

Second Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Private Bills

Chairperson
Mrs. Colleen Mayer
Constituency of St. Vital

Vol. LXX No. 2 - 6 p.m., Tuesday, May 16, 2017

ISSN 0713-9489

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Point Douglas	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE BILLS**

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital)

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Hon. Steven Fletcher
(Assiniboia)**

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

*Hon. Messrs. Cullen, Fletcher, Gerrard,
Schuler, Hon. Ms. Squires*

*Mr. Ewasko, Mses. Fontaine, Lathlin,
Mr. Marcelino, Mrs. Mayer, Mr. Wharton*

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Bill 218–The Red Tape Reduction Day Act

*Mr. Jonathan Alward, Canadian Federation of
Independent Business*

*Bill 221–The Missing and Murdered Indigenous
Women and Girls Awareness Day Act*

*Ms. Sandra DeLaronde, Indigenous Women's
Leadership and Research Institute
Mr. Marcel Balfour, private citizen*

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

*Bill 221–The Missing and Murdered Indigenous
Women and Girls Awareness Day Act*

Kathy Bent, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 218–The Red Tape Reduction Day Act

*Bill 221–The Missing and Murdered Indigenous
Women and Girls Awareness Day Act*

* * *

Clerk Assistant (Mr. Andrea Signorelli): Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Private Bills please come to order.

I have before me the resignation of Mr. Wharton as Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Private Bills. Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a new Chairperson.

Are there any nominations for this position?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I nominate Ms. Mayer.

Clerk Assistant: Mrs. Mayer has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mrs. Mayer, will you please take the Chair.

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

Are there any nominations?

Mr. Ewasko: I nominate Mr. Fletcher.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Fletcher has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'm honoured.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Fletcher has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Fletcher is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 218, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act; Bill 221, The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day Act.

We have a small number of presenters registered to speak tonight and, as noted on the list of presenters before—and are listed on the noted—as noted on the list of presenters before you.

A written submission from Kathy Bent on Bill 221 has been received and distributed to the committee members. Does the committee agree to receive this document and have it appear in the Hansard transcript of this meeting? *[Agreed]*

Before we proceed with presentations, we do have a number of other items and points of information to consider.

First of all, if there is anyone else in the audience who would like to make a presentation this evening, please register with staff at the entrance of the room.

Also, for the information of all presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you are going to accompany your presentation with written material, we ask that you provide 20 copies. If you need help with photocopying, please ask our staff.

As well, in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members.

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

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process of speaking in committee. The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Every time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is the signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

Thank you for your patience. We will now proceed with public presentations.

Bill 218—The Red Tape Reduction Day Act

Madam Chairperson: Bill 218.

Mr. Jonathan Alward.

Mr. Jonathan Alward (Canadian Federation of Independent Business): I have copies for the committee.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Alward, you may proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Alward: Thank you and—excuse me—good evening, everyone. It's good to see some unfamiliar faces here for once.

On behalf of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, thank you for the opportunity to present the small-business perspective on Bill 218, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act. My name is

Jonathan Alward, for those of you who do not know, and I'm the Manitoba director of provincial affairs for CFIB.

And at CFIB, we're passionate about small business because of their massive contributions to our economy, employment and our communities. We believe that small businesses deserve a strong voice in government decisions.

CFE—excuse me—CFIB provides a reasonable, credible and effective way for businesses to participate in the political process, just like larger businesses and unions do. CFIB represents 109,000 independently owned and operated businesses across Canada, including 4,800 right here in Manitoba. We're strictly non-partisan, non-for-profit organization, and our members are located in every region of the province and in sectors that closely mirror the province's economy. Every CFIB policy decision is set by direct feedback from our members through accurate and regular surveys which operate under a one-member, one-vote system. Our views are strictly based on the results from these surveys, so it is therefore with great confidence that I can present here on behalf of our 4,800 members and express their strong support for Bill 218.

CFIB has been a leading voice for regulatory accountability for years, and we have been pleased to work co-operatively with the Manitoba government to help identify red-tape headaches facing entrepreneurs and develop the tools necessary to reframe how the government studies regulatory requirements, policies and their impacts.

CFIB members in Manitoba have cited government regulation and paper burden as one of their most concerning issues to their business. I was pleased to reiterate these concerns with members of government and opposition this past winter. Government regulation and paper burden is a significant concern to entrepreneurs because of their direct and indirect cost that it places on their businesses. CFIB estimates that the annual cost of all regulations in Canada businesses pegged at \$37 billion, with one third of that, approximately \$11 billion, considered to be unnecessary red tape. And, in Manitoba, all federal, provincial and municipal regulations cost businesses an estimated \$1.2 billion each year or roughly \$360 million of which is considered red tape.

* (18:10)

Furthermore, as you can see, this hidden tax affects small businesses much more than larger firms. Indeed, Manitoba small-business owners deal with a significant amount of red tape. They're tied up in everything from assessments, employment standards, PST and GST regulations, income tax filings, municipal bylaws, privacy rules, payroll taxes, WCB paperwork, and the list goes on and on and on. And in Manitoba, CFIB members cite that PST, WCB, workplace health and safety and employment standards as the most burdensome regulations in terms of how much time it costs business owners and their staff on compliance.

Consequentially, when surveyed, 68 per cent of Manitoba's small-business owners agreed that provincial limit-provincial red tape in Manitoba limits their ability to create jobs.

At CFIB, we're committed to meaningful solutions to reducing this hidden tax facing small businesses or red tape. Red tape, importantly, is not to be confused with necessary regulation. Small-business owners have no issue complying with common sense rules and policies that protect consumer safety, the environment and even their employees.

But red tape is something else. It's inconsistent information, confusing forms, bad customer service or getting the runaround. They lose hours on the phone with government agencies. They have to comply with confusing and often arbitrary rules, and they deal with unhelpful or even aggressive customer service agents on occasion.

It's not surprising, then, that we were pleased to join Deputy Premier Stefanson on January 23rd of this year for the government's announcement that Manitoba would become the first province to accept CFIB's one-for-one challenge. And, as you know, Manitoba government recently introduced Bill 22, which I was also pleased to speak on to help accomplish this goal and to establish the measurement tracking or reporting systems necessary to help minimize the regulatory burden facing Manitoba's small-business owners.

What Bill 218 does is provides additional essential help to ensure the successful delivery of Bill 22. Bill 218 will promote the awareness and feedback necessary to help continue identifying the many red-tape headaches facing small businesses in the province, and importantly, this tool has proven very effective in British Columbia.

Getting the government to cut through mountains of red tape can be a daunting task and that's why we like to show our appreciation to the government officials who recognize the importance of reducing unnecessary regulations for members.

So, every year, CFIB gives a Golden Scissors Award to the government official who did the most to cut red tape for their business that year. And during CFIB's 7th annual Red Tape Awareness Week last year—or, this year, sorry—CFIB presented the Golden Scissors Award to the BC government for their efforts to reduce red tape. And in 2015, as—and this is why it happened, BC became the first jurisdiction in North America to legislate an annual Red Tape Reduction Day dedicated to repealing outdated regulations and improving government customer services, as this bill promises to do as well.

BC's first one was held on March 2nd of last year, and the day produced real results with many examples the small business owners brought forward to CFIB and/or government being acted upon. These results included: the government introducing a permanent area on its website to submit red tape headaches, and I certainly encourage you all to look at that; it's a great addition to what this provincial government is already doing.

The government repealed 37 onerous pieces of legislation; over 215 regulatory requirements were removed, and now it only takes 15 minutes to apply online for a special-occasion licence to host parties or outdoor weddings, replacing an extensive amount of paperwork. This is an important one: transitioning military personnel and retired veterans. They no longer need additional testing to transfer their truck driving credentials to commercial licences. And another example was British Columbians can now get information and assistance to register to be an organ donor at any one of the 62 Service BC locations.

Clearly, improved red tape awareness for—through Bill 218 can provide a significant—positive impacts for the residents and businesses in Manitoba.

CFIB, therefore, encourages all elected officials and public servants to work together to ensure the successful implementation and delivery of Manitoba's Red Tape Reduction Day to ensure that we can identify as many red tape headaches as possible and common sense solutions that are needed to resolve them.

A successful red tape reduction day will undoubtedly help Manitoba's entrepreneurs focus more their time, energy and their money on growing their businesses and, in turn, Manitoba's provincial economy.

As the big voice for small business in Manitoba, CFIB will continue to be a strong advocate for reducing the unnecessary regulatory burdens facing entrepreneurs in the province, and we look forward to seeing Bill 218 receiving royal assent.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli): Just a comment—first of all, thank you very much, Mr. Alward, for your presentation. I can certainly understand some of the challenges that business, small and medium, have in our province. Being an entrepreneur and a business owner for the better part of 30 years, I can appreciate the challenges that we have as we continue to try to grow and obviously provide jobs for Manitobans as well in our businesses.

So, just on a note and again, a comment, I thank you very much for your presentation tonight, and I appreciate your comments. Thank you so much.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Well, thank you very much, Jonathan, and I read on page 5, the last paragraph, where you say, as the big voice for small business in Manitoba. And that you were for myself when I was in business, and you've done a lot of great work.

In fact, I just want to point committee to page 3 where we have that great chart, where 68 per cent of your members agree that red tape can limit my ability to create jobs. And then you go back to page 5, second last paragraph—I love this—we want to help Manitoba's entrepreneurs focus more of their time, energy and money on growing their businesses and, in turn, the provincial economy.

Again, I just—could you make it very clear for committee that your sense is, and the sense of small business, which is predominantly women entrepreneurs, that when they're spending time on red tape, they're not spending time on creating jobs. Would that be your argument?

Mr. Alward: What we've heard overwhelmingly, year after year, is that regulatory burdens in the province impede job growth, impede growth of businesses, so this is a necessary, very productive step to help identify those problems and certainly find solutions.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Yes, and thank you, Mr. Alward, for your presentation today. I appreciate the amount of time that you spent preparing this five-page presentation. Or is it five pages?

The question I have is very simple. There is—on page 2, the paragraph that starts with, indeed, Manitoba's small-business owners deal with significant amount of red tape.

And then it says, for example, they are tied up in everything from assessments, employment standards, PST, GST, regulations, income tax filings, municipal bylaws, privacy rules, payroll taxes, WCB paperwork. The list goes on and on.

And I want you to comment on—do you want all of this abolished?

Mr. Alward: Thank you for the question, and certainly as I've reiterated to Mr. Lindsey, I believe it was last week, when talking about Bill 22, and I've reiterated elsewhere in the paper, in no way is this to remove necessary regulations that help protect consumer safety, employee safety, the environment. This is about red-tape headaches which we've clearly identified are those unnecessary pieces of regulation to comply with. It's looking to do the necessary compliances in the most cost-effective way, the most time-effective way possible.

That's what business owners are looking for. They have no issue complying with necessary regulations.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I—my question relates to the choice of the day, the third Tuesday in September. There could have been many other days chosen; why is that a good day?

Mr. Alward: We're very pleased the government's brought forward a day to recognize this. Certainly, we think it makes sense in terms of getting the ideas to government to act on over the winter. I believe that makes a lot of sense. And as we've seen in British Columbia, a day around the same time has proven to be very, very effective, so if it's not broken, I don't think we need to fix it.

* (18:20)

Mr. Gerrard: In British Columbia, they chose a day in March, did they not?

Floor Comment: Correct.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Alward.

Mr. Alward: Sorry. I guess I would say that the flip side of the cycle, you're looking at providing enough time for government to be able to act, and I believe this is going to be able to accomplish that goal.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Alward.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

Bill 221—The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day Act

Madam Chairperson: I just would like to let committee know that we have a presenter, Mr. Marcel Balfour, who has just recently entered and would like to speak to Bill 221.

I will now call Bill 221, Sandra DeLaronde.

Ms. DeLaronde.

Ms. Sandra DeLaronde (Indigenous Women's Leadership and Research Institute): So I'd like to acknowledge and thank Ms. Nahanni Fontaine for introducing this bill as a private member's bill. I should say that my role here tonight is as the executive director of the Indigenous Women's Leadership and Research Institute, as well as I am co-chair of the Manitoba Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Coalition.

So we were encouraged that the bill had been introduced and received all-party support. We do have some concerns in that in some ways it entrenches the perception of the victimization of indigenous women into law.

I have to say as a woman raised in northern Manitoba that I have a very—still maintain a very strong kinship to the North and that I have, on my social media, many mothers of young daughters who are very afraid and state publicly that they are afraid that perhaps they will be the next missing and murdered indigenous girl in Manitoba.

So I worry that to entrench our victimization may not be the wisest action. If we recognize the strengths and the resilience and the courage of indigenous women and maybe call it the indigenous women's day of action act, or, you know, something that really recognizes those strengths.

We are concerned that with the inquiry, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, that we have not heard what Manitoba's participation will be.

We are also concerned that the federal government has transferred money to the Province of Manitoba for the family information liaison units and we understand that will be through the Department of Justice under Victim Services, but we do know that within the context of Victim Services that individuals whose family members go missing or whose cases are found by police agencies to not fall within the criteria of missing and murdered, that they cannot gain support from Victim Services, and this is an issue for many family members who feel that their cases have not been investigated properly. So we recommend, as an action, that the Province of Manitoba engage the community-based organizations that already have established relationships—trust relationships with family and in—families of indigenous murdered and missing women and girls and two-spirited people to engage those to deliver the services in order that families may be prepared for the inquiry when they decide to come to Manitoba.

We're concerned that a focus in a legal document that focuses on our grief and misery as indigenous women sends the wrong message. We would like to see this act backed up with action by government and receive all-party support for those things that have caused the victimization in the community; that is, the lack of economic security for indigenous women. So, we recommend a fund that addresses those economic issues for indigenous women be in—put in place. We recommend action such as a review of The Child and Family Services Act that entrenches indigenous cultural practices such as the family group conferencing process that allows families to move away from permanent guardianship and helps to bring families back together.

So those are my comments, and I—in the end, it's a bold act and gracious to the House for their all-party support, but, you know, would ask that you consider action. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Thank you very much,

Ms. DeLaronde, and on behalf of our caucus, I'd like to thank you for coming in to make your presentation, and I really do appreciate your feedback.

I think that I can speak for everyone around this table that no one would want to do anything that would further entrench or to entrench the victimization of our indigenous women and girls. And I thought a lot about that since this bill came to the floor of the Legislature. And I'm still giving it some deep reflection, but the thing that continuously comes to my mind is that there are some acts in—that have happened in this world that are so atrocious that we memorialize and we commit a day to honouring those who have been victimized and who have suffered. And, when this bill was first proposed in the Manitoba Legislature, I thought, if there was ever anything that happened to our Manitoba people in general that deserved and warranted a day to really reflect on the past egregious errors, it would be those offences committed to our indigenous women and girls. And I thought, because of the grave situation that many of our indigenous women and girls have endured, I thought that this act was appropriate, and having an awareness day, so that it would create and foster awareness amongst all the communities in the province of Manitoba about the plight, if you will, of many of our indigenous women and girls. It would be a day for all Manitobans to reflect on that, and I would hope that the spirit of this legislation would result in people reflecting on what they can do to change the circumstances.

* (18:30)

So I'd be really interested to hear a little bit more about your thoughts in terms of having the awareness act, as this legislation outlines it, if you—in what way do you think that it would further entrench the victimization of indigenous women and girls?

Ms. DeLaronde: Thank you for the question.

First of all, Manitoba is ground zero for missing and murdered indigenous women in that we are, you know, aware of the years of work that Ms. Fontaine has put into assisting and supporting those families in Manitoba and ensuring that this issue raised national scope.

What we are concerned about is the language; you know, we have to be able to change the discourse for women and girls, and we have to focus on the strengths that each indigenous woman, girl and child brings to this province. And, you know, if—and it also, I think, in terms of the government, and

receiving all-party support, I think, to back it up with action and resources that would support, beyond awareness, that would support change for indigenous women's—women and girls, particularly in the North.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Chair, would you canvass the committee and see if there'd be agreement to add 10 more minutes onto questions of the presenter to allow a more fulsome discussion?

There don't seem to be a lot of presenters tonight, and maybe we could take at least another 10 minutes. Would you see if there's leave?

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Schuler. That's not a point of order, but I will ask the committee if there is leave to allow for 10 more minutes for the presenter to answer questions? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Madam Chairperson: Ms. DeLaronde, did you want to continue, or—Mr. Gerrard.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Thank you, Ms. DeLaronde. I think what I hear you saying is that you'd prefer this to be a day of action instead of an awareness day. And, in other circumstances where we've had a day dedicated to a particular issue, sometimes there is within that action related to education and understanding. And what I would ask is if there was to be an educational component which came along with this bill, what would you have the focus of that educational component—would it be on trying to send a positive message about the strength of young women and girls? Or would it be a focus on the history of what has happened?

Ms. DeLaronde: So awareness and education, awareness through education and action—they can work hand in hand with one another. I think that there has been far too little done in terms of recognizing those strengths of indigenous women. And, certainly, that can be done through an education process.

What concerns me is that I hear young girls go—what they say about themselves, that they're afraid, you know, that they'll be the next one that's murdered or missing. And what concerns me is that there are systems in place that don't—that have not addressed the concerns of indigenous women and girls over the

past—the history of the country, why we continue to persist with this particular issue.

So, when young girls look at themselves and the focus is on human trafficking, is on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, they begin to not think well of themselves, and for lack of a better way of expressing it. It has an impact on their mental health and well-being because of the living in constant fear. It has an impact on how they believe society perceives them to be, as victims and less than. So, in terms of the awareness and education, I would strongly suggest that it be life-enhancing for indigenous women and girls and that there be services and programs in place that will help to raise the expectations of indigenous women and girls.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): It's not really a question, but more of a comment. I just wanted to acknowledge and congratulate your newest appointment to the coalition, Ms. Chantell Barker. She's from The Pas; we've known each other since grade 7. I just wanted to, you know, share that she'll be a great asset to your—to the coalition. She helped start the CAP program, which basically, in terms of education—educating, when she was a probation officer, our inmates about the residential schools and its effects in order to help them understand they're not bad people. There's a reason why, there's a foundation why we're here, and so with that knowledge she'll be truly a great asset to the coalition. So I just wanted to thank you for coming here today.

Madam Chairperson: Ms. Fontaine—[interjection]

Oh, Ms. DeLaronde.

Ms. DeLaronde: Sorry, I would just want to say that Ms. Barker has contributed greatly in the short time that she has been with the coalition. Thank you.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So, miigwech, Sandra, for coming to present.

So, you know, absolutely, I completely agree with what you're saying in respect of situating indigenous women as victims. My thing with the bill was that I was trying to—for several years, actually, there's been requests from families to have a day recognizing their loved ones, right. So that—and I know, Sandra, that you know this, right, so that families are feeling that their loved ones aren't forgotten and that they're recognized and that they're still—I mean, and that's some of the work that we did with the monument and the mural and all of that. So, for a couple of years, families have been asking for

an official day recognizing missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

So it's a balancing act, right, and so my commitment was to try and ensure that families had an opportunity and an official day that recognized their loved ones. I will tell you, just for logistics, is that I had originally wanted the title to be called—and there was a little bit of, like, rules. So, originally, I had wanted it to be called the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls honouring day act, so that it also—it honoured them. So I missed some of the deadlines or there was some confusion, I can't remember; my staff would know that.

So, I mean, I'm open to looking at—and I know that one of my colleagues has already indicated that he would support a change to the title. However, I do want to put on the record that it was families that asked for a day that specifically is in respect of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. So, I mean, I'm good to look at—and I don't know what the procedure is here, in respect of, you know, if—and I'm not sure what we would—how we would maybe end, you know, the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, you know, honouring day. Origin—we had talked about honouring, recognition. My colleague over here is talking about empowerment day, but empowerment is a little bit different than what we're trying to do in respect of the bill, and again, it is simply to give families that recognition of their loved one. So—[interjection]

*(18:40)

Madam Chairperson: Ms. DeLaronde.

Ms. DeLaronde: Sorry, Madam Chair. That's important, to give that recognition, but it can't stop there, right. It needs to go beyond that. Maybe they are two separate issues, but I really think that part 2 is where we go, and how do we support the equalization of indigenous women and girls in this province.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I'd sincerely like to thank you, Ms. DeLaronde, for coming out today and practising that our—throughout our democratic process. And so you've been with the indigenous women leadership and resource institute; I'm not sure how long, but are you saying that you have not—you did not have a chance to consult on this bill or to run it by the institute as far as where this bill could potentially go in order to declare an awareness day?

Ms. DeLaronde: I'm not sure of what you're asking.

Mr. Ewasko: So was the institute consulted on The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day Act?

Ms. DeLaronde: No.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

I will now call on—oh, sorry—the time has expired. Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call on Marcel Balfour.

Do you have any written material for distribution to the committee, Mr. Balfour?

Mr. Marcel Balfour (Private Citizen): Only on my iPhone.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Balfour: Awesome, thank you.

Thank you very much for allowing me to be here. And my notes are not very good, so I don't have much fun writing, anyway—excuse me.

So I'm just here as a private citizen. I support a lot of the comments that Sandra had said with respect to the bill. And one of the main points that I wanted to bring across was focusing on honouring. So I'm glad to hear that the attempt, or there might be an attempt, to maybe amend your bill to focus on that component.

First Nations, the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls coalition, which includes a number of service providers, families and others, had worked on something called Families First, which was a report that attempted to deal with Manitoba's then refusal to call a provincial inquiry and focus on a national inquiry instead. And what came out of that, among other things, was, we'll just do it ourselves, from an indigenous perspective, we'll use our own laws and we'll just do it ourselves if Canada doesn't want to do it and if the NDP government doesn't want to do it either.

Things have changed since then, which is a good thing. And there is a national inquiry. But one of the outcomes that came out of the report was making sure that we do honour our loved ones that have gone, passed and also that are missing. And so I'm glad to hear—or I'm hopeful that you'll consider amending your bill to be able to not only be an awareness act, whatever that means, but actually have some honouring component to it. That would be

consistent with the Families First approach, and would be welcome, from my perspective.

But I also agree, though, that there should be a lot more, especially with the inquiry and a number of things that are happening, both in the media—social media and whatever's happening with the inquiry. I think that you have an excellent opportunity to be able to strengthen your bill, to be able to honour loved ones, to create awareness and give some firm commitments from the Province of Manitoba, especially since you've got the three-party consent or agreement to the bill, that since you guys are all in agreement on this, go one step further and actually do something that is a little bit more well-meaning and gives effect to immediate actions.

Some of the immediate actions that were identified in Families First identified some immediate supports that could be provided to First Nations, both in the city here, but also in the North.

There was also identification of going forward and including First Nation representation and a representation from the Families First Foundation on the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee. It was suggested to create an office for young women and men who have been victims of domestic violence, where they can go and call, as well as reinforce supports and services available, including but not limited to protection order designates. There's also been, over the years, a number of requests and calls for a 24-7 safe spaces for people. There's also been identified a number of other supports for families to assist with searches, funeral costs, and other costs associated with the care for children of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Providing financial supports and supports for the establishment of the northern conference or workshop for commitment for education and awareness, whatever that means, because you do have a number of provincial resources that could potentially make sure that there is a good education awareness or honouring program that's funded to be able to give effect to the words that are on the bill.

As well, in Families First, there was an identification of the need for looking at interconnected systems, that there's not only intergenerational effects of racism and assimilation and colonialism, but there's a number of things that could potentially take a look at in terms of the relationship between the justice system and the child and family services, or, as I call it, the child apprehension system. And I think that there's a

couple of innovative things that you could take with this bill to bring it one step further. I'm not sure how that would do, but I would be more than willing to participate in further discussion on that.

Like Sandra, I wasn't aware of this bill. I just saw it in the Metro news, which I don't usually see—read the Metro news, but I saw it online and so I quickly came here after the gym this afternoon.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Balfour.

Ms. Squires: Well, I want to thank you very much for coming to present to committee this evening, and I really do appreciate your perspectives and sharing with us your viewpoints. And I certainly will look to the leadership of this bill's sponsor, the MLA for St. Johns, who brought this bill forward, in terms of, you know, some possible amendments.

But what I would like to say is that there are so many other cultures in our society that do have a day set aside for recognition and reflection of the atrocities that that culture has endured. And those days are days that we come together, all aspects of society come together, and learn from the history that is behind us and learn from the mistakes that had happened to those—that cultural group. That awareness day is, like I said, many other cultures have a day set aside for that reflection. And, when I saw this bill, I had recognized the spirit of this bill as setting aside October 4th as that day when we could all come together as a society.

Manitoba, as we all know, has a very large indigenous population, and I think that it is incumbent upon Manitoba to show some leadership. And I do appreciate the leadership of this very issue from the members around the table, particularly the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) and the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin).

And I thought that the October 4th date could be a good launch pad, if you will, to always bring forward, it wouldn't be, this wouldn't be the end, but this would be the beginning of that journey towards healing and recognition.

So I'm still, again, reflecting on the comments and again looking to the leadership around the table for some guidance, but I really do appreciate your comments. So thank you for coming here, and on behalf of our caucus, I appreciate you coming here.

* (18:50)

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for being here and for presenting and suggesting a series of action steps. One of the potentially interesting things that could be done in terms of action is, when there is the completed report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, that this could be a day of action to work towards the fulfillment of the recommendations of that report.

Mr. Balfour: One of the things I was thinking is—perhaps you're correct—is that maybe this bill is a little premature, that maybe that day should be the day of the release of the report—of the national inquiry's report, which then gives it—giving effect to it.

There's a number of things, though, that can be done right now. There needs to be political will as stuff that's already been identified that will be, again, regurgitated yet again in terms of various recommendations of other reports as well. So I think wherever the day lands is irrelevant. I think it's actually the actions that go with it that I think are more important.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Yes, and thank you for your presentation, sir. I am an immigrant, and I use the present tense, I am, and I never say, I was, because I will always be an immigrant who was welcomed into this country. And I always thank my indigenous friends for allowing me to stay in their land. And I think that's part of how I treat myself not only as a guest, but as an honoured guest.

Now, we—your comment about the call to action instead of just an awareness, I would say that we learn from the mistakes of history. History usually teaches lessons, lessons that tell us that we are imperfect, our cruelty, meaning the human cruelty against one another, knows no bounds, and one result is this: missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. And I'm quite aware of the effects. I could see it in Weston and Brooklands, Tyndall Park, indigenous families suffering, and it's one of the reasons why I ran for political office. I thought I could affect change and, well, only history will judge me if I was effective or not.

And this bill is a good start—I would daresay that—and a very positive first step towards our common goal of lifting each other up. I would want you to believe that, please.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. The time has expired.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

Are there any other persons in attendance who wish to make a presentation?

Seeing none, that concludes public presentations.

* * *

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

Mr. Schuler: Seeing as we already have the—Ms. Fontaine sitting in the chair for Bill 221, may I recommend we start with 221 and then go to 218?

Madam Chair, may I recommend we revert back to Bill 218 and do line by line with 218, and then come back to Bill 221? Would you seek leave?

Madam Chairperson: Agreed? All in agreement?
[Agreed]

Bill 218—The Red Tape Reduction Day Act (Continued)

Madam Chairperson: Does the bill sponsor, the honourable member for Gimli, have an opening statement?

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli): I do. Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to be back in the chair again to talk about Bill 218, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act, and thank you again. I'm very pleased and happy to be here tonight—this evening to talk about Red Tape Reduction Day Act, which will designate the third Tuesday in September as Red Tape Reduction Day.

In Manitoba, businesses spend \$1.2 billion a year complying with federal, provincial and municipal rules and regulations. We expect that about \$360 million or approximately 30 per cent of that is spent on complying with red tape.

Businesses, municipalities and not-for-profit groups find themselves equally hamstrung by red tape. Every Manitoban should be concerned about red tape. It affects our competitiveness as a province and our government's ability to deliver effective public services at a reasonable cost.

Even if you are lucky enough not to encounter red tape in your life, you still will pay for it indirectly, because it costs—costs to government have to be paid from either a tax revenue course or costs for business and end up being passed on to customers.

Red Tape Reduction Day will serve as an annual reminder for governments to work on reducing this burden. It will serve as an occasion for Manitobans to communicate their red tape concerns to their elected officials.

Our hope is that it'll bring further awareness of the issues and highlight the progress that has been made in streamlining procedures for Manitoba's business, not-for-profits and municipalities.

Madam Chair, there's also been a misunderstanding about what red tape reduction means for environmental protections and work safety in this province. So, in the interest of bringing some context into the discussion that we'll be having today, it is important to understand that—what is meant by red tape reduction.

* (19:00)

Red tape refers to the regulations that are out of date, conflicting or redundant. We also should be able to get behind an effort to eliminate regulatory requirements that create confusion, that are difficult or impossible to comply with, that cause unnecessary costs and have no positive impact for Manitobans.

I know during my business career and my elected career over the last year—a little over a year ago, I have heard of many examples of regulations that have not been updated for decades such as—and just an example—different departments giving inconsistent advice to businesses, of technical standards that haven't been updated to reflect technological changes, and so on.

Anybody who's ever run into—run a business—and for myself, as well, I can appreciate the challenges—or not-for-profit, as well, or being involved with municipalities, which I can relate to, being an elected official in the late '90s for my town of Winnipeg Beach, we've all encountered these problems with outdated red tape for—front and centre. Some of the issues are 40 and 50 years old, so they definitely need to be addressed and, quite frankly, I look forward to celebrating—and Manitobans look forward to celebrating—Red Tape Reduction Day next September and every year after. And, certainly, I hope to be able to make real progress on red tape reduction going forward.

And, Madam Chair, I'll leave it at that, and I look forward to our discussions.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the member.

Do—does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 218?

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Chair, the bill is as simple as it gets. It's just the designation of the third Tuesday of September of each and every year as Red Tape Reduction Day.

It is a celebration of some sort, and I understand the ideology behind it which is to reduce government intervention in almost all business activities. I know that, say, free-enterprise approach to the market, and I believe somewhat that it is not really that bad, but there has to be a check and balance in everything that happens, especially in the lives of those in business and for their customers.

Now, government is the only one that can impose those rules about checks and balances, but there has to be a check and the balancing act has to be done by also government. And there will be rules and there are common goals that are usefully enunciated and proclaimed whenever a law or a rule is imposed or rejected or cancelled or amended or repealed.

The—this is a simple case of designating a day, and I guess I can go along with it.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Marcelino.

Clauses 1 through 3—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Is there leave of committee to recess for 10 minutes to allow for drafting of an amendment?
[Agreed]

We are recessed for 10 minutes.

The committee recessed at 7:05 p.m.

The committee resumed at 7:14 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: Committee back—will come back to order, please.

Bill 221—The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day Act
(Continued)

Madam Chairperson: Does the bill sponsor, the honourable member for St. Johns, have an opening statement on Bill 221?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So, again, I just want to say again, I cannot reiterate how grateful I

am that everybody supported this bill. As I say, I—as I stated just a little while ago—actually, it was a couple of years that family members have been asking for an official day, and I think I had said it in the House, and I guess that would be several years back when there was discussion on the February date that we were going to be looking at. And I remember that that was actually one of the first times that a family member had said, do you know what, it would be really nice if this day would be in honour of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

So it's been several years that family members have wanted an official day. And I recognize our presenters; I recognize it's a very fine line between situating and entrenching indigenous women only as victims, and, you know, juxtaposing that to what families want in respect of something that is tangible that they can feel and they can see, that honours their loved ones.

And if you talk with families, you know, what a lot of families will tell you is that, you know, my daughter, like, she was here. She lived here. I gave birth to her, and she's gone. Like, we have no sense of justice. And so, you know, this bill goes to, tangibly, as Manitobans, giving something in recognition of their loved ones, you know, be it their daughters or their moms, that they were here; that they are Manitoba citizens and that we value them and that we love them.

So, you know, I do want to just reflect on—a little bit about—again, it's a very fine line of trying to kind of 'navigate' between all of these different positions in respect of indigenous women. And a lot of the work that I do when I'm asked to come and speak on MMIWG, I actually always—situated in respect of, you know, the strength of indigenous families and indigenous women in general and how, as indigenous women, we come from this long line of ancestry of indigenous women who, if it weren't for our great-grandmothers and our grandmothers and our mothers, we wouldn't be here. We weren't meant to be here.

So I just want to say again how so, so grateful I am to everybody, and I'm so grateful to everybody that's here tonight that is agreeing to support this bill, and it means a lot to me, and I say miigwech to each and every one of you.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 221?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I'm just very happy to provide a few brief comments once again on Bill 221. Very pleased to support this bill and the amendments to entrench an awareness day act into the Manitoba culture. I think of many families who would be going through the loss of a daughter, a sister, a cousin, a loved one, a neighbour, especially when there's no closure. I think that, for those families, they deserve to have a day set aside that could possibly bring them some solace and some peace.

And it would be very different—a different mood of the day if it were just specifically a call to action, which I do agree with the presenters that we do need to continuously have calls to action, but I do see that as a separate issue. I see this as being a day in which the affected families could come together and mourn together, to grieve together and to grow and heal together, and I think that's what awareness days are all about. We celebrate—or we have memorials for many, many different cultures that have had atrocities committed unto them, and it's a day when the entire community can come out and support them and be there with them and say, we're here for you, and we understand we don't know what you're going through because we haven't experienced ourselves, but we just want to stand with you for a moment in solidarity to help you through your healing journey.

And I really believe that the spirit of this legislation hits those—the—you know, it hits that mark, and I do believe that it will be an opportunity the families to come together and to know that they are not alone, that they do have their communities behind them. So, I'm, again, very pleased to say a few words in support of this bill.

* (19:20)

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Again, I just want to put a few words in support of this bill and just to show how I can—share, I should say, how I can elaborate with Ms. DeLaronde's comments about young women afraid, are they next? Is their sister next? Is their mother next?

Again, though, I'm not—I'm confident in sharing that—you know, my personal story of my younger sister is right now leading a high-risk lifestyle in the West End of Winnipeg. I only have sightings of her through my older brother, and because of that high-risk lifestyle, I'm raising her three daughters. So let's just say when I read the newspaper or watch the news and they find the next victim, I was thinking, is

that my sister? What am I going to explain to her daughters?

So I just want to thank everyone for supporting this bill, because I agree with everyone here that it will provide solidarity. It will provide some—a connection to the importance to their missing sisters or murdered sisters, and at least there's something here that we know, we care, and we're going to honour. So, again, just thank you—just, with those words of honour—I mean, on record. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the member.

Clauses 1 through 3—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass.

Shall the title pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm asking leave—[*interjection*] No, I'm not? [*interjection*] Okay, sorry.

I move

THAT the title of the Bill be amended by adding "HONOURING AND" before "AWARENESS".

Madam Chairperson: The amendment is out of order. In 'accordint'—accordance with O'Brien and Bosc, page 770, the title "may be amended only if the bill has been so altered as to necessitate such an amendment."

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): The committee has listened to many presenters, and we've listened to members of the committee, and we would ask if you would canvass the committee to see if there was leave to accept this amendment.

Madam Chairperson: Is there leave to access—accept the amendment? [*Agreed*]

It has been moved by Ms. Fontaine

THAT the title of the Bill be amended by adding "HONOURING AND" before "AWARENESS".

The floor is open for questions.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): In the—congratulations to the presenter. And, as deputy chair of this committee, I want to make sure that, U in the title of honour has U in it, as in the letter: h-o-n-o-u-r-i-n-g.

Madam Chairperson: Yes.

Ms. Squires: I would just like to say that on behalf of our caucus, we do support these—the changes to the title.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to also add that I support this change.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Chairperson: Amendment—pass; title as amended—pass. Bill as amended be reported.

The hour being 7—the hour being—*[interjection]* Oh, sorry, Mr. Schuler—*[interjection]* Oh, the hour being 7:24, what is the will of the committee?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Chair, I would just like to put on the record, on behalf of the committee, that it is most unfortunate that the gallery isn't full of media to come and see how we work in this Chamber. We don't always agree, and there are a lot of things we do agree on, and not just do we agree on a piece of legislation, but we also can agree to amend a piece of legislation. This is the right thing to do. Both pieces of legislation went through unanimously, and it's very unfortunate that the media gallery is empty, because this shows what legislators can do when they want to get together and do positive things. Again, there is a time and a place where we agree—and there is that time, this is not one of those times—this is a time when we get together and agree on things and we listened to presenters and we reacted to presenters, and I'd like to thank the committee and those who led both of these bills for having done great work. This is one of these high moments where we will reflect on as, when we're no longer here, as one of those real positive moments in our careers. Thank you to the committee.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 7:26, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Madam Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 7:26 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Re: Bill 221

Dear Committee Members,

Please consider my submission found below, that consists of my stance on proposed Bill # 221 as put forth by honorable member Nahanni Fontaine. The speed at which this bill was proposed and then reported to the public was short therefore I regret I did not have the time to go into as deep and thorough of analysis of the situation as I wanted to. Overall, it is my learned opinion that new narratives and discourses that move away from placing Indigenous women and girls specifically, and Indigenous populations in general, in victim positions are badly needed. This opinion has provided the framework in which I based my attached submission on.

Please contact me if you require more information. I can be reached at the numbers listed below my complimentary closing.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy M. Bent

Committee Submission on Bill # 221

Indigenous specific population counts from the most recent census were not yet available at the writing of this submission however, according to the 2011 census, there were over 1.4 million Indigenous people living on the land we now call Canada with the majority of them living in the four western provinces (over 58%). Out of that population, 851,560 identified as being First Nation, 451,795 as Metis, 59,445 Inuit and the small remainder reported to be other Indigenous identities such as non-Status. It is anticipating that all of these numbers will increase by at least 20% once the 2016 census is tabulated if the growth trend reported on in the 2011 census continues. Supporting this claim, from 2006 2011 the First Nations population grew by 23%, Metis by 16%, and the Inuit population rose by 18%, all significant growth amounts.

In Manitoba only 195,900 people reported Indigenous ancestry and out of that group, 114,225 people identified as being First Nations with 57.9% of them living on reserve and 42.1% reported living off reserve, mostly in large urban centers such as Winnipeg, Brandon, and Thompson. In addition to the growth trend, these latest statistics also showed

that a majority of the First Nation population in Canada was considerable younger than the non-Indigenous population with the youngest First Nations people living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba where the median ages were reported as 20-21 years respectively. These median ages represent half the median age of the non-Indigenous population of these two provinces (Statistics Canada, 2011). With such a rapidly growing and young Indigenous population, it is imperative that serious considerations be given to Indigenous child and youth developmental needs when forming governance policies and practices.

With that in mind, statistics that show the exact numbers of Missing and Murdered Canadian Indigenous women and Girls (MMIWG) are not available. In 2010, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), reported that they had data on 582 known cases of MMIWG. However, in a recent CBC report (2016), Patty Hajdu, Canada's Minister for the Status of Women, stated that according to the NWAC, 4000 is more likely the correct figure even though the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) data indicate 1200 women fall into the category of missing and murdered. Regardless of these figures, in Manitoba there are approximately 100,000 Indigenous females living in the province and the situation is dire for all of them but especially for the at risk women and girls whose poor living conditions pre dispose them to dangerous situations that increase their chances of being murdered and/or going missing.

The factors underlying and contributing to the problem of MMIWG in Manitoba and Canada can be traced to elements of colonization that seriously weakened pre-colonial cultural beliefs, values and traditions that formed the base for cultural identity development. Cultural identity consists of three main components/concepts; self identification, feelings of belonging and cultural participation. Research indicates that cultural identity is significantly and positively correlated with all measureable and positive social, political, economic, psychological and spiritual outcomes. That is, as cultural identity rises in strength, as measured by the three aforementioned concepts when operational defined, so do all positive outcomes as marked by self-esteem measures, and income and educational attainment records to name just a few outcomes used to date. For healthy self development, an individual has to self-identify with their culture of origin across the social, mental, emotional, physical and spiritual

plains in a positive manner thus forming good self-perceptions of self. Regarding the latter, (positive expression of cultural identity), an individual's level of cultural identity is measured by their self-esteem in relation to identification with their culture of origin (COE). An individual with good cultural identity also has to develop and maintain feelings of belonging to their COE. This task is accomplished via participating in traditional cultural events and activities. It is not enough for an individual to self identify and assert their cultural and self identity as they must also participate and live within the cultural environment they espouse to, in terms of that culture's systems of beliefs, values and so on.

The environment in Winnipeg specifically, and Manitoba in general, is relatively poor in relation to providing a positive atmosphere for Aboriginal children, youth, young people to 30 years of age, and all aged people really, to develop a good cultural identity even though rapid social and political changes have, and continue to contribute to vast improvements in this area. Research indicates that colonial legacies related to elements of colonization, have already tainted Indigenous self and cultural perceptions in their own eyes and the eyes of the non-Indigenous population, with the latter problem having led to the creation of systemic and overt racism and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls that still seems to prevail given media reports and some academic literature. The problem of negative Indigenous self-perceptions would be exasperated by drawing attention to the frailties of the environment, Indigenous women, girls, people, their families and communities via passing Bill # 221 - The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day Act. If this Bill passes, not only will Indigenous women and girls have to continue to deal with systemic and overt racism and discrimination that is continually and almost daily perpetuated and put forth in the environment by media sensationalism and other political and organizational streams, they would also have to come to terms with processing more negative fodder to inform their self perceptions. All this negativity increases any cultural shame and embarrassment that would likely arise from having a specific day to recall the devastating problem of MMIWG that reflects on all Indigenous people either indirectly or directly when in reality, MMIWG cases only affect a small proportion of the Indigenous population, even though proportionally speaking, Indigenous women are over-representing in this group.

The idea of raising awareness of the problem of MMIWG and Indigenous family violence is excellent when taking into consideration contextual variables such as those related to the environmental, biological, political and spiritual complexities linked to child and youth development trajectories. Bills passed to designate specific days to certain causes go a long way in raising awareness however, when the Bills being proposed are cultural specific as this bill is, the pro and cons must be weighed diligently and wisely.

As an Aboriginal women's health and wellness expert who has specialized child and adolescent development education and training and who has studied and worked in the Indigenous community for over 20 years, it is my conclusion that overall, if this bill is passed, it will indeed provide another avenue in which to raise awareness of the MMIWG issue, which is not applicable to all Indigenous women and girls as the majority of the Indigenous population is overall healthy and only indirectly affected by this issue. However, this task would be accomplished at the expense of creating an environment in which Indigenous children, youth and young people must live in, that primarily focuses on negativities rather than the strengths and spiritual richness present in all Indigenous cultures.

Bibliography

Statistics Canada. (2017). About the data, census profile, 2016 census: Incompletely enumerated

Indian reserves and Indian settlements. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/about-apropos/about-apropos.cfm?Lang=E#aa2>

Statistics Canada. (2011). Aboriginal peoples in Canada: First Nations people, Metis and Inuit. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/about-apropos/about-apropos.cfm?Lang=E#aa2>

Tasker, J. (2016). CBC News. Confusion reigns over number of missing, murdered indigenous women. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mmiw-4000-hajdu-1.3450237>

CORRIGENDUM

On April 12, 2017, page 13, first column, third paragraph, should have read:

So I do want to thank all of our stakeholders and especially Sergeant Antoniuk, and Sergeant Bessason who is here as well, as well as Tara Reimer and Jody Kuik. You've been a great help throughout this process, and I look forward to celebrating May 20th every year and, hopefully, we can arrange some really exciting events moving forward. So, thank you again for your information, for the feedback I've received tonight, and I look forward to future interactions with all of you.

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>