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Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

The 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.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: And before we begin this morning, I would like to introduce some guests we have joining us in the public gallery. We have Kayla Harder, Lois Ruston, Kim Fontaine, Kelsie Sanderson, Melissa Budden, Amanda Myers, Karen Campbell, Sue Muvingi, who are guests of the honourable member for Tyndall Park.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I move that Bill 209, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, expanded training for judges and—

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: Order. I have to do my part first, apparently. Thank you.

As previously announced, the honourable member for Tyndall Park has indicated that Bill 209, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, extended training for judges and judicial justices of the peace, will be their selected bill for this session, and that the question will be put on second reading of this bill this morning at 10:55 a.m. accordingly.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 209—The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Expanded Training for Judges and Judicial Justices of the Peace)

The Speaker: I will now recognize the honourable member for Tyndall Park to move the second reading motion to begin this debate.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I move that Bill 209, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Expanded Training for Judges and Judicial Justices of the Peace), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

The Speaker: The honourable—thank you.

Motion presented.

MLA Lamoureux: I am proud to rise this morning for second reading of Bill 209, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Expanded Training for Judges and Judicial Justices of the Peace), otherwise known as Keira's Law.

I want to thank those who have joined us today in the gallery and those who are tuning in to our livestream. Some of our guests who have joined us here in the gallery today are from Brandon Women's Resource Centre, Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters, Ikwe Shelter, Rotary Club, women physicians from Canadian Women in Medicine and OBGYNs here in the province of Manitoba.

Allow me to begin by providing some background information. A couple of years back, Kayla Harder, who lives here in Manitoba, first brought to my attention Keira's Law. Kayla is a friend of Keira's family, an advocate and survivor of intimate partner violence. She has also joined us here today in the gallery.

I learned through Kayla how Keira's Law stems from a tragedy—a preventable tragedy that took the life of a four-year-old little girl, Keira. On January 28, 2020 Jennifer, Keira's mom, brought an emergency motion

to court to suspend or supervise her ex-husband's access to their four-year-old daughter, Keira. There were 53 court orders within a three-year period of time between Jennifer and her ex-husband. The ex-husband was described as abusive, erratic and having escalating behaviour.

The judge found the evidence against the ex-husband compelling; however, not urgent, and adjourned the motion.

Honourable Speaker, just days before they were set to return to court, Keira and her father were found dead at the bottom of a cliff in a murder-suicide. The case was then referred to the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee for recommendations aimed at preventing similar deaths.

Honourable Speaker, this is why I have brought forward today's legislation. Manitoba has one of the highest rates of intimate partner violence in the country per capita, and unfortunately, in more cases than not, children are caught in the middle. Children more and more often are being subject to violence. Many are abused themselves, while others watch and listen to abuse to their loved ones.

One of the organizations who I consulted with shared the traumatic stories that children frequently share of overhearing yelling and physical violence while they're in bed pretending to sleep. Furthermore, while we here in Manitoba have some of the highest rates of intimate partner violence in the entire country, choices for those experiencing it are very few.

Unfortunately, we are living in a society where an individual who lives with an abusive partner has two options: (1) stay and suffer the violence, or (2) flee and try to remain safe, and this becomes incredibly complicated when you consider children.

Once someone has entered the court process, the family justice system can often force their children to have even more contact with the abusive parent. And through research, we know that children who are exposed to family violence are at risk of emotional and behavioural problems throughout their lives. We know that, in any situation involving the family, the focus should always be on the best interests of the child.

So, Honourable Speaker, while seeing both parents can be important for a child's development, it should only be in the child's best interest to see both parents if it can be done in a safe manner. This is really the main objective of this legislation.

It is absolutely critical to recognize that the system needs tools in place to address and consider psychological abuse, in particular, coercive control, the use of intimidation, isolation and other means as a way for one partner to wield power over another. We need to make sure that coercive control is properly considered when assessing cases of protection orders, which often involve children intimately associated with cases of intimate partner violence.

Now, I want to emphasize how I truly believe in the rule of law. I have the utmost respect for judicial independence and our judicial justices of the peace and provincial court justices.

* (10:10)

Judges and JJPs do incredibly difficult work while taking an impartial stance in assessing the evidence before them when deciding whether to grant a protection order or when reserving judgment on a family matter.

With that said, I would argue that this is—and this is backed up by similar legislation that has received royal assent at both the federal and provincial levels—that this level—that this legislation gives our judicial officials additional tools to make rulings that have really important implications, sometimes life-or-death situations. We saw this with Keira's case.

I met with quite a few organizations that I'm sure I'll be asked about shortly, but I did want to share some specific thoughts that the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters, MAWS, shared. MAWS has been fighting for years to expand training for the judicial officials. Currently, victims have to convince judges that they are being targeted, and quite often cases get thrown out.

Now, women's shelters often have a protection order designate. This is someone who is trained to provide correct terminology so that when a client brings a case to the JJP, it is accepted. But it's sad that this is the reality that so many individuals of intimate partner violence are having to face.

Keira's Law would help officials view and consider scenarios more from a survivor's perspective. Right now, the process to get a protection order can be invasive, often difficult, degrading and challenging to remember the details. Survivors often are forced, time and time again, to retell and relive traumatic situations, and lots of survivors are suffering from traumatic brain injuries, PTSD and from situations like this, and the longer that it goes untreated, the more difficult it becomes.

Honourable Speaker, I'd like to table a document that was taken under advisement during Committee of Supply from the previous minister of Justice when asked if JJPs and other family court professionals receive training in domestic violence and trauma.

Ultimately, this legislation brought before us today is to put into law continuing education topics for judicial justices of the peace and provincial court judges by enhancing education on issues like coercive control and IPV. This would help enable judges to make decisions with safety at the forefront.

I'm encouraged that, thus far, I have received very positive feedback from my colleagues, and my hope is to see this legislation passed here this morning to have it move on to committee.

In closing, Honourable Speaker, I'd like to thank those who, again, came to the Legislature here with us this morning. I'd like to thank those who are tuning in live; I know we have many people watching live from across Canada and in Ontario. I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to consult with me. I'd like to thank Kayla for bringing this to my attention. I'd like to thank Jennifer for being the backbone of this legislation and for making a truly profound impact all over Canada.

And lastly, Keira. This legislation is in tribute to you.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): So, this private member's bill touches on very important considerations, when any judge makes a ruling that includes the topics of assault and violence against women. It's important work that I believe all members of the House needs to be done with due diligence.

I ask: Did the member consult with the ministers of Justice and Families when drafting this legislation?

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for Assiniboia for her very good question.

Just to expand a little bit more, the legislation is a little bit further than that. It also talks about intimate partner violence, coercive control and sexual assault and abuse. And I extended a bill briefing to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), so he would have had the opportunity.

Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Gives me great honour to have—second this bill on the first reading, and I thank the member for Tyndall Park for bringing this important legislation forward.

During our bill briefing, I did have the opportunity to ask this question, but I would like it brought a little bit further into the House.

Is—after JJPs and judges are trained, is there plans to possibly roll this out to the next level of authority, being the justices or the appellant court?

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank my colleague from Brandon West for the question as well as for attending a bill briefing. I know, typically, as opposition, we don't often give bill briefings, but I felt this legislation is really important and I'm grateful that he took me up on the opportunity for it.

I think that the legislation itself, we are intentionally not being too prescriptive with it because, again, it's about the rule of law. We believe that judicial officials, judges and JJPs, they have the confidence from us that they know what they're doing. And so we are going to allow them to just have more resources, and they can choose how far to take it.

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): As an Indigenous woman and a member of a government with 10 Indigenous MLAs, I'm compelled to ask the following question.

I think this—I would like to ask the member opposite: Did you consult with any First Nations, advocates or chiefs prior to drafting this legislation and, if so, who did you consult with?

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank the member for Seine River for bringing this important question here to the House. I mentioned earlier that we have consulted with quite a few people and I would happily go through the list.

It was first brought—this legislation was first brought to my attention by a woman by the name of

Kayla Harder. She's actually here with us today in the galleries. Further to Kayla, I've consulted with Jennifer, who is Kiera's mother, and Kiera was the little girl, at age four, who was part of a murder-suicide because of an abusive father and ex-husband to Jennifer.

Further to that, I consulted with the Brandon Women's Resource Centre; Ikwe shelter, an Indigenous shelter; Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters, MAWS; Rotary Club—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I want to thank the member from Tyndall Park to bring this forward. I see her compassion on a daily basis. I understand the importance of keeping people in our community safe and having these types of laws.

Can you share your personal feeling on why you're bringing this forward?

MLA Lamoureux: I really appreciate that question from the member for Selkirk.

There are actually a few personal reasons why I choose to bring this forward, Honourable Speaker. And I have to admit, I would only be bringing this forward—I'm only bringing this forward because it was first brought to my attention, again, from Kayla.

But what made me so passionate about it is, in part, the other hat that I have. I am a trained marriage and family therapist, Honourable Speaker, and I have dealt with many clients in the past who have experienced different forms of intimate partner violence.

I've learned about the different types of abuse that oftentimes, particularly for me in my experience, from women who are newer, immigrant women, and abuse from financial abuse to spiritual abuse—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

MLA Kennedy: When we were in opposition, our now-Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) introduced a similar private member's bill. Many of us learned from her work and continue to do so, now that we're part of the NDP government.

Can the member share with us her findings and the benefits of expanding the continuing education topics for provincial court judges to include intimate partner violence and coercive control?

MLA Lamoureux: Again, I'd like to thank the member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy) for the question. I can recall, actually, when the minister, on opposition side, of course, brought forward this legislation, and I spoke

in favour of the legislation. I think it was a very positive step and, I would suggest, would play quite nicely with the legislation that I've introduced today.

The legislation that I've introduced today goes a little bit further because it also specifically talks about coercive control. Coercive control is a newer topic.

* (10:20)

Not everyone actually knows what coercive control is, and I can share with the House: the use of intimidation, isolation and other means as a way for one partner to wield power over another. This is the definition of coercive control and why—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I'd like to thank the 'mendall'—the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) for bringing this forward. This is an important education for anybody that's working in situations where there is a possibility of intimate partner violence, and so thank you for doing this. It's something that I've always been very—close to my heart, as well.

Can the member share what content would be covered in the mandated course?

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank the member from Morden-Winkler for the really good question.

Again, with this legislation, it is not our intention as legislatures—legislators to be too prescriptive in what we are trying to bring forward. We really want to be the ones to be able to empower judges and JJs. And so, through this legislation, we are encouraging them to undertake the following: the sexual assault, coercive control and intimate partner violence. It would then be on them to have the resources provided to decide how does this look, as far as training goes. I'm imagining like a school curriculum; how do you choose to fit it into continuing learning?

MLA Cross: As we know, Indigenous women are disproportionately affected by intimate partner violence, sexual assault. Our NDP government has done much to fix the damage done by the previous PC government especially as it pertains to women's well-being. We've invested in the implementation of the new MMIWG2S strategy, and—to support survivors of gender-based violence, just to name a few things we've done.

How does the member think her bill will complement the work of our government, in particular our MMIWG2S strategy? And, of the 231 Calls for Justice,

which one do you think fits nicely into your proposed bill?

MLA Lamoureux: Again, I'd like to thank the member for Seine River (MLA Cross) for the question.

It's very, very important to me, and I believe my colleagues would attest to this, that when I bring forward legislation, it is done in a non-partisan fashion. That is why I consult with both parties. That is why I offered the bill briefing on this legislation, and so I want to just caution the member that we don't turn this into a partisan game.

She asks what this legislation could do to complement her government. I believe that this government could support this legislation, and that would go a far way. It would show that they're willing to work with parties across the line, and it would be so beneficial to hundreds of thousands of Manitobans.

Mr. Perchotte: We're hearing some very compassionate words from our member from Tyndall Park, and I don't think we could agree more that we need to protect people regardless of race or their background.

Can the member share what other jurisdictions where this training is currently mandatory?

MLA Lamoureux: That's a really important question to be asked here in the Legislature because oftentimes legislation is actually based off other jurisdictions. They're used as templates.

So, currently, it has received royal assent at a federal level, so nationally as well as in the province of Ontario. In both cases, royal assent was nearly one year ago and there has been nothing but positive praise that has come from it. There has been zero pushback from the justice department.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The time for questions has ended.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I'm pleased to step—stand up in the House and put a couple of words on the record in respect of Bill 209.

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge the folks that are in the Chamber that are on the front lines of doing really important work supporting Manitobans in a variety of different capacities and fronts, making sure that they have access to the resources and the supports that they need as they navigate the judiciary and the particular experiences that they're faced with.

So I want to acknowledge not only the folks in the gallery but, certainly, all of the folks across our province that do really, really important work supporting victims.

I want to acknowledge Rona Ambrose, who in, I believe, 2017, at the time she was the federal minister for the Status of Women. And at that time, she brought forward legislation, as my colleague from Tyndall Park has noted, in respect of judicial—increased judicial training, particularly in respect of sexual assault, rape culture, consent. And it's made its way through Parliament and did receive royal assent. So I want to acknowledge the work that she did.

In fact, the—and I want to provide a little bit of context in respect of that federal piece of legislation. At the time that Rona Ambrose brought forward that legislation, it became increasingly clear across the country that more work had to be done in respect of judicial training, because there were several examples across Canada of really egregious commentary by judges towards victims that were before their courts. And I just want to lay out some of the comments around that time that judges were saying in their courtroom to victims.

And I'll start here in Manitoba. We had Judge Dewar, who was presiding over a case involving some folks from the North, including an Indigenous woman, and in that court case, he called the rapist a clumsy Don Juan. And what that did in that case was that it undermined the victim, who rightfully came before the court seeking justice on her sexual assault, and it positioned the rapist as just having been, like, clumsy, like, oh, I didn't kind of know what I was doing; there's no fault in it, there was no mean-spirited in what I did. It basically excused, in a court of law, his behaviour.

And Judge Dewar went on to say—he described the case as, and I quote, misunderstood signals and inconsiderate behaviour. That was directed towards the victim. He also went on to say he blamed the 26-year-old woman for creating, and I quote, inviting circumstances and how she wore a tube top with no bra, high heels and lots of makeup. And I quote, he said, in a court of law, during a trial about rape and sexual assault, he said sex was in the air.

And as I've said many times in this Chamber that the language that we use is so important, because it then informs the way we see something, our analysis on a particular situation, and then informs the way the public sees the information. And what Judge Dewar did in that was he essentially blamed the Indigenous woman for her sexual assault and dismissed the rapist.

There's several cases across Canada. We have judge Justice Camp from Alberta. In 2014, during a sexual assault trial, Camp, who was then a provincial court judge, called the complainant, who was homeless and 19 at the time of the alleged assault, so basically just a child, the—during the trial, he repeatedly called her the accused. And then he told the young woman, and I quote, pain and sex sometimes go together, and asked her, couldn't you just keep your knees together?

* (10:30)

We have another example. Another judge out of Alberta, Judge Michael Savaryn. He acquitted a 15-year-old boy of sexual assault, ruling that through a camera, filmed the girl saying no to the teen, that the complainant had not expressed her objections clearly and did not behave as if she had been assaulted after the fact.

Another judge, Judge Pat McIlgery [*phonetic*] from Alberta, is—he acquitted a 16-year-old accused of sexually assaulting a 13-year-old, saying, and I quote, she did not scream, she did not run for help, she did not confide in her aunt.

And finally, another example from Judge Jean-Paul Brown [*phonetic*]-Brouwen [*phonetic*], from Quebec, during the 2017 trial of sexual assault against a 'chaxi' driver, he said to the victim, and I quote, that she was a little overweight. And she was 17 years old, Honourable Speaker. He said to a 17-year-old victim of rape that she was overweight, but that she had a pretty face and was maybe a little bit flattered by the attention that she received from her rapist.

So I think it's important to put on the record the historical context of wanting to put measures in place to ensure that those folks that sit in positions of power and ultimate decision-making capacities have the training—the proper training and understanding in order to execute those duties to the best of their ability.

I said that at the time Rona Ambrose was the first politician across Canada to bring forward legislation to do just that. As a result of Rona's legislation, I myself, in this Chamber in 2017, 2019 and 2020, introduced the Provincial Court Amendment Act, mandatory training awareness.

And I would be remiss if I didn't put on the record that every single time I introduced that legislation—which now, members opposite on the PC side seem to be in favour of—every single time I put that bill up for a vote, each and every one of the members opposite voted against that legislation.

And so I do appreciate—I know that the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) had also, at the same time that I was putting my bills, she also put her bills. I think that if there's one thing that both the member for Tyndall Park and I can agree on is that citizens who come before the courts for a variety of reasons including sexual assault, deserve to be able to access equitable, compassionate, respectful justice in our court systems. I would imagine that both her and I are on that same page.

And so I want to just finally, in my last minute, I want to acknowledge all of the Manitoba citizens who have faced just the most traumatic experience that a person can experience: the violation of your body against your will, against your consent; just the utter, sheer terror of sexual assault. And those folks who, even in that trauma, still find the courage to come forward and to report their sexual assault, to go through the interview with different policing institutions, to seek out resources and supports, some of the supports that are in the Chamber today. It takes an enormous amount of courage for women and girls and gender-diverse folks and anybody who's been sexually assaulted to come forward with that experience and to seek justice. And for that, I lift you up and I acknowledge you.

Miigwech.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): It gives me absolute pride to rise in the House today and speak in favour of this bill that has been brought forward by the member from Tyndall Park.

I think it was very, very profound that the member from Tyndall Park stated that this should be a non-partisan bill. This is about the protection of individuals in Manitoba. This is about the protection of vulnerable women in Manitoba, no matter their ethnicity, no matter their background. Every single woman that is facing any sort of crime involving intimate partner violence, coercive control, sexual assault or any of these issues or crimes deserves the respect and the compassion of the court, as I said, no matter what their background is.

I know on this side of the House, we have heard specifically from one of our members, our member from Morden-Winkler, who has previously experienced the justice system and the shelter system because of past issues in her life. And that's why I really wanted to make sure that when I talk about this bill, it represents all women in Manitoba, all women in Canada or anybody who is travelling through Manitoba

that may be subjected to criminality and then find themselves as a victim in front of our courts.

I was pleased to attend the bill briefing on this matter and listen to the passion in which the member from Tyndall Park brought this issue forward and explained the reasoning behind this. And, again, very, very emotional, very, very compassionate line of talking about this bill.

I was also pleased to receive a call and be able to speak with Kayla, as well, who is here with us in the audience. I didn't have a chance to meet her personally, but we did have a lengthy conversation on the phone and she's a constituent of Spruce Woods and so, really close and bordering on my constituency, and I was happy to speak to her about this bill and the support that she had.

She was very passionate when we spoke about this and I actually had to say, one moment, could you let me just tell you that you don't need to convince me to be on board with this bill because I second this bill and I'm very supportive of this bill. So, at that time, we then had a great conversation about the need for education in our judicial system.

And, you know, learning what has happened to Kayla and her family—I said it on the phone; I'll say it in the Chamber: I'm sorry you had to experience that. It must be extremely traumatic for you and your children, and I hope that when this bill is passed that it gives you some solace in your advocacy and your work towards this, so thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and to educate me further on this.

Honourable Speaker, when I was going through my career, I investigated, you know, uncounted number of—at that time we called them domestic violence, but intimate partner violence calls for service. And I'd also like to recognize the folks from the Brandon Women's Resource Centre that are here, because our police service had great ties with themselves, as well as the shelters within Brandon, to make sure that the vulnerable women that were subjected to any of these crimes had an outlet, somewhere to go for that safety, someone to talk to and open up about what had happened to them.

I cannot imagine what these victims go through, and then the repeated telling of their stories, of their situations, the vicarious trauma that continues on, the repetitive trauma that continues on, every time that they have to open up about this.

* (10:40)

Every time that they have to talk about it, whether it be in a shelter, whether it be with an investigator, then through the courts, through Victim Services, very, very difficult, and it takes a personal toll on these individuals. It's very difficult for them to tell their stories. And sometimes, when they get to court, they are worn out. They've told their story so many times that they may seem hardened to it or they may seem very despondent because of all of the trauma that they've gone through.

So I think this bill brings the fact that education on these sort of issues to JJPs, judicial justice of the peace, or judges that are going to be the triers of fact, that are going to be listening to protection orders or prevention orders or, ultimately, are going to be the trier of fact when it comes to the actual case before them. And they can listen to it knowing that, oftentimes, it is one person's word against another, but then they will be educated and look at it saying, okay, I've learned why somebody may be—seem less passionate when they're in court because they have told their story many times, why they may seem a little bit despondent, because they've been subject to this.

It's not uncommon for a woman to suffer intimate partner violent or 'marriagal'—marital sexual assaults or coercive control many, many times during their relationship before they report it. Sometimes it can be up to 100 times before they have the courage to come forward, and the survivors that have to deal with this after they've come forward, it's very difficult for them.

So I believe if the education can be brought forward to the judicial justice of the peace who will be hearing protection orders or prevention orders and section 810 orders, those sort of areas, it's incredibly powerful for them to have this education. And again, for the trier of facts, the judges that will be sitting listening to these issues, they'll be able to reflect on their education and their abilities to understand from a victim-centred point of what individuals are going through.

I'd be remiss—I think I've said it in this House before, but I worked for a chief of police many, many years ago, and when I spoke to him on an issue one time, it was about discipline with—inside of the police service, and it will come to a point on this, but we talked about discipline and the fact that as the chief of police, he could fine me internally, he could charge me a day's worth of pay, he could take away some of my holidays, he could demote me to a different position, but one thing that he could never do, Honourable Speaker, is take away my education. And education is

the foundation that we all must build from and learn from.

Honourable Speaker, judges and JJPs are highly trained independent members of our judicial system, but providing them more tools to work with will only help to strengthen our Manitoba judicial system, and it will only prove to further support our vulnerable women population within Manitoba.

So again, I would like to thank the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) for bringing this forward. Very important legislation, non-partisan legislation that I think everybody in this Chamber must support to make sure that our vulnerable citizens can be well represented in the Manitoba courts.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park—no. The honourable member for Kirkfield Park.

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): I'd like to recognize, and I think we should all in this Chamber recognize, that too many women who experience sexual assault or sexual violence are afraid to report their experiences or testify in court.

And I'd like to share a study that stood out to me from—done by a Vancouver Island—or a Vancouver-based west coast LEAF that states that 95 per cent of survivors chose not to report assault. This is mainly due to a belief that the report would not lead to a conviction or consequence for the perpetrator.

And I was hoping that, you know, I could share a little bit about my work as a correctional officer. And it's just wild to me that—to think that, not too long ago I was working a block away at the Winnipeg Remand Centre and met a lot of folks who came into custody who were, unfortunately, survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual violence.

And I'd like to maybe share a story about an offender that I got to know really well, and we developed quite a lovely rapport. Thank you. And she shared her hopes and her dreams with me. She also shared that she was involved in an abusive relationship with her partner. She was also pregnant, and she was smart and funny. She was a good mom. She really cared about her kids. And she was reliable, and she was a really caring person.

So she earned the position of trustee in the jail, and trustees have responsibilities such as, you know, cleaning up the unit. They'll maybe do laundry; they'll help serving meals. And the incentive there is that once the inmates lock up in their cells, the trustees are

able to stay out on the unit and clean, and so that affords them some extra time outside of their cells. And we had many conversations about the potential of her leaving her partner, and you know, we worked really hard to find resources and help her get on a better path.

And I talked to her about approaching the police about the abuse. She told me one time she was assaulted so badly she ended up in hospital, and the police were at her bedside. And I asked her, you know, did you feel like you could share your experience? And she said no, and I think, you know, she said that she wouldn't be taken seriously. And I think that's the message that the system has sent to women and gender-diverse folks, is that, you know, you may come forward, but we won't necessarily take your concerns seriously.

She said that her situation was minimized and that she had no confidence in the justice system, and I wholeheartedly believed her. You know, we set her up with community supports. We tried our best with the Elizabeth Fry Society.

I remember walking on the unit, doing my rounds, and you've got to go to each cell and you check each cell, make sure that everyone is safe in there. And I came around the corner and she was on the phone. She, you know, part of being a trustee is once you're finished your duties, you have some extra time; you're allowed to use the phone. And she was visibly upset, and the last thing she said on the phone was I'm sorry, and she slammed the phone and she went to her cell, and—very upset.

So I followed her and, you know, asked her, you know, sounds like you had a bad phone call. And she said yes, it was with her partner, and, you know, we, again, we talked about what would leaving look like, and what supports could we offer for her, and unfortunately, under this former government, there weren't a lot of tools on my tool belt to help this person, this offender. She was eventually released, which was great, and months went by and I thought perhaps we had a success story.

* (10:50)

But it turns out she went missing, and they weren't able to find her, and she was eventually discovered murdered. And I drive by the Polo Park underpass and see her picture every day when I go home, and I remember her, and I remember her courage, and I remember her compassion and that she was a human being, and that she deserved to feel safe. She deserved to feel

confident in the justice system and that she would see justice.

We also know that people from marginalized sexual and racialized groups are more vulnerable to being targeted for sexual harassment. Honourable Speaker, 70 per cent of trans youth in Canada have experienced sexual harassment. Black women face more systemic barriers when reporting sexual violence and engaging with criminal justice systems as victims of crime. First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada are at an increased risk of violence. A national inquiry found that Indigenous women and girls are 16 times more likely to be slain or to disappear than white women.

Between 2014 and 2019, there were nearly 500 victims of intimate partner homicide across Canada; 80 per cent of those victims were women.

Even though women are more likely to experience intimate partner violence, this can affect an individual of any gender or gender identity, race, culture, age and income bracket. And dismissal by law enforcement and overt comments by judges, which we heard the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) reciting earlier, creates a culture where women and girls do not feel empowered to report their assaults.

So introducing sexual assault training will contribute to the creation of culture within our justice system that encourages survivors to come forward. I'm just thinking about my experiences in speaking with women in the carceral system and their experiences with intimate partner violence and sexual violence, and just the prevalence of it is really quite alarming.

I'd like to present some facts as well—some statistics, pardon me, some sobering statistics if I may: each year, over 40,000 arrests result from domestic violence. That's about 12 per cent of all violent crime in Canada. Since only 22 per cent of all incidents are reported to police, the real number is much higher.

Indigenous women are killed at six times the rate of non-Indigenous women. I want to repeat that again: Indigenous women are killed at least six times the rate of non-Indigenous women. It's very sobering statistics.

Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.

I have a daughter, and I worry about her future. I worry about her having to come up against rape culture, and what that means for her growing up. And I want to ensure that she lives in a province and a

country where the justice system will take care of her should she need to utilize it.

And this is a hard thing to talk about, and I know there's a lot of triggers for folks during this debate, and I just want to thank our guests in the gallery for being here today and the good work that you do for Manitobans.

And I just want to highlight a few of the PCs failed on their responsibility to uphold justice for women and marginalized people in Manitoba. In 2017, the PC government cut justice programming for organizations like the Elizabeth Fry Society and John Howard by 20 per cent.

When I was talking about having a duty belt, wear duty belts with tools on them, and I feel like services and resources are some of those tools that were on my tool belt, and those were taken away from me, which made it hard to do my job and made it hard to keep women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse folks safe.

They cut the Indigenous Court Workers Program, a court program designed to help Indigenous—

The Speaker: Order, please.

In accordance with rule 25, as previously announced, I am interrupting debate to put the question on the honourable member for Tyndall Park's (MLA Lamoureux) selected bill.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 209, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Expanded Training for Judges and Judicial Justices of the Peace).

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

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 34(7), I am announcing the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan). The title of the resolution is Respecting Front-line Workers.

The Speaker: It has been announced that pursuant to rule 34(7), that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan). The title of the resolution: Respecting Front-line Workers.

* * *

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Is there a will to recognize the clock as 11?

The Speaker: Before we move on, I need to make the record clear that the motion is accordingly passed.

Is it the will of the House to call it 11 o'clock?
[Agreed]

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 8—Calling on the Provincial Government to Extend Employment Standards Benefits to Workers of the Gig Economy

The Speaker: The hour being 11 o'clock, it is now time for private members' resolutions.

The honourable member for—the resolution before us is the private members' resolution 8, Calling on the Provincial Government to Extend Employment Standards Benefits to Works of the Gig Economy.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I move,

WHEREAS gig work includes paid work outside of traditional employment and includes app-based food delivery work on an in-demand basis; and

WHEREAS in recent years there has been a significant growth in all forms of food delivery in Manitoba; and 3

WHEREAS a consultation paper developed by Employment and Social Development Canada on developing greater labour protections for gig workers found that the most precarious forms of gig work are found largely in provincially regulated sectors, rather than those which are federally regulated; and

WHEREAS the gig economy provides employment opportunities for many Manitobans looking for flexible income; and

WHEREAS workers of the gig economy in Manitoba have expressed concerns such as low and unpredictable wages, being terminated from the job without warning, and lacking workers' compensation coverage if injured on the job; and

WHEREAS paid time for gig workers is often only associated with 'engaged time' and not paying for time required to perform the work; and

WHEREAS all workers in Manitoba deserve fundamental rights, safety, and protections from exploitative workplace practices; and

WHEREAS both employers and employees of the gig economy benefit from employment practices that support productivity, fairness, and worker wellbeing.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to develop a comprehensive review of The Employment Standards Code with the view to extend protections to workers who do not fit the traditional conception of an employee and recognize that workers in Manitoba deserve basic employment standards and protections.

Motion presented.

MLA Lamoureux: I am happy to rise to introduce this resolution this morning, calling on provincial government to extend employment standard benefits to workers of the gig economy.

We are all aware of the increase in goods and services now available online and through apps on our phone.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Many people have more than one application on their phones. For example, it's normal for someone to have the SkipTheDishes application, Uber Eats and DoorDash all available on their personal phones.

We're living in a time where at the click of a button, we can order many different foods and services, and, Honourable Speaker, with such huge growth and a newer economy, we need to educate ourselves as legislators about the understanding of who gig workers are.

* (11:00)

Through consultation, I've learned that gig workers range from higher class folks with good incomes who are looking to earn a few extra bucks, to single mothers or students who rely on the gig economy for the time flexibility, to newer immigrants who might be struggling to find employment in their chosen fields.

Gig work truly is an extraordinary shift in both work and the workforce, and with this comes the growth of unfamiliar types of work.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, as with any new field, department, topic or idea, credibility must be built. The gig economy has proven themselves credible, and this is evident through the demand every day in our society. No matter what fast food joint or restaurant you go into these days, you'll see gig workers coming and going. Often here at the Legislature, if you go by the security at the front, it's normal to see a SkipTheDishes driver, just as an example.

I'm confident in saying that many MLAs and staff here at the Legislature utilize these resources, yet, unfortunately, this type of work often is marked by low pay, little security and few, if any, benefits. In particular, Honourable Speaker, app-based gig work is a type of precarious work in which a digital platform company uses technology to manage certain aspects of work.

Now, our current Workers Compensation Act and employment standards act only defines workers with certain parameters, and so many of these workers are not subject to even the most minimal standards. Therefore, many employers have no obligation to provide base employment standards for their workers, and it's very easy for people to be taken for granted here.

It is important to recognize that there can be many advantages for companies to not have actual employee status. For example, when you don't have employee status, a company doesn't have to pay minimum wage or workers' compensation premiums, or provide equipment, workspace, benefits or health and safety protections. This can be beneficial for the company, but not at all for the worker.

I have had gig workers recently share with me, just over the last few weeks, that it would be helpful to have protection for needed shifts, that the price of gas should be considered and that some companies are trying to combine orders so drivers in fact get paid less. These are just a few examples of recent concerns raised directly from gig workers.

Further, through my consultation with both the gig workers, the business community and labour organizations, I have learned many themes with respect to the gig economy.

Number 1: The current gig economy model relies on all expenses to be paid by the worker, whether this be gas, insurance, maintenance, licensing and more. Honourable Speaker, consider the price of gas or vehicle maintenance with our roads, and the comparison to other jobs where mileage, as an example, is often paid for.

A second theme is limiting paid time to only be engaged time, and not paying for time required to perform the work. To be clear, this includes driving to a pick-up point; waiting for food; getting gas; cleaning a vehicle or anything else required to be able to perform the work. None of this is paid for.

Think about a gig worker. As an example, they live downtown and they get a notification on their

phone to go and pick up food from Wakoya on Osborne Street here, and they're asked to bring it to a home in the Wolseley area. Geographically, these locations are very close together, but when you factor in commuting, waiting for the food and traffic, sometimes in rush hour, gig employees are only being paid while the food is in their vehicle en route to their destinations. That's it.

And this is important to recognize, because I don't believe that people fully understand this. I know I didn't until I began consultation on this resolution.

A third theme I have heard lots is how, by misclassifying gig workers as contractors, they are not eligible for employment insurance, workers' compensation or the right to join a union if they wish to negotiate working conditions. Again, this is just very limiting and tying of hands.

Lastly, the fourth theme I have heard lots about is, if working in the gig economy is your primary source of income and you are working over a certain threshold, benefits should be extended.

Now, just to change gears a little bit, Honourable Speaker, we know that BC has brought forward legislation to help develop a strategy to deal with precarious types of work and proposed employment standards and other protections specifically related to app-based workers. And this legislation passed in BC.

My hope is that Manitoba will be next to follow, especially because our new Manitoba government was elected on a mandate to better support workers, no matter what they do in the province.

And I was very pleased to see that the Minister of Labour and Immigration's (MLA Marcelino) comments in response to my honourable colleague from Agassiz on April 3. The minister said, and I quote: All workers deserve safe places to work. All of them deserve health protection. And every single worker deserves the right to dignity and all of their protections. I table a copy of this now.

I'm happy that the minister recognizes this and that all workers, not just the ones that are defined as permanent workers, deserve health protections.

In closing, Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the individual who first brought this to my attention. They came and they visited me at my weekly McDonald's and made me aware. I want to thank everyone who took the time to consult with me.

And I want to reiterate that the purpose of this resolution is not to be overly prescriptive or directive

to the government, but rather in the spirit of better understanding the issue at hand. We need to better review this issue, understand the demographics and talk about it in the context of the Employment Standards Code to explore if employment standards provisions should be modernized.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be 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.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I thank the member for Tyndall Park for this resolution.

Our NDP government strongly commits to creating more quality jobs for Manitobans. We have made our budget based on their feedback, along with our plan to lower costs for working families. This is what Manitobans deserve.

My question is: Who has the member consulted with when drafting this resolution?

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank my colleague from Burrows for this important question.

I did quite a bit of consultation for this resolution, meeting with dozens of workers in the gig economy, including those who work at SkipTheDishes, Uber Eats and DoorDash. I met with the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce on this resolution, and I met with the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

Thank you.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Thank you to the member from Tyndall Park for bringing forward this important—this resolution.

I would like to ask the question: Does the member's definition of gig work only include digital platform gig work or would this include buskers and artisans?

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank my colleague from Agassiz for her question, as well as her remarks on April 3 here in the House as well.

Definition of gig workers is widely recognized as having all the characteristics of precarious employment, typically temporary, part-time or casual; low-paid; lacking in predictability, work hours and job security without health and welfare benefits and protections.

This type of work is considered as independent contracting, and this designation often leaves these workers without the necessary employment protections.

Mr. Brar: Our team has done incredible work in introducing legislation that will create better jobs for Manitobans and expand the protections of workers. This is thanks to the tireless work of our Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Has the member met with the Minister of Labour and Immigration to discuss the extension of benefits to workers in gig economy?

MLA Lamoureux: As well as I'd like to thank my colleague from Burrows again for his question.

He talks about how the government is really emphasizing and encouraging new jobs, and my hope—we see this in the budget—my hope is that it comes to 'flurition.'

I really want to emphasize the importance of protecting these jobs, as well. Protecting jobs as a whole for those here in Manitoba is something that I have talked about with the minister with respect to immigration here in the province. And we know that oftentimes newer immigrants are utilizing these type of—this type of job through gig work.

* (11:10)

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): My question for the member of Tyndall Park. This being something that I never paid very close attention to, this industry, so it had interest me in doing some research.

Can the member answer with the House today—share with the House today: How many Manitobans are currently working in the gig economy?

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank my colleague from La Vérendrye for the important question. And, like him, until this legislation was actually brought to my attention, I wasn't too aware with the topic either, and I've been learning so much over the course of the last few months.

And this is in part—the question of how many people are within the gig economy currently working, it's a question that is very important, and we have

endeavoured to discover these numbers, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

And to me, it's a testament of why it is so important that we as legislators begin to talk about the gig economy. We know that there are hundreds and thousands of people here in Manitoba working within the gig economy, but we don't have hard stats on the numbers.

And again, we consulted with this with the chamber of commerce, Manitoba Federation of Labour—

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

Mr. Brar: Manitoba now has a team that is going to put workers and their families first.

I want to hear from the member what she thinks about how the gig workers were doing under the previous government.

MLA Lamoureux: Again, I try my very best when I bring forward in—legislation, when I speak in question period, anything that I bring to the floor of this House, not to create partisanship. I think it's more important that we work together. I don't want to go back and forth about who did what, who did not do what.

All I know is that this legislation was brought to my attention through a visit at McDonald's. And it was brought to my attention, and I brought it forward at my earliest opportunity.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): I thank the member from Tyndall Park for bringing this resolution forward.

My question—again, being a former employer myself, as well, just curious on would these benefits apply to gig workers who hold another form of full-time employment?

MLA Lamoureux: I think that's a great question, something I actually spoke about with the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

When we think about what is happening here in the province of Manitoba and how often people are deciding to go into more gig work, we hear that they're doing it for many different reasons. Some are doing it, as the member suggested, as a part-time gig on top of their full-time job. Some are doing it as their primary job. And this is exactly why I want to encourage the government to have these conversations, think about the employment standards.

We as legislators, I believe, have an ethical obligation to see what would constitute and make it fair so people have access to—whether it be health benefits, workers compensation or EI, and—

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

Mr. Brar: Our government knows that when we uplift people, it uplifts all Manitobans. That's why we are doing things like a universal nutrition program and building social and affordable housing. It leads to growth in our economy while helping Manitobans achieving their full potential.

Under this basis, my question is: How would extending protections to gig workers benefit Manitoba's workforce and economy?

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank, again, my colleague from Burrows for asking a really good question.

I think that we need to shift our thinking about the traditional definitions of a worker. For far too long, narrowly defining definitions limit our abilities as legislators to encompass what workers have to do to attain their basic rights. We—again, as legislators, we have an obligation here to protect Manitobans.

I quoted it and I tabled it earlier in my speech, Honourable Speaker, but the Minister for Labour said, just on April 3: All workers deserve safe places to work. All of them deserve health protection, and every single worker deserves the right to dignity and all of their protections.

This is the truth, Honourable Deputy Speaker. This is something that is being said—

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

Ms. Byram: I would like to ask the member from Tyndall Park: Is there any sort of financial impact for Manitobans with this resolution? And, if so, can she just give a little bit of clarification on that?

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank my colleague from Agassiz. This resolution itself does not have a financial impact. The resolution, what it is, and I'm just going to read the Therefore Be It Resolved: the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to develop a comprehensive review of the Employment Standards Code with the view to extend protections to workers who do not fit the traditional

conception of an employee, and recognize that workers in Manitoba deserve basic employment standards and protections.

There's no dollar value to that, Honourable Deputy Speaker. It's about having the conversation so we can better learn.

Mr. Brar: Our government's recent budget was informed by what we heard from Manitobans, including those from working families. As we work to make life better and help those who need it most, what are some of the other ways we can support workers in the gig economy?

MLA Lamoureux: That's an excellent question that the member from Burrows just asked. I think there are many ways that we can be supporting workers in the gig economy; in fact, all workers throughout Manitoba. And again, I'm very optimistic. They made a lot of promises; the budget said a lot of things. I'm looking forward to seeing them play out in our economy here in Manitoba, and I think that ways that we can help, the first step, by supporting today's resolution.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The question period has expired.

Debate

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

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): While I welcome the opportunity presented by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) to talk about the changing state of work in Manitoba, I worry that this rushed resolution does not do justice to the nuance of the issue of precarious work.

The background that I bring myself here to the Legislature with is as the former president of the University of Manitoba Students' Union, one term, two terms that saw the interruption of our classes due to a labour dispute. And I'll get more into that later on, but a good amount of my undergraduate degree was dedicated to precarious work and to the state of labour. And so I'm happy to put some words on the record when it comes to how important it is that we aren't erasing the layers and nuances within that work.

So, Honourable Speaker, like I mentioned—Honourable Deputy Speaker, rather—this is a ginormous, complex issue that cannot be solved by simply looking at one code. I also worry that the language

presented today undermines generations of movement-building by describing workplace protection as a benefit rather than a right.

I'd go a step further and also say that workers in Manitoba don't just deserve basic standards; workers deserve just standards. Though there is so much more when it comes to glaring inconsistencies that I'd like to take the time to deconstruct today, though I do appreciate that the member, you know, has recently looked into this issue and it is one that we have the opportunity to educate each other on today as well.

And so the face of work has changed dramatically in my lifetime, and so, you know, our laws must ensure representation for this new reality as well. There are many dimensions to what work looks like now: union or non-union; salaried or shift work; contract, part-time or gig. It's understandable that legislation is being presented confusing one with the other, though that doesn't take any dimension—that doesn't make any dimension of work any less valuable.

And so I know that so far we've talked about food delivery services. Maybe a few folks who are on their phones right now are ordering—oh. Maybe a few folks who are on their phones right now are ordering lunch from one. Courier services, you know, folks that are maybe ordering a ride home already. And, you know, surprisingly we haven't talked about yet home-care services that rely heavily on in-app organization.

* (11:20)

So many of these services we rely on to get food, to get groceries, this is now a reality that we're faced with as individuals here in Canada. And, many of these services not only provide necessities that we rely on but also provide lifesaving services for many like those who rely on home care. And so it's incredibly important that when we talk about recruitment, retention of folks within home-care services, that we also talk about the nature of their precarious work as well.

In 2005, only 5.5 per cent of Canada's workforce found their living in the gig and app economy, and in 2020, that number rose to 10 per cent. Predominantly, as mentioned prior, it is newcomers who find themselves in app-based precarious work and as a result are taken advantage of by their employers. On the surface, it is quick entry-level employment, though it is largely determined by whether or not customers tip instead of by whether or not the employer makes a profit.

Now, gig work is not to be conflated with those who find work through a digital platform who can be

characterized by dependent contractors. As a handful on this side of the House can attest to through lived experience, gig work is fulfilling and ignites community in special ways, though it has become too precarious to be sustainable. Gig work is predominantly practised by those in the arts, in construction and other independent skilled forms of labour.

In their line of work, often gig work provides them with the freedom to decide how much they get paid, how much they work and where they work, something that dependent workers do not have control over. Dependent workers, like folks who work for SkipTheDishes or Uber Eats or various home-care services as well.

Another layer that is integral that we understand is the value that many workers hold in being an independent contractor. When identified by choice, being an independent contractor can be an empowering pursuit. What's problematic is the mischaracterization of dependent contractors like those that work for SkipTheDishes, for example, as independent contractors without their informed consent. This has resulted in many a lawsuit across the country and many that have sided, actually, in—the ruling has sided with those of workers.

Many workers, namely food couriers, ride share drivers and even home-care workers, who find their living through app or digital services, are victim to employers who use the grey areas of our law against them.

Recently, the Supreme Court ruled on the side of Uber workers after exploitative attempts by the food and ride delivery service to withhold benefits from them, claiming that they are independent contractors. A similar case has since been brought forward by SkipTheDishes drivers and the hope is that the court ruling that predates it will help set a precedent for workers seeking justice today after grey areas in law have been capitalized upon and continue to be capitalized upon by predatory companies. But, to be fair, these grey areas aren't so grey; they just exclude the many nuances of work today.

Gig, independent and app-based work are a new reality for our communities and can't simply be solved by looking at one code. Thus, we must ensure that our laws as a whole reflect the reality in a way that offers all workers dignity.

For a great deal of time, Manitoba had a Conservative government who did the exact opposite. They froze public sector wages like I alluded to earlier, that

resulted in labour and in strikes across the province and interrupted many a session of the University of Manitoba including the one that I served as president during. This resulted in \$19.1 million of taxpayer money needing to be paid out after it was founded that the government had acted illegally and interfered with the bargaining of hundreds of thousands of public sector workers.

That's something that we must never forget about, as well as, you know, cuts that, you know, the members opposite seem to like to talk about. And when it comes to the word cut, it sounds like, you know, to me at least sitting over here, it sounds like this is the word that they use the most frequently, you know, second, actually, maybe only to carbon tax, and so, I am ecstatic that we get to both say, you know, cut and gas tax in the same sentence so often in return. And, you know, gas is something that so many folks that work in precarious work, that work in app-based work, rely heavily upon. In fact, it directly affects the amount that they take home each day.

But not only did, you know, the PCs bring up cuts today, bring up cuts yesterday, bring up cuts the day before, but they also cut, when they were in government, positions in Labour and Immigration which have led to a massive backlog of MPNP applications. They also cut project labour agreements, and they also cut the Workplace Safety and Health advisory council, weakening protections for Manitoban workers.

Though I am proud to say that the—that Manitoba finally has a Labour and Immigration Minister who gets it. The first bill, Bill 7, that was introduced during the spring session by the NDP Minister of Labour reintroduced project labour agreements to level the playing field for union and non-union workers alike. And this, you know, this move is great for one that considers timelines and considers government projects and things that taxpayers are waiting on, and the need for workers to be compensated fairly to get work under way.

Not only this, but, you know, just last week, many of us here in this Chamber all attended the Canadian Cancer Society reception of which they shared, you know, a really interesting statistic from a recent survey that showed 92 per cent of all Canadians in favour of the move to make the serious injury and illness leave 27 weeks as opposed to the prior 17, something that we are already championing here.

Not only this, but there is an advisory committee being struck on the state of precarious work here in

Manitoba, and our incredible Minister of Labour is one spearheading that work.

Our NDP government is fighting every day to make life better for all workers, especially those who face injustice. And this can be done by defining and evaluating vulnerable workers and quote, unquote, precarious workplaces; establishing new standards to ensure equal pay for equal work; establishing regular labour review processes; and developing a portable benefits bank for workers as well.

Now, we in Manitoba have the political will to get this done. And while we work on shifting the narrative and shifting traditional ideas of what work looks like, you know, on this side of the House, we will always stand for and with the working people. The beautiful thing is that this is only the beginning and we are so excited to see what's next.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I'd also like to, again, thank the member from Tyndall Park for bringing forward this private member's resolution for the government to extend Employment Standards benefits to workers of the gig economy.

Our world is an ever-changing place and we are witness to these changes in our communities, our lifestyles and our workforce. Society's expectations and demands have also changed over time, with many feeling a little more pressure and a lot less time.

In today's fast-paced lifestyle, our economy's changed, and like I said, the workforce. There are many more demands put on folks and many carry extra financial burdens and seek this part-time employment to offset some of those extra financial strains.

Many find that extra job in the gig economy, which defined—which is defined as a labour market that depends on temporary or part-time positions filled by independent contractors and freelancers rather than full-time, permanent employees, most often utilizing online platforms for clientele.

I am certain we have all used these platforms one way or another, whether it's ordering a meal through SkipTheDishes app or getting an Uber ride to an event or grocery delivery using Instacart. Many folks are interacting and choosing to use online apps to do their shopping and ordering on a daily basis. And with today's technology, we find our lives have forever changed.

Gig workers play an important role in the Manitoba economy, and we value the work that they do. Just recently, I had an Uber take me to a hockey game, and on the way there, we had a great conversation. I learned a little bit about the Uber industry itself, and the internal workings of how drivers get paid. And in that case, I learned a little bit about the driver himself. He told me that this gig, this driving gig, was not his full-time job; he did this as a part-time job to earn extra income to take home to his family.

I see on the daily where they get their meals delivered with SkipTheDishes. And we all have friends and family that do shopping online, grocery shopping, and in some cases getting it delivered right to our homes, or we go to the store and pick it up. 'Havering'—having delivery gig workers perform a variety of these roles allows folks to spend time elsewhere and set other priorities.

* (11:30)

For Canadian newcomers, the gig economy can fill the employment gap, and stats indicate that many landed immigrants make up the majority of rideshare and delivery service drivers. Gig opportunities allow folks job flexibility and it also allows businesses to take advantage of these independent workers or contractors while they're trying to hire in a very tight labour market.

We will continue to see innovative and creative ways that companies grow, utilising a variety of platforms and the gig economy is one where we can see it grow as the needs and demands of today's society changes.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It's always a pleasure to get up in this House to represent the fine people of the constituency of Transcona.

All of us are reminded that that's exactly what we're here to do, is represent our constituents and that's why when we sit here in this House, we are here to debate serious topics that have, you know, an impact on our daily lives, including this PMR brought forward by the member from Tyndall Park who is concerned about gig workers.

I would argue, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that some of the first gig workers appeared right at the beginning of when we moved into a capitalist system. I can tell you from my own personal history as a kid growing up on Ravelston Avenue West in Transcona,

had a paper route. I remember my district manager on my paper route. And this is like, delivering print media, all right? Some of the very first examples of a gig economy in the sense of we were our own freelance employer, and I employed my sisters along the route.

And we had a district manager. I remember in this scenario, the district manager was Nick. We picked up our papers on a corner of Hoka and Regent which was also the location of the André's general store. I can tell you the André family really liked it when we as gig workers showed up because we would go and buy a candy bar, usually before we hit the route, which was right after school. Talk about getting a job early in life. We were right there, right after school, picking up a chocolate bar, picking up our papers from Nick and getting them delivered.

But here's what the really important piece is: but we never had any real worker protection, either, because if I was sick, I had to make sure I had someone show up, Honourable Deputy Speaker, to deliver those papers because our customers relied on that service, much like gig workers right now, in this particular generation, are relying on them to show up too.

I remember having my Radio Flyer wagon and the wheels wore down because I did that route for a number of years, Honourable Deputy Speaker. But the biggest, most important thing that I think really has continued throughout this path of as we've gone through the economic shifts that were brought up by the member from Agassiz, was that you still had to have connection with your customer, you still had to collect the money from your papers, and you still had to hand over the money to the district manager because what was left over was left over for the paper boy. So if the paper person never got to every customer, you still had that bill to pay, so you were incentivized to make sure that you got to every customer. I remember doing that.

It's not a whole lot different than what happens right now with that person that's doing DoorDash, that's doing SkipTheDishes, and that's working for themselves in this gig economy. It's something that, as you can see, we reflect quite often on.

I can also say that there is a couple of—actually, these are Radisson constituents now, but grew up in Transcona. We have Peter Martin and Murray Rougeau, who just did a Transcona-themed podcast in this gig economy, and on this podcast, they're talking about their memories of growing up in Transcona.

I think, really, it's the same story that every member in this House has growing up in their own particular constituencies that they represent and how important it is to bring these stories. I can tell you right now, many students that are in school, even in high school right now, are experiencing the gig economy for the very first time and experiencing what it's like not to be valued, essentially because these workers are available to the agents that hire them, be it now using their bikes or scooters to deliver food, to deliver whatever is ordered by the particular customer.

What's important is that we build in, really, a definition of what is a gig worker right now. What does it mean to be a gig worker? As I began my comments, I reflected back, as soon as we introduced capitalism, gig workers have been around the whole time supporting the economy, supporting, really, and doing the jobs that many people really don't find particularly attractive. And oftentimes, these workers are the ones that are taken advantage of.

So it is important that we do build in some safety measures and some pieces where you can have some support if you're unable to do that work. It's really important that we ensure that workers have these rights built in. But it's really difficult to do in this economy now that's rapidly shifting and rapidly changing. I would argue these changes have occurred throughout. Right now, they just seem to be happening faster than we can actually bring forth some pieces that can support those workers.

I look forward to the partnership between the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) in bringing forward pieces of legislation that will answer what the needs of these particular workers are. I think we can see and we can say that as we begin to really want to call our own shots, I think that's what really attracts that—the typical gig workers, that they want the opportunity to call their own shots in the sense of when they work, how they work and when they're going to be available to do the tasks that many of us do on a daily basis.

And so, what's important to know is that even though they're handling their own finances, even though that they're filling in their own tax pieces, what's really important to remember is that there aren't the benefits associated that many of us take for granted.

I can tell you that Canada has been really at the forefront of ensuring that some of these rights of workers have been taken into account throughout our

history. Many of our social safety nets are a result of progressive governments that look to ensure protections for workers. I would hope that as the economy begins—continues to shift, that we continue to look after the welfare of the people that are doing the really important work.

I do recall, again, as I opened my remarks, being a young person, 11 years old, going out there hustling and doing the work. I think as people arrive in this country, they want to do the same thing. And typically gig workers are people that are new to Canada, don't know the ins and outs of what it is to participate in an economy, but do want to do one thing. They want to be contributing members of this society just like when my parents, when they decided to come here, Honourable Deputy Speaker, they came here for opportunity.

And I think what we have to do, it's incumbent upon governments in this House, people in this Chamber to ensure that we continue to provide the support for new people as they arrive to this country and that we do it in a way that uplifts their desire to contribute to what Canada and Manitoba have to offer everybody, not just its citizens but also people that want to be the citizens of this great land of ours.

The other piece that's important that I do want to bring up is that we need to get a real solid definition as to what a gig worker is. Are they self-employed or that—do they work for the company that they represent? That definition will have to be worked through.

* (11:40)

And we also have to see if we can build in other protections that ensure that they can continue on this path, even while trying to pursue their education, trying to pursue the purchase, maybe, of a home and making permanent roots in our area, here in Manitoba and our country of Canada.

So like I said earlier, I look forward to the partnership between our Minister of Economic Development and our Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) in bringing forth legislation that will look to protect the rights of these workers, Honourable Deputy Speaker. It's something that is important.

And I can tell you, we've all experienced the very great service of these gig workers. I can share you just a quick little story, as I begin to wrap up my comments: I was at Sub Zero, which I believe was in the constit of Elmwood, Jamison and Johnson, somewhere around there. On the weekend, you wouldn't

believe the lineup, Honourable Deputy Speaker, right down the sidewalk.

And who was going in all the time? It wasn't the member for Elmwood (MLA Maloway), it was all the gig workers, DoorDash, SkipTheDishes, picking up the stuff and making sure they were delivered, right here in—even Transcona people, Honourable Deputy Speaker, go to Elmwood.

And thank you for your time.

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): I want to thank the member, my colleague from Tyndall Park, for bringing this forward today because I think it's an important topic of discussion. It's something that, you know, we don't really talk about too often now. But primarily after the pandemic, gig work has really come into focus.

And both my colleague from Radisson and the Minister of Education have made some really good points.

Just on a personal note, I've also got my first taste of work life delivering paper. And it was pretty rough when you're young and, you know, I think it was the three of us: it was my friend who was a little bit older than us, he was I think 13, myself—I think I was maybe nine or 10 around the time—and then my little brother.

We went to go deliver papers. We had our little wagon behind us filled with newspapers and they used to give free samples back in those days. So you know, we'd sneak a few to pay ourselves. But that was gig work, right? And that's kind of what, you know, we made our—I don't even remember what the pay was at that time, but it was enough for us to go to the Safeway on Keewatin and buy a slushie. I can't remember the name of the spot there, but we loved it.

And that was enough for us in the summer, right? And it kind of taught us how to manage money, earn our own wages and do something with our spare time in the summer rather than just sitting around.

And so, the Minister of Education made a really good point: freelance work is not a new concept, right? Freelance work has existed for a very long time. And there's a lot of people who are engaged in freelance work as a way of really honing in their own creativity, right?

We look at the arts sector specifically. And there's a lot of folks who are engaged in freelance work and it allows them to provide a service to folks and be compensated for it, but have the freedom to do that work on their own time, on their own—you know, their

own schedules and even their own locations, right? I mean, talk about work from home now after the pandemic, and lot of freelancers were working from around the world, different corners of the world, previously.

But gig work in specific is something that I think is—you know, we've all interacted with it in some way, whether it's ordering from SkipTheDishes, DoorDash or taking an Uber. This is all gig work. And there's a lot of folks who are engaged in this work now.

I—there's a stat that my colleague from Radisson had brought up earlier and I think it's worth repeating, but something like 77 per cent of the folks who are engaged in gig work are people who are, you know, recent newcomers to Canada.

And you know, we see this every time we hop into an Uber. I always end up having pretty interesting conversations with Uber drivers about how they got to where they are and where they want to go into the future. You know, a lot of these folks don't want to be driving Uber forever, but it's a way to make ends meet.

But it is a little bit challenging to be doing gig because it is precarious. You don't have benefits. You know, and we are fortunate to be living in Canada where we have universal health care. Down in the States, that's not the case.

But here, you know, for example, dental care or vision care, you don't get those benefits, and so it's a challenge. But, nevertheless, these folks make time for it, and they are often sometimes students, as well, who drive—are engaged in this work and, you know, they make ends meet.

I have, you know, nieces and nephews who sometimes do SkipTheDishes too just to make fast cash, so, you know, and it really is that. It's fast, available work that lets you, you know, earn some sort of living in a short period of time.

But these stats here with 2005, 5.5 per cent of the total Canadian workers were gig workers, but 2020, really at the cusp or the start of the pandemic, we were looking at 10 per cent of the total population of Canadian workers were defined as gig workers, and by December 2023, just under 500,000 people, roughly 1.7 per cent of the Canadian population, were working through a digital platform or an app to provide a service, sell or advertise goods, for sale or rent out accommodations. This has really grown after the pandemic and have provided people a different avenue of, you know, using their skills to make money.

But I think it's important to note that, you know, what this also means on the other end. If you're a corporation like Uber, for example, this is great for you, right, because you've got these, quote, unquote, independent contractors who are working and earning a revenue for your corporation. You're not paying them benefits, right? And I remember at the time when we were having conversations about Uber coming to Winnipeg, there was a lot of excitement because it's, you know, it's something new. It's—often the phrase that gets used is it's a disruption. They're a disrupting force to the existing industry, and so the conversation at that time was, how do we balance this with the existing industry which was the taxi industry?

And, in my view, and I know a lot of the folks who were engaged in the taxi industry at the time, we went pretty fast without considering the impacts of what Uber would do to the existing market. The taxi industry—and I know my colleague from The Maples has a background in that; I have family who were involved in the taxi industry—a lot of those folks were really, really concerned about the impact the Uber would have on their licences, right? And I don't know how many folks in this Chamber know, but a taxi licence previously were hundreds of thousands of dollars, right? We're not talking about—

An Honourable Member: It's not chump change.

MLA Devgan: It's not chump change. Exactly. And the introduction of Uber into the landscape really upended that investment, right? Hundreds of thousands of dollars. These are small businesses on wheels.

And so the previous government moved pretty fast—too fast—in removing the taxi board in order to make way for Uber, and, you know, years later, here we are now: Uber has eaten into the taxi industry.

And you've created two, I would say, issues, if not three. The first issue is, this has had a devastating impact on those owner-operators who are still trying to recover that money. You've now introduced a whole new workforce who do not get benefits from Uber and who are contract workers.

And the third issue, which is a little bit annoying to me, is that we're sending a lot of money to Silicon Valley, right? Uber is not based out of Canada; it's an American company, right? It is. It provides—the people who drive for Uber are providing a fantastic service, you know? They're not in the wrong in this, but the way that this situation is structured is that the people who are benefiting from this are not, you

know, companies in Canada, and we've had a negative impact to the taxi industry.

So, you know, to the point of the resolution, I think this is a very important conversation because it's one that has not yet happened, right? Particularly after the pandemic, we've seen this industry, the gig economy, so to speak, the side hustle economy; it has grown exponentially. But it is still precarious work, and a lot of people who do a, quote unquote, side hustle, you know, probably don't want to be just doing a side hustle if their main hustle would be enough to cover their costs, put food on the table.

And so, when we talk about adequate benefits and adequate protections, you know, one of the things that I'm—you know, it is a direct connection, but extending the gas tax holiday is going to benefit those people who are just trying to earn money driving in an Uber. And I'm glad our government is extending that, and whatever tools are in our toolkit that we can use to help those folks who are in the gig economy, who are doing a side hustle, we're going to do that.

* (11:50)

But I also think it's important to have this conversation about how we can continue to support the gig economy. It is growing and it will continue to grow, but we need to make sure that we're protecting these workers.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to put some words on the record.

MLA Robert Loiseau (St. Boniface): C'est un honneur d'avoir la chance ce matin de partager mon point de vue au sujet des travailleurs à demande et de représenter les intérêts de Saint-Bonifaciens et des travailleurs du Manitoba.

Notre gouvernement néo-démocrate, l'honorable Député-Président, s'engage à créer plus d'emplois au Manitoba pour les Manitobains et les Manitobaines. L'honorable Premier ministre (M. Kinew) a été clair à plusieurs reprises au sujet de l'importance d'investir de façon stratégique dans l'économie manitobaine, puisque c'est le chariot économique qui tire les chariots des services sociaux et de notre province.

Au cours des sept dernières années, les conservateurs n'ont rien fait pour aider les familles des travailleurs à faire face à la hausse de l'inflation et face à la hausse de coûts de la vie. En fait, leur inaction a fait en sorte que le coût de la vie a augmenté au Manitoba.

Le gouvernement conservateur présidant a manqué à son devoir d'investir dans notre système de santé, dans nos écoles, au niveau de l'infrastructure, et a supprimé des protections des travailleurs, ce qui a rendu la vie des travailleurs plus difficiles au Manitoba.

Notre gouvernement, l'honorable Député-Président, travaille chaque jour à créer des emplois de haute qualité, mieux rémunérés et à réduire les coûts pour toutes les familles manitobaines. Il est donc évident que notre gouvernement travaille toujours de façon consistante envers un examen complet du Code des normes d'emplois en vue d'étendre les protections aux travailleurs qui ne correspondent pas nécessairement à la conception traditionnelle d'un employé, et de reconnaître que les travailleurs du Manitoba méritent des normes et des protections de base en matière d'emploi.

Notre priorité, l'honorable Député-Président, en tant que gouvernement néo-démocrate, englobe un engagement direct vers l'inégalité des chances et le traitement équitable de tous les travailleurs du Manitoba.

De nos lois à nos interactions avec les secteurs publics et privés, nous travaillons vers l'augmentation des salaires et les avantages sociaux de tous les travailleurs du Manitoba—qu'ils soient syndiqués ou non, qu'ils travaillent à quart, à temps partiel, qu'ils soient salariés, qu'ils soient contractuels, qu'ils fassent partie d'un groupe de travail ou non. Notre gouvernement, l'honorable Député-Président, reste à l'écoute de la nature changeante du travail au Manitoba et au Canada.

D'ailleurs, il était important de noter que le premier projet de loi que nous avons présenté au cours de la session de printemps est le projet de loi 7, qui permet aux entités publiques d'utiliser des accords de projets de travail qui créent des conditions égales pour les travailleurs syndiqués et non syndiqués garantissant des salaires justes et équitables et permettent de respecter les délais et le budget des projets.

Nous créons des conditions de travail égales dans cette province, et nous nous engageons à protéger tous les travailleurs syndiqués, non syndiqués, salariés, travailleurs postés, travailleurs à demande, contractuels et à temps partiel.

Nous nous sommes engagés à augmenter le salaire minimum au Manitoba dans le Budget 2024, ce qui contribue à faire augmenter les salaires dans l'économie du travail. Le 1^{er} octobre, nous augmenterons

le salaire minimum de 15,80 \$ de l'heure—ou à 15,80 \$ de l'heure.

Nous avons également réduit les taxes sur l'essence, ce qui permet aux gens d'économiser 14 cents par litre chaque fois qu'ils font le plein. Cela inclut l'argent des livreurs de nourriture et des chauffeurs de covoiturage qui doivent payer de leurs poches pour l'essence. Pour grand nombre de ces travailleurs, le prix de l'essence détermine leur salaire net à la fin de la journée.

Nous avons aussi, l'honorable Député-Président, déposé un projet de loi visant à rétablir le Conseil consultatif sur la sécurité et la santé au travail, qui conseillera le ministère du Travail et de l'Immigration sur les questions émergentes dans le domaine du travail.

Nous avons également déposé un projet de loi visant à prolonger la durée du congé en cas de blessure et de maladie grave, de 17 à 27 semaines, afin que les employés manitobains puissent bénéficier des soins et du repos dont ils ont besoin pour revenir au travail avec toute leur attention et leur dévouement.

Nous avons également, l'honorable Député-Président, augmenté le financement du ministère du Travail et de l'Immigration afin qu'il dispose des ressources nécessaires pour réagir à l'évolution des lieux de travail du Manitoba et pour trouver davantage d'emplois de qualité pour les Manitobains et les Manitobaines.

Nous créons également de nouveaux postes et des fonds de fonctionnement pour le ministère, afin de traiter les demandes d'immigration plus rapidement et d'offrir aux familles immigrantes un meilleur soutien.

Nous sommes conscients, l'honorable Député-Président, du fait que les travailleurs itinérants sont plus nombreux à avoir immigré au Canada, qu'ont été nés au Canada, parfois dans des proportions de 77 pourcent ou même plus élevé.

Notre gouvernement—

Translation

It is an honour to have the opportunity this morning to share my views on the subject of on-demand workers and to represent the interests of St. Boniface residents and Manitoba workers.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, our NDP government is committed to creating more jobs in Manitoba for Manitobans. The honourable Premier (Mr. Kinew) has been clear on several occasions about the

importance of investing strategically in Manitoba's economy, as it is the economic engine that pulls the carts of social services and our province.

Over the past seven years, the Conservatives have done nothing to help working families cope with rising inflation and the rising cost of living. In fact, their inaction has caused the cost of living to rise in Manitoba.

The presiding Conservative government has failed to invest in our health care system, our schools, our infrastructure, and has removed protections for workers, making life more difficult for working people in Manitoba.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, our government is working every day to create high-quality, better-paying jobs and reduce costs for all Manitoba families. So, it is clear that our government is still working steadfastly toward a comprehensive review of the Employment Standards Code to extend protections to workers who do not necessarily fit the traditional concept of employee, and to recognize that Manitoba workers deserve basic employment standards and protections.

Our priority as an NDP government includes a direct commitment to equal opportunity and fair treatment for all Manitoba workers.

From our legislation to our interactions with the public and private sectors, we are working to increase wages and benefits for all Manitoba workers—whether unionized or non-unionized, whether shift or part-time, whether salaried or contract, whether part of a work group or not. Our government remains attuned to the changing nature of work in Manitoba and Canada.

In fact, it was important to note that the first bill we introduced in the spring session was Bill 7, which allows public entities to use work project agreements that create equal conditions for unionized and non-unionized workers, guaranteeing fair and equitable wages and keeping projects on time and on budget.

We are creating a level playing field in this province, and we are committed to protecting all workers—union, non-union, salaried, shift, on-demand, contract and part-time.

We committed to increasing Manitoba's minimum wage in Budget 2024, which helps drive up wages in the labour economy. On October 1, we will raise the minimum wage to \$15.80 per hour.

We've also cut gas taxes, saving people 14 cents per litre every time they fill up. This includes savings for food delivery people and carpool drivers who have to pay for gas out of their own pockets. For many of these workers, the price of gas determines their take-home pay at the end of the day.

We also tabled a bill to re-establish the Advisory Council on Occupational Safety and Health, which will advise the department of Labour and Immigration on emerging labour issues.

We also introduced a bill to extend the duration of leave for serious injury or illness from 17 to 27 weeks, so that Manitoba employees can get the care and rest they need to return to work with full attention and dedication.

We have also increased funding for the department of Labour and Immigration to ensure it has the resources it needs to respond to Manitoba's changing

workplaces and to find more quality jobs for Manitobans.

We are also establishing new positions and operating funds for the department, to process immigration applications faster and to provide immigrant families with better support.

We recognize that more migrant workers have immigrated to Canada than were born in Canada, sometimes by as much as 77 per cent or more.

Our government—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have four minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

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