum wage work for me? How many people making minimum wage are my customers? How many people could be my customers if they could actually make a bit more money? That's actually thinking of things in terms—and thinking of people as more than just a business or a cost.

This is a raise for customers, and there are thousands of Manitobans who are working in poverty. The other—*[interjection]* Oh, thank you very much. And, you know, but the other is that there are lots of other people who are trying to work their way around the minimum wage, around—we have the gig economy. You have Investors Group stadium got a \$200-million bailout but there are people working million—minimum wage there.

This government has said they've put \$600 million in business supports—lots of it, free money, and we're trying to tell workers that they don't deserve a raise.

People need to be able to live and work at the same time. This is not a minimum wage for underage or young workers, this is a minimum wage that sets a standard for whether people can earn a living and feed their families or not.

There's no question that this should happen.

Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the members opposite were serious about raising the minimum wage and providing a living wage, why did they vote against increase in wages for support workers of those with intellectual disabilities in the CLDS sector, where our government this last budget increased supports from \$13.75 an hour to \$15.11?

I think that's significant, yet the parties opposite—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Borderland will have nine minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 26, 2022

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