

Third Session – Forty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Piwniuk): 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 in which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Please be seated.

Good morning, everyone.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Deputy Government House Leader): I call for debate Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Deputy Government House Leader—acting government House leader, that Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act, will be put forward.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 226—The Red Tape Reduction Day Act

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): I move, seconded by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) that the—that Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We're going to have to redo it because the member from Brandon East wasn't on the—online. So, if I get the honourable member for McPhillips to do it all over again. Oh, he's online now, so you can do it all over again—if the member from McPhillips can repeat what he just introduced.

Mr. Martin: Then, on behalf of my colleague for Brandon East, I apologize, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon East, that Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Martin: It is always a pleasure to rise in the House, even if it is virtually, but to participate in democracy.

I think it's incumbent upon all of us during this time of COVID, now that we're hitting the—about the 14th, 15th month of this pandemic, that we are now seeing the light at the end of the tunnel with AstraZeneca being offered to people 40-plus. We're seeing on social media everywhere people getting that shot. But as a reminder that we all need to follow those fundamentals to stay safe, wash our hands, wear a mask, follow distancing protocols and, obviously, get the vaccine.

But that being said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act signifies and makes the third Tuesday in September of each year as red tape reduction day.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear at the outset, when we're talking about red tape, here, we are not talking about health regulations, we are not talking about the safety of children. I think we need to look at this in a very reasonable manner. I do believe that our government has looked at this at a—reasonable manner.

I think, in a lot of instances, I don't believe that we, as elected officials, are fully aware of the reality that regulation or over-regulation, or even in some cases under-regulation, can serve and can and impact the population.

A good example was in last night's standing committee. One of the pieces of legislation we are bringing forward that—and one component of the legislation actually equalized the electrical code for Manitoba and Winnipeg. I did not realize that there is a separate electrical code for those two jurisdictions which exist within our own province. So it's amazing that, here we are in 2021, and even within our own borders we still don't have a single electrical code

for members of that industry to follow. So they actually have to learn two codes and any subtle differences between those. But again, knock on wood, with the support of the opposition, we will ensure that is corrected.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the good fortune of—in a—in one of my previous lives, worked for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. We heard consistently from small- and medium-sized businesses the impact that regulation has on them. It is estimated that the impact on the provincial economy is well over \$1 billion. Again, these are not my numbers, these are numbers being shared by various organizations, and I'll take them and their research at their word. But regardless of that, there is no denial that Manitobans—businesses and individuals—are and can be heavy—heavily regulated.

So, whether we're talking about the individual who simply wants to deal with government in a quick and efficient manner, whether we're talking about a new business setting up shop or whether we're talking about a government staff person, civil servant, trying to navigate the ins and outs of their own system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is an opportunity that all of us can collectively say, there are issues within the rules and we need to take action to mitigate and to minimize those rules.

Or, you know what, in a lot of instances it's a matter of correcting the rules or regulations. And in some instances it's a matter of the regulations simply not keeping pace with the times that we live in.

*(10:10)

Not surprisingly, technology moves at such a breakneck speed that we actually still have references to fax machines and their use and, in some instances, requirements that contracts to government be faxed. I'm sure if you went and talked to any young person and asked them what they thought a fax machine was, I think most of them would look at you—look at you with bemusement, to say the least.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think as legislatures we need to have a look and understand that there is a role for all of us, that this is not an opportunity for over-the-top rhetoric. This is not an opportunity for gotcha politics, in that what we're trying to do and what I'm trying to do as a private member is simply say to this government, and to say future governments, that the recognition that red tape exists and needs to be constantly looked at is a worthwhile cause.

I only think of the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) last night in standing committee, whom honestly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've never seen the member for Concordia speak with such a fervent passion as he did last night when he was talking about regulation and over-regulation. And I could see that burning within him, that desire to, you know, let's take action together. And so it is my hope that the passion that the member for Concordia brought last night to committee did not wane over the last several hours since committee rose last night.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the key components that I'm quite proud that our government came in and has utilized, and is currently utilizing, is making use of our civil servant staff, who are in the best position to understand how the regulatory requirement works within their own jurisdictions and within their own departments. Because we, as legislatures, we're—whether as government or as private members through such business as private members' business—are constantly bringing forward new regulations and new rules.

So the idea that one comes in and one is removed off the books is an idea that has been borrowed from the British Columbia government, that's currently in use by the New Democratic Party there. So as you can see, this—the idea of a government taking responsibility for its rules and regulations is not a party issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a good government.

I don't want to overplay or overstate this. I'm not suggesting that somehow passage of this act and this recognition of a red tape reduction day is somehow going to clear the runway and be all sweetness and sunshine afterwards, but what I am saying, it is an opportunity for all of us as elected officials to remind ourselves that as we are listening to our constituents about legislation and information that they require, it's also incumbent on us as elected officials, as we help our constituents navigate through government, to not only help them get through government, but to look back at their journey and to identify potential areas which can be improved.

I remember during the task force on red tape, we were meeting with staff from the mining branch and I want to thank them very much for the time they took. And one of the individuals who deals with gravel said, you know what, I was asked by my staff to ask this question. You have have this form, which is section D. Staff—the staff person fills this out every quarter—doesn't understand why you need it, but we fill it out anyway—and I'm just wondering why

you need the information in section D. And the staff person simply said, I don't know. And that is a surprising answer that you'll get from a lot of government officials, is that rules and regulations are brought in at that time for a very good reason but that reason is lost in time and sometimes it becomes—the rule itself becomes the reason.

So, you know, when we're asked, you know, why do we need to do this? Well, because the rule says so. Well, you know, I haven't had a horse that I've needed to tie up to a lamppost in downtown Winnipeg for a number of years.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those very brief comments, I look forward to debate and conversation this morning. I urge all my colleagues to give this due consideration and support this bill and The Red Tape Reduction Day Act.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

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

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Can the member tell us why this bill's a top priority for this government during a pandemic?

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): I thank my colleague for that question.

I'm not sure if my colleague understands what's happening this morning. This is private members' business, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is an opportunity for all of us as private members to bring forward legislation. This is not a government bill. This has been pointed out time and time again. It's no different than the process that we saw when the NDP were in office and private members would bring forward legislation on behalf of their members. So I would encourage the member to do some research, and I look forward to their support of this act.

Thank you.

Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley): Yes, and speaking and—on the topic of today's Red Tape Reduction Day Act: during the last six years, what are some examples of

unnecessary red tape that this government has reduced?

Mr. Martin: I thank my colleague for that question.

And it is worthwhile to note some of the successes that our government has achieved over the time. For example, we've made the—Canada Day a fixed statutory holiday for retail workers. Again, this was a request by the Retail Council of Canada. We've enabled nurse practitioners to issue death certificates. And we've removed the licensing and fee regime for oil and gas lease agents, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A lot of these—and maybe in our individual lives—wouldn't have a significant impact, but again, added up, they do make a difference to those individuals whose occupations are affected by these regulatory requirements.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I just want to ask the member to actually apologize to the member for Point Douglas. The member for Point Douglas knows absolutely the question that she was asking the member from McPhillips in respect of his private members' bill in the midst of a pandemic.

And so, again, I want to bring the member back to the question that the member for Point Douglas asked: Why is he bringing forward a bill that nobody celebrates, in the midst of a pandemic?

Mr. Martin: I'm not sure if the member for St. Johns was getting up on a point of order or a question. Apparently she was trying to have her cake and eat it too.

I will remind the member that private members' business is just that: private members. The issue is—always been the opportunity for individuals to participate in the democratic process.

If the member wishes to disband private members' business, they're free to put that forward as a commitment in the next election. I, for one, can't see myself supporting such an idea.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): You know, in the last 12 years or so, at the City of Winnipeg there were massive cost overruns with the police headquarters; contracts were issued without—that nobody had applied for; there were major audits; there was a recommendation that the RCMP investigate. The RCMP did investigate and no one was—and recommended charges that didn't happen.

So I have to ask whether that's—whether this is the proper priority of this government but—because it

clearly is the case that, not only are people—is red tape not an obstacle to things happening, but the law isn't.

Does the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) think that there should be a public inquiry to find out what happened at the City of Winnipeg? Because—

* (10:20)

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

Mr. Martin: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I, for one, am a bit befuddled by the member's line of questioning. I'm not sure if he is realizing that this is private members' business this morning. The bill for debate is Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act.

I would suggest to the—my colleague, the MLA for St. Boniface—he made a number of allegations and comments. If he has information of criminal wrongdoings, I would suggest that he take that information and proceed to the RCMP or whatever police authority he thinks is best suited to take action on the—

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

Mrs. Smith: So, I'll give the member another opportunity to ask this question because this member—when the member from Waverley was asking questions about what his government has done, he referenced our government.

So we're asking why is your government bringing forward Bill 226 during a pandemic, when Manitobans are struggling, when this isn't a priority for them? Manitobans want to get the vaccine. They want the vaccine rollout as smooth as possible. This government has befuddled that. Manitobans know that.

So why is this member again bringing this forward when they could be bringing forward something that actually holds this government account?

Mr. Martin: Well, I thank very much the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), and I absolutely agree with the necessity of accountability, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that is what Bill 226, the red day reduction—The Red Tape Reduction Day Act does. It holds this government to account. It holds any future government to account. Should the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) one day find himself in the Premier's chair down the road, Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act, would be an opportunity to hold that member and his potential Liberal government to

account, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Accountability and transparency takes member—or, takes many forms.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): I'd like to congratulate my colleague from McPhillips for bringing forward such a great bill.

A question: What are some of the costs and downsides of having a Province that burdens their businesses, charities and government agencies with such unnecessary red tape?

Mr. Martin: I thank my colleague for that question.

In a lot of instances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we're talking about red tape, when we're talking about not-for-profits, the biggest issue on them is the time component.

As someone who used to run a not-for-profit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I saw first-hand that regulatory burden that was placed on my agency—or on the agency that I happened to work for, for information that the government already had. And when I queried the staffperson as to why they continually needed this information, they said, well, those are the rules. And that is just one small example of one small not-for-profit here in the province of Manitoba—

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

Mrs. Smith: So, the member talked about accountability. So, recently, this government took away the right for a committee to be called for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Does the member think that, you know, calling a committee to discuss poverty reduction effects—efforts is red tape? We have thousands of Manitobans that are struggling in this province right now due to this pandemic and this government continues to hide under the guise of these red tape reductions, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

So does the member think that calling a committee to discuss poverty reduction efforts is actually red tape?

Mr. Martin: I thank the honourable member for Point Douglas for that question.

And red tape and over-regulation is something that individuals, on a whole, face. I think of, you know, the member talked about people struggling. I remember when the previous NDP government decided to impose, say, you know, the provincial sales tax on people's house insurance. I remember individuals coming to me and saying, you know what,

I can't afford this additional cost. I'm living pay-cheque to paycheque. So there's always opportunities for any government to take a look at the actions they're doing. We as a government—and if we—

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

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): I would like to ask the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin), how has the amount of red tape in Manitoba changed over the last five years?

Mr. Martin: I thank my colleague for the question.

And I think this one really is at the crux of it. We've removed over 90,000 regulatory requirements. So if members opposite want to re-enact those 90,000, they're welcome to make that commitment, they're welcome to list all 90,000 out and make that commitment to re-impose those on Manitobans. I would suggest, since they're unable to do so, they, like most Manitobans, haven't noticed these changes and improvements to the regulatory environment here in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate is open.

Any speakers?

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act, does nothing for Manitobans. This member is bringing forward a bill during a pandemic. This—he should be ashamed of himself. Manitobans are struggling right now. They're struggling in terms of losing their jobs. We've have—we have more homeless people in this province than we ever have. And this government is to blame for that. Instead of bringing forth bills that will actually create betterment for Manitobans, this is what this member brings forward?

This bill is going to simply proclaim the third Tuesday in September of each year as Red Tape Reduction Day. What does that do for Manitobans? Nothing.

You know, this government's priorities during the middle of a pandemic is apparent: creating a completely useless holiday that will do nothing for Manitobans. They'll simply use this to justify their future cuts to services.

Deputy Speaker, Manitobans in this province are losing their lives to this pandemic, to addictions; they're losing their jobs or are remaining unemployed. Manitobans have lost their homes, and our homeless population continues to rise, and this government brings forward Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day?

This government could have brought something forward to address some of the issues that Manitobans are struggling with, like maybe stopping this government from cutting civil service jobs, maybe stopping this government from, you know, interfering in collective bargaining and get our IBEW workers back to work. But instead this member brings forward Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act.

It shows exactly where this government's priorities are. Their priorities are simply on cuts. Cuts to real services that Manitobans rely on.

This bill was originally moved by the current Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Wharton) back in 2017. And, well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, here we are again, in the midst of a pandemic and, not to mention, a recession where people are struggling more than ever, and this is what the member brings forward.

We need more accountability from this government. And what has this government done? They've taken away the right for members to come and speak to the poverty reduction report. Manitobans—they know that Manitobans care about poverty reduction in Manitoba. They know that there's been hundreds of Manitobans that have come and spoke to this report, and this is the very reason why they don't want to be held accountable.

When Manitobans who are struggling do well, we all do well. But this government likes to take care of the other 1 per cent who are doing well. Under this government Manitobans are getting poorer and poorer, and the ones that are rich are getting richer and richer. And Bill 226 does nothing to address that.

We need a government that's actually going to listen to Manitobans. And I can't tell you one Manitoban that's brought forward and asked the member from McPhillips to bring forward Bill 226. Like, who was consulted on this? What Manitoban said to him, hey, member from McPhillips, can you bring forward a day that actually, you know, celebrates the red tape reduction day? Like, I've never heard of every—any Manitoban that would want to celebrate a red tape reduction day.

*(10:30)

Instead, what they'd like to be celebrating is that all Manitobans have got inoculated for the COVID-19 vaccine; that our seniors are given, you know, free transportation to go and get their vaccine; that those cannot—those that can't afford to get to the sites are given free transportation and those that have mobility issues would also be given transportation to go to these sites.

Deputy Speaker, I was inoculated on Sunday and I can tell you I had to wait in line. I had to go up three sets, or no, two sets of stairs. There is an elevator there, yes, but again it's, you know, you're standing in line, and the line wasn't that long but it could have been quite long. There were all these gates that were kind of cordoning off and for somebody with mobility issues, that would be a struggle for them. So, you get through that line and then you stand in another line to—for them to check your credentials, and then, if you want, you can speak to a nurse, and then you go stand and speak to a nurse, and then you go into a line to get seated to get vaccinated.

So these are things that Manitobans want to talk about. These are things that Manitobans care about right now, not a bill that's going to, you know, proclaim the third Tuesday in September as red—the red tape reduction day. But they want this government to actually make sure that Manitobans get vaccinated, and, you know, this government's priorities aren't there.

We've—quite frankly, this government should be embarrassed and actually start listening to Manitobans and what their priorities are, because I can tell you, from what Manitobans have been sharing with me, this certainly isn't one of them.

But what this government considers red tape are public services Manitobans rely on and this is what Manitobans' priorities are: keeping the services we have and adding other services what—are what Manitobans need and what Manitobans want. They don't want a red reduction—red tape reduction day. That's even a mouthful.

Like, we're going to celebrate a day when there's a pandemic going on. How about we celebrate when all of our members in Manitoba have been vaccinated?

And, you know, I think about the red tape. There's been five red tape 'omnibus' bills within the past five years. All of these bills were lumped together—various changes that realistically had nothing to do with each other in an attempt to avoid individual scrutiny of the

changes being made. And many of the changes in these bills have nothing to do with red tape. Many of the changes were even too significant to put together in one bill, but what did this government do? They did it anyway because they like to bulldoze through, regardless of what Manitobans want or what they have to stay—what they have to say.

And I don't understand how this government thinks that what they're doing is for the betterment of Manitobans. You know, Bill 226, again, does nothing for the betterment of Manitoba. Manitobans have come to learn what red tape really is when it comes out of this government's tape and that's simply a guise for more cuts, more erasures of important regulations that actually protect consumers and our environment, and more privatization of important government assets. Bill 55, many of the amendments of the appeal—repeal acts proposed in Bill 55 have nothing to do with red tape nor are they even related to one another, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

How does repealing The Adult Literacy Act reduce red tape? How does removing the requirement that apprentices are hired on public works projects reduce red tape, Deputy Speaker? The reality is that these changes have hurt Manitobans and everyday Manitobans. We're talking about people who are struggling, people who have lost their job, people who are going to lose their job because of this government's cuts. They continue to cut.

They've, you know, chopped our health-care system up, which has put us in this place that we're in now. You know, all sorts of surgeries are being delayed because there's not enough services being offered because this government has chased nurses out of our province. They're not treating them very well and nurses just up and said, you know, I've had enough of this government, I'm not going to, you know, put my time and energy into fighting a government that doesn't care about the work that I'm doing on behalf of Manitobans.

And I want to thank all of those nurses, you know, who are on the front lines that are doing this work and say that, you know, we revere your work and we're thankful for it, while this government continues to, you know, cut and slash services that our Manitobans rely on.

I want to go a little bit on our—the attack on labour that this government has, you know, been doing. Bill 55 repeals The Apprentice Employment Opportunities Act (Public Work Contacts), which

requires that all public work contracts hire apprentices. This change will make it higher-harder for young Manitobans to complete their apprentice hours and become certified journey people in this province. Deputy Speaker, this will create jobs, meaningful jobs in this province.

And this is what this government continues to do is deplete the services in this province. They should be ashamed of themselves. They should take this red tape reduction day, go back to the drawing board and tell their boss that he should start listening to Manitobans and bring their priorities forward—

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

Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley): First of all, I just want to say to all those who got elected—all sides of the House—five years ago yesterday: happy belated anniversary. And happy belated anniversary to our government taking over five years ago. I'm honoured to represent Waverley and, back then, St. Norbert. So I thank my family, my friends and the electorate who supported me.

But, before we took over back in April, 2016, we identified more than 948,000 different regulatory requirements on non-profits, local governments, businesses and private citizens. That's why I'm extremely happy that my colleague, who served some time with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, my colleague from McPhillips, has brought this act forward.

This act is going to help many businesses focus on their business instead of the loads of paperwork and the chaos that the former NDP government enforced on them. These businesses are the backbone of this country, they're the small engines of our economy, and without them we would not be the best country in this world. They should be focusing on their businesses, not the mounds of paperwork that was put in place by the former government.

With the The Red Tape Reduction Day Act, business owners will do just that. They will get to once again—focusing on their business.

As someone who used to own two small businesses, I know how time sensitive paperwork is. It's frustrating to deal with and feels like it's never-ending. People without businesses can still relate to red tape, as every adult in Manitoba will deal with red tape in one form or another at some point in their life.

By reducing this red tape we are improving access to government services and we are rebuilding the provincial economy. With this act we are finally eliminating mounds of unnecessary barriers, and we are promoting economic development. With this red tape removal, we are getting rid of irritating paperwork, reducing overlap with governments and moving more services online.

There are just a few ways that this act is removing corporate red tape. As a government who is here to help businesses, we are focused on identifying unnecessary regulatory requirements that have damaging effects on the competitiveness of businesses that degrade the quality of business and the availability of community services.

Red tape creates frustrating regulations that do not result in identifiable outcomes in terms of environmental health or public safety. The removal of this red tape is going to help create a business that focuses on the people providing those services, not the paper. The NDP and Liberal members of this legislation are doing a dishonouring service to this great province by most likely not voting in favour of this bill.

In Manitoba alone, small- and medium-sized businesses spend an estimated \$1.2 billion annually to comply with federal, provincial and municipal regulations. The CFIB estimates a full 30 per cent of this sum, or \$360 million, is spent on red tape, which are regulatory requirements that create unnecessary burdens to businesses. This money could be spent on bettering businesses instead of the irritating red tape that these businesses have due to the NDP.

* (10:40)

On top of this, the NDP's excessive regulation and unnecessary red tape that they—created a strain on our province's economic growth and put a significant burden on the finances of businesses, non-profits and government alike. They also made accessing community services more challenging and inefficient.

During this process, our government had conversations with stakeholders like good governments do. With these conversations, it was clear; we know inefficiency is due to outdated and unnecessary red tape are causing everyday hardships, and cost Manitoba business owners at least \$360 million a year.

A transparent, effective and efficient regulatory environment will support the sustainability and growth of Manitoba's economy. For these reasons, we know eliminating these unnecessary barriers and

burdens caused by red tape will foster job creation, boost Manitoba's economy and unleash our province's true economic potential. This is not only going to help us during the restart our economy past COVID-19, it's going to help for many years to come when COVID-19 is hopefully just a recollection of a memory.

We cannot let the massive burden of red tape increase. Our province is in desperate need of modernization when it comes to all the red tape that we have been handed down through the many years of NDP government. Our government is committed to implementing a key performance indicator as a means of defining, implementation and tracking our government's progress of reducing red tape, in the form of regulatory requirements. We want to be very transparent with Manitobans and we believe the system will help with that transparency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's just talk about the grading of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has given over the years. In 2015, when the NDP were still in power, we were given a grade of D. But wait, it gets worse. On January 16, 2016, four months before our government would take power, we were given a grade of F; F means failure. We are in last place when compared to other provinces, just like our education system. The NDP believes in last. They believe in the status quo and yet they'll go on and on about how great they did in government. But if they did, you wouldn't constantly be in last place in areas like in independent businesses.

The NDP doesn't care about the backbone of this province. It is easy to see this with this failing grade. But today, in 2021, five years and a day after our government took power we now have a CFIB grade of an A. An A. An A for astonishing. A, as in first place amongst every other province in this country. In year 2017-2018 we removed 23,288 regulatory requirements. In 2018-2019 we removed 83,161 regulatory requirements. And in 2019-2020 we removed 90,824 regulatory requirements. That's a total of, if I did the math correctly, 197,265 pieces. Let me say that again: 197,265 pieces of red tape that the NDP put in place for no good reason. It was only there to bog workloads, to make small businesses focus on paperwork instead of what really matters: their business, providing a service, consumer needs.

We did not stop there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are now leaders in accountability and reducing inter-provincial trade barriers. That's right, our government did that. Our government only has 10 total exceptions

to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement—10. This is second only to Alberta. For instance, we allow to—we allow direct-to-consumer shipment of Canadian wine and have no limits on the amount of alcohol that can cross its provincial borders. This is in place to help businesses in this province to success, to allow them to grow.

Does this act abolish red tape all together? Of course not. That would be foolish. Red tape is required in some areas like statutes, regulations, forms, policies and processes.

But the problem is, in some cases requirements can overly be complicated, contradictory, out of date or simply incomprehensible. That's why the Red Tape Reduction Task Force's goal is not to simply eliminate requirements; rather, this mandate is to identify requirements that are poorly written, duplicative or do not achieve their stated public policy goal.

With The Red Tape Reduction Day Act, there will be an important date to highlight the annual progress made in our ongoing efforts to reduce red tape in Manitoba, a public day that business owners, like yours truly was at one point, can see just how much red tape our government is abolishing, the day we'll see that 197,265 pieces of red tape grow significantly; I cannot be more prouder on a day like this, which will be.

Just like this government has done throughout the pandemic, we are continuing to help businesses in Manitoba. I stand here today happy and excited for my colleague, bringing his experience in the CFIB to bringing this bill forward.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Before I begin with my own remarks this morning, I just wanted to lift up my colleague from Point Douglas who spoke so well this morning about the real needs of her constituents, the real needs of Manitoba families, the real needs of people during this pandemic.

And, you know, I mean, maybe we'll have some fun here this morning. I've got some remarks, and we'll see how closely I stick to the notes. But what I will say is, you know, when given an opportunity, as a member of this Legislature, to bring forward a piece of legislation, you know, I guess maybe it's no surprise that a less-than-serious member would bring a less-than-serious bill. But I do think that it's worth highlighting that we have an opportunity, we—in fact, we have an obligation to Manitobans to bring forward their concerns and their issues.

And it was said many times by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), but I'll say it again: who is asking for a Red Tape Reduction Day Act celebration? It makes no sense.

In some ways I would argue this—maybe this is more red tape. A whole bunch of bureaucrats need to go back in the backrooms of the Legislature, write up this bill, you know, go through the process. I don't know what happens.

Is there—you know, do the calendars get changed across the province? Do we send out a notice to every municipality; every member, every citizen in Manitoba is given a notice: today is red tape reduction celebration day, get your pointy hats, your party hats on, get your—you know, get your balloons, let's have a party?

Nobody's asking for this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and certainly not during a pandemic. There are so many issues that we should be talking about that are more important, and yet this member seems focused, in I would say in an unhealthy way, on this particular issue. And that's because it's his government's focus. His government's focus has been to reduce the number of regulations across government no matter what those regulations pertain to.

You know, in fact, when this government came into office, they said, well, we're just going to get rid of—for every regulation we have, we should get rid of two. We should—if we bring in a regulation, we've got to get rid of two.

Well, what if those are good regulations? What if those are regulations that matter—regulations when we're talking about adult literacy, for instance? What if these are regulations about apprentices in this province?

Well, no, too bad, we're not going to do this in any kind of reasonable manner, as the member would suggest. In fact, we're just going to say, well, it's two-for-one, and that's just the way it is.

You know, they sent out civil servants across this province to count the regulations, spent months counting regulations across government just so they could say, well, we have 940,000 regulations and now we're going to reduce it by 50,000 regulations or—you know.

And the member talks about tying up horses. No, no, this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is about important regulations that keep Manitobans healthy, safe and happy.

And yet, this government seems obsessed across the board.

* (10:50)

Now, I didn't have an opportunity—I've got to admit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wasn't listening quite as intently as I probably should have to the member from McPhillips, but I think he spent a lot of his time talking about the work that I did on committee listening to Manitobans, last night, who came to talk about a terrible piece of legislation brought forward by the now-Minister for Families, the former minister of Municipal Affairs, who brought forward a bill that is actually creating more red tape.

And what's absolutely stunning about this piece of legislation that was brought forward yesterday, first of all, is how terrible it was that even the minister had to, on the fly, start pulling out, out of his back pocket—papers were flying everywhere—pulling out paper after paper, trying to amend and then starting to vote against his own bill and clauses in his own bill: Well, no, no, no, no, wait a minute, I don't like that one, I don't like that one, I don't like that one. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: You know, the member—the minister was completely flustered because the former minister handed him a stinker and said bring this forward.

But what we did hear over and over again, from elected officials across this province, is how Bill 37 is taking away local choice and local democracy, but more importantly and more pertinent to the bill before us today, is CAOs and other administration officials, who said over and over again that this was going to be burdensome red tape that's only going to result in further delays to development.

So, while they talk out of one side of their mouth—well, regulation is bad, regulation is bad—they bring in a whole new regulatory regime and force it on municipalities across this province. It's shameful, and I guess, you know, the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) didn't get the memo before he came to committee. I note that he was pretty quiet last night when all—you know, CAOs and elected officials from his own constituency were coming to tell him how wrong he was, and from his former constituency, to tell him to stop the bill in its tracks, to delay it, to cancel it, to just shut it down. He was pretty quiet last night. He didn't want to get into that.

And yet here he is this morning, standing up and saying, well, it's all about red tape. Even if he was to

come this morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and speak up for those folks that we heard at committee last night, to say to the minister, to say the former minister of Municipal Relations, to say it's time to scrap this bill, to scrap Bill 37, that might be something.

But he won't do that because he is in lockstep with every single member of this caucus and this Cabinet, who is trying to jam through omnibus bill after omnibus bill. Don't look behind the curtain. Don't look what we're actually trying to do. We'll call it red tape and then we'll go after the things that are important to Manitobans.

And all of this at a time when Manitobans are simply asking for better health care, investments in education. How about support for our economy in a real, concrete way? This province continues to be at the bottom of the pack when it comes to support for small business. They want to talk about small business. They want to talk about doing something for Manitobans. Well, what do they do? They raise the hydro rates. They continue to not give supports to small business. You know, this is just—this is fluff.

And I can say, you know—again, I can see where it's coming from. In fact, I think this is—is this the third time that this bill has come before the legislature?

Is this a priority of government? Apparently not. And that's why they put the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) up to bring it up and obviously go nowhere. He doesn't even have the support of his own—his own caucus isn't—they don't—they didn't applaud him, they don't support him. You know, maybe some of us feel bad for him, but the reality is, is that he's the one that's willing to go lockstep every step of the way and support this kind of terrible legislation.

An Honourable Member: We got it: lockstep. Move on.

Mr. Wiebe: So, while the Minister for Justice—he says we should move on. We should move on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We should move on from this terrible time-wasting legislation and we should talk about the things that are important to Manitobans.

We should talk about the vaccine rollout. We should talk about the failures this government has undertaken when it comes to that.

We should talk about how the austerity agenda over the last five years. They want to celebrate their anniversary being elected—five years of neglect, and we see the results. We see the results in real terms, in

communities across this city, whether it's—and the province, whether it's in St. James, whether it's in Concordia, whether it's in other places.

This is what Manitobans have come to expect from this government. They see the cuts that are coming in education, they see the cuts that have happened when it comes to supports for small businesses. And when it comes to bills like Bill 37, they see a government that is so out of touch they won't listen to local representatives, ignore them at committee, they'll put their heads down, they'll look away, they won't listen.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will listen. And we will continue to listen to Manitobans every step of the way—for the minister. And we will ensure that when we bring forward legislation, it's about issues that matter to Manitobans. And we'll continue to do that whether it's the pandemic or beyond.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I'll try to keep this fairly brief.

In terms of the previous red tape reductions that have been—happened, I'll just give an example of one that happened that we have a serious problem with: lead contamination in St. Boniface. There were a number of businesses out there that were allowed, under a previous red tape reduction act, to grandfather the fact that they had been there forever, in order to let them start toxic waste dumps. That is not the kind of streamlining we need.

I will say, for all of this talk about red tape, that the major obstacle for small businesses who I have helped try to get off the ground—and sometimes very successfully—in Manitoba, is access to capital. It's not red tape; it's access to capital. And frankly, the PCs tend to be every bit as bad as capitalists as the NDP are being socialists.

That—in between 2000 and 2010, Manitoba was one of the most dangerous provinces to work in for workers. And it wasn't because of red tape; it was because of a complete lack of enforcement.

And then when it came to applying for small-business assistance last year, this government left tens of millions of dollars unspent because there were so many obstacles to getting that—to actually—successful application to help. It was—there's a reason why 80—over 80 per cent of all the support for businesses in Manitoba and COVID support has been federal and

not provincial. And it's because the provincial government has made big promises but has made it almost impossible for many businesses to access the money they actually need.

When we talk about red tape reduction—and talking about things that waste people's time while everyone's being paid, No. 1, I think, would probably be Bill 226, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act. So if we really want to celebrate, we could make today red tape reduction day. We'll celebrate it today by saying that this bill just adds a bunch of pointless red tape and will force people to do a bunch of—with, too, you know, whether it's the Lieutenant Governor, MLAs, all the people—Leg. Counsel, who had to work on this bill, anybody who's had to work in translation, the amount of money we've just wasted talking about this bill, which is purely symbolic, which will never make a difference in anyone's life, is really an indictment of this government.

And that's all I have.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further speakers?

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I'm not quite sure that I can—I don't want to say talk, because it's not a competition, but my colleagues have done just an outstanding job speaking to this bill and the concerns around this bill.

Certainly, I would echo a few of the words they've already put on the record in regards to the timeliness of this bill being brought forward. I'm not sure if the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) has merely forgotten or perhaps isn't hearing from his constituents that currently we are in the middle of a pandemic and that there are issues that are very pressing that I know are facing his constituents that can and should be addressed by way of legislation that doesn't seek to celebrate a day, The Red Tape Reduction Day Act.

You know, my birthday is in the month of September, and I can tell you definitively that this would make that month a little bit darker for me, should this, you know, come into law. This just seems like such a—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara:—such a—an unusual use of our time during a pandemic. This seems like something that would, in fact, just create more red tape.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter before the House, the honourable member for Union Station will have nine minutes left remaining.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 18—Parent Engagement in Manitoba's Education System

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 11 o'clock, I'm now stopping debate on private members' bills and we're going on to private members' resolutions.

And the private member's resolution is parent engagement with Manitoba's education system, and the honourable member for Assiniboia.

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): Just before I start my comments, I would like to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member for Assiniboia, can you move it and have a seconder of your resolution?

Mr. Johnston: Oh, sorry. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. If the honourable member can just introduce it and second it by a member of the—I move and seconded by another member of your same caucus.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your guidance.

I move, seconded by the member from Riding Mountain—and do you want me to read the resolution now?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Johnston: Therefore—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Therefore, and therefore—okay.

WHEREAS parental involvement in education is vital to building a nurturing, safe and engaging learning environment for children both in the home and in the classroom; and

WHEREAS it is recognized that parent engagement in education is a key factor in the enhancement of student achievement and well-being; and

WHEREAS parents and caregivers played an important role during COVID-19 by taking on a bigger role to support their children's education at

home while balancing COVID-19 related changes in their own work and personal lives; and

WHEREAS during the pandemic parents and caregivers have showed that they have much to contribute and the pandemic has reinforced the vital role they play in creating nurturing, safe and engaging learning environments at home or in the classroom; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government believes in the value of parental involvement and believe parents and caregivers value engagement at the school level with teachers, principals, and staff; and

WHEREAS parents and caregivers engagement is sustained by providing consistent tools and processes for them to inform student success at the school level and in the system as a whole; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's parents and caregivers are already directly involved through informal and formal means in the education of their students; and

WHEREAS in the new School Community Councils parents will be able to exercise their engagement in a formal process which will allow them to directly influence the education of their children; and

WHEREAS parents will have more involvement that is meaningful in local decision-making through the new School Community Councils.

Mr. Johnston: THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend Manitobans, parents and caregivers for their continued engagement in education system, enabling their students to achieve success in their studies and urge the provincial government to continue to provide meaningful process for parent and caregiver engagement in Manitoba's education system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Assiniboia, seconded by the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt),

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend Manitoba's parents and caregivers for their continued engagement in the education system, enabling their students to achieve success in their studies and to urge the provincial government to continue to provide meaningful processes for parents and caregiver engagement in Manitoba's education system.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for your guidance.

Just before I start, I would ask that you pass on my best regards to the Speaker and hope that she is able to join us soon. And may I wish you well in your deliberations as the Speaker.

Mr. Len Isleifson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I am pleased to bring forward this resolution on behalf of our government. Our government was elected in 2016 and again in 2019 with substantial support from the people of Manitoba.

One of our primary platforms in both elections was to address education reform in Manitoba. As a result of our review of education in Manitoba, our government created the Manitoba education review commission. Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the review commission was to make recommendations to our government.

The education review commission was charged with reaching out to the people of Manitoba, to engage parents, as well as create opportunity for Manitoba education stakeholders to present their opinions and their suggestions. One of the most prominent recommendations arising from the education review was to create more parental involvement in the decision making affecting education of their children.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution acknowledges the role of parents and caregivers who play such an important role in the lives of their children and their education. Parents have always played an important role in the education of their children.

Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic, parents rose to the occasion, as they have had to balance their own personal lives while providing support to their children's education at home. Manitoba parents and caregivers invest their time into education of their children and in the education system of Manitoba. Parents and caregivers have done this prior to COVID-19, during the pandemic and will continue to do so after we meet these challenges.

This resolution seeks to have Manitoba—the Manitoba Legislature recognize the importance of parents involved in our education system. We understand that parents want to play a proactive role in implementing and contributing to the successful education experience of their children and the education success within our community.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this resolution speaks to the confidence and support our government is prepared to give Manitoba parents. This resolution acknowledges that parents have always been engaged

in their child's education, and the important role that parents and caregivers play. This resolution celebrates the critical role of parent engagement in Manitoba and acknowledges parental involvement in education being vital to building a 'nurturing'—nurturing, safe and engaging learning environment for children, both at home and in the classroom.

Parent engagement in education is a key factor to enhance student achievement and well-being. Parents and caregivers play an important role during COVID-19 by taking on a bigger role to support their children's education at home while balancing COVID-19 related challenges in their own life-work environment. During the pandemic, parents and caregivers have showed that they have much to contribute, and the pandemic has reinforced that vital role.

Mr. Speaker, student achievement improves when parents play an active role in their child's life. It has been my experience that engaged parents not only play a major role in their own child's education, but they create a vital energy for the school itself. Given the opportunity, engaged parents are eager to contribute more. Our government recognizes that this parent resource is underutilized in our system and province.

It has been my experience that parents do not want to—excuse me—it's been my experience that parents do not want to interfere with educational professionals. Our teachers and principals are well respected by engaged parents. So it makes sense to create an atmosphere where parents, teachers and principals can work in true partnership. In keeping with our government's intention to further establish parental engagement in the education system, we have introduced legislation that allows more meaningful parental contributions.

Currently, parents and caregivers are engaged in formal—in a formal process through the parent advisory councils. Parents have made many noteworthy contributions through this mechanism. I would like to take the opportunity to recognize and acknowledge the parent association of parent councils. This organization was formed to support and guide the parent councils of Manitoba. MAPC, as well, acts as an advisory group to Manitoba education.

In the proposed new legislation, our government plans to extend parental involvement by creating school community councils. The SCCs will be structured to allow parents to be more part of the decision-making process through meaningful engagement. The SCCs will involve parents in the education system at

the local level by creating a stronger voice of parents for the future of our students.

Some of the new opportunities for parents will be to address the needs of the community it serves; to contribute in assessing the effectiveness of educational programming at their school; to help analyze the student achievement learning outcomes; and reviewing areas that can be done for improvement to evaluate outcomes and overall performance of their school; to be involved in proposed capital construction projects at the school site, the proposed annual budget and the monthly expenditures.

* (11:10)

These are major challenges and they do take major commitments: to be part of the changes in school programs and activities as they review them with the teachers and the principals, to review short-term and long-term priorities for the school as set out by a school plan which they contribute to with their teachers and their principals, to understand the needs of transportation, to certainly be aware of some of the disciplinary challenges that the schools face and maybe potentially contribute to addressing those needs, to review and contribute policies implemented at the school and encourage involvement and welcome other interested parents to the school. And, Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you how important that is because the whole concept of what the government is proposing is to engage parents to a fuller degree.

And I think that the parents that are engaged will offer an opportunity to those parents who are a little apprehensive, who may not be necessarily to the point of engagement, to really feel comfortable in getting involved and to show that we as a government are certainly prepared to create a very active role for them.

Mr. Speaker, parents will be consulted on the type of role that they play in regards to the new community councils. There'll—the minister announced recently that there will be a task force going to each district to engage parents and to have them contribute from their perspective on what would be the best way for the new structuring, the school community councils, to be able to engage and to be able to support education as a whole; to be able to make the recommendations that they feel that they need to make, and make the contributions that they feel that they can be most effective.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to present this resolution to the House. I hope that it will be supported by the Legislature as

the initiative is to certainly support those very important positions of parents in education.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): So, 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. Nello Altomare (Transcona): It's always a pleasure to rise in this House and ask questions of our colleagues.

I would like to ask the MLA from Assiniboia how he squares the circle of having MAPC involved but yet having this government cut MAPC's administrative assistant and then expect MAPC to provide contributions to not only the creation of this PMR but also Bill 64.

How does he square that circle with saying now that parents all of a sudden are going to have this magnified voice in this system?

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): I think that the reason that these organizations came to formation is because of their interest in the development of education within the system. They're very caring people. They're people who take an interest and certainly are aware of the responsibilities at the grassroots.

So it would be my commentary that no matter what role that these organizations are expected to play, they will take an active role in ensuring that education is maximized in the province of Manitoba—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Member's time has expired.

The member from Rossmere—Portage la Prairie. My apologies.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I wonder if the honourable member from Assiniboia could explain a little bit more about the value of having parental engagement in an education system?

Mr. Johnston: Well, I think that certainly it's beneficial to all when people take an interest in one of the most important factions of democratic society, which is education.

And parents, of course, are engaged with their children to ensure that they, as well as their community, are successful. And when a parent is involved and a parent is motivated in the school's activities, then really what that does is it creates a situation where the student is more motivated—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

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

I'm hoping that the member can provide some clarity around why the government is putting up barriers for parents to get involved in their children's education and then bringing forward a resolution encouraging parental engagement?

Does this mean that the government is reconsidering Bill 64?

Mr. Johnston: Thank you for the question to my old seatmate in the Legislature.

I would challenge the member's statement that the government is setting up barriers for parent councils or parents to be involved in their child's education. I think that the evidence of what we're proposing right now is very strong in the government's support to ensure that parents play more of an active role and are able to participate to even a greater degree in education in Manitoba. So I think that the move by the government is a positive one and not a negative one, as the member may suggest.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): It's clear that Bill 64 replaces local genuine representation for families with school community councils, which have no real authority or real influence at all over decision making.

So I ask the member: How does this plan to move to school community councils—how will that impact the ability of local families, local voices to actually have an influence in local education in their communities?

Mr. Johnston: Thank you to my honourable friend from St. James, who is as familiar with the area as I am.

I can assure the member from St. James that, as a former school trustee in St. James-Assiniboia for a number of years, that I wouldn't be supporting anything that I didn't think was an opportunity to create a better education or a stronger education in our communities. And I believe that this community

support with engaged parents, it's been my experience that it's extremely positive. And we're taking it to the next level.

So I would say the engagement of the parents within this community is going to be—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I'm wondering if the member could explain how parental engagement is vital to student success in our education system.

Mr. Johnston: I wish to thank my honourable friend from Rossmere, who is as dedicated to the education system as anyone I know, being a former principal. And certainly he understands, and he understands the merit of this particular initiative.

The far-reaching component is, again, you can't underestimate the value of an engaged community in education. It's far reaching. It's far-reaching into the school to create the energy and the support of the principals and teachers, as well as engaging the community as a whole. I can't tell you how many times it's been my experience where I've been walking through a grocery store and someone's pulled me aside, when I was involved in the education system, asking questions and trying to engage in regards to—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

Member from Transcona.

Mr. Altomare: Can I hand it over to the member for St. James (Mr. Sala), please?

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Member for St. James.

Mr. Sala: I'd like to just—building off the last question, just ask the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Johnston) for clarity.

So, he suggests that, under this new regime, that there'll be greater opportunities for parent engagement in local decision making. But what happens if a child-care centre is threatened to be pushed out of a local school?

* (11:20)

Right now, families can go to their local division decision makers and and advocate for that not to happen. What happens under this new regime, when they have no authority or decision-making power? Will that child-care centre be lost?

Mr. Johnston: Well, no, not at all. What the initiative here is to have parents being able to engage into their local community as well as the overall educational structure in Manitoba.

So, the organizations that we're talking about, the SCCs, will have representation on an advisory group to the minister as well as representation on the PEA—the provincial education authority. So those entities are certainly decision-making entities where parents will have input.

So, in regards to particular situations, in particular areas, there is certainly more an avenue to be able to address those—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Member's time has expired.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I want to thank the member from Assiniboia for bringing this very important resolution forth.

And can the member explain how the education review will strengthen parental and caregiver engagement?

Mr. Johnston: Well, I think, as I indicated—and thank the member—again, the member—our caucus has got a great deal of educational experience. The member from Swan River is a former teacher for many, many years and certainly makes a great deal of contribution to our deliberations as a government.

Further to his question, as I'd indicated, the school community councils are designed for the opportunity of a meaningful—and I stress meaningful—input into the education in—of Manitoba, and that's, quite frankly, what the education reform had suggested and our government has taken action—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

The member from St. James.

An Honourable Member: I will take his question, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Sure—member from Transcona.

Mr. Altomare: I would like to ask the member from Assiniboia, where is the voice of the person that is not a parent in this system? Where is the voice of that grandparent, that community member, that person that is interested in the education of our youth, in the public education system here in Manitoba?

How is their voice going to be heard in this new system that's being created?

Mr. Johnston: That's a great question, and, frankly, I was waiting for it.

The member from Transcona indicates that there is a voice outside of just parents within the education system, and I concur with that. The way that this new structure's going to be set up is that this is going to be a provincial entity, just like Crown corporations are a provincial entity, just like health care is a provincial entity.

So those individuals who may have concerns with regards to how their—the education system is performing or pursuing, they have every right to address it with the MLA who is ultimately responsible for what happens as far as provincial initiatives—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

The time for questions has also expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Thank you for this opportunity to rise today in this House to talk about this PMR, Parent Engagement in Manitoba's Education System.

As a person that has worked in the system, just like the member from Assiniboia, parents are currently engaged and highly engaged in the education system in Manitoba. I will say, with his last answer to my last question, MLAs are now become trustees, trustees that, by their very definition of the word trustee, were empowered and entrusted to represent our community voice.

So, here we have a bit of an incongruence going on where parents had a vehicle through their locally elected school boards, through their participation in parent association councils, to have their voice heard. And what we hear today is now that there is going to be more meaningful voice added to this. It's difficult to understand this.

I'm sitting here reading the resolution and it says, whereas parental involvement in education is vital to building a nurturing, safe and engaging learning environment. Well, absolutely. No kidding, right? It goes into that—what else are parents going to be involved in when they're involved in with their

school? Of course, they want to create these nurturing environments.

Whereas during the pandemic parents and care-givers have showed that they have much to contribute to the pandemic in creating safe, engaging learning environments at home—well, no kidding, because there is very little leadership shown by this government for planning for the pandemic and how to engage parents in the pandemic. So, instead, what happened is that we had school divisions and school boards provide avenues and meaningful ones, like remote learning centres created by each school division here in the city, because there was a vacuum created because of the lack of leadership shown by this government.

So then, six months down the line, to create a remote learning centre that has had very little uptake. And, as a matter of fact, the remote learning centres that were created by the locally elected, locally responsive school divisions and school trustees were able to create remote learning centres that met the needs of their students in their communities—something that they're really good at doing.

Well, so now we're creating this new provincial education authority in Manitoba that I doubt will be able to respond to the community needs, especially local needs, and especially seeing what we learned from the pandemic. We learned that local voices were responsive to local needs.

People take a great deal of pride in their schools, in their school communities. And by creating this new structure through a provincial education authority being informed by these new super SCCs that really don't have the power that this government says they will have. And so they will make recommendations, but really, the decision making and all the power resides with the provincial education authority that may or may not actually take the recommendations of these school community councils.

So, after a period of time when these school community councils will have their recommendations, they'll bring them forward. This government has a track record of not listening to its constituents, not listening to any type of contributions from people that are really right on the ground. They'll get turned off by this system and there'll be very little engagement. And so what will end up occurring is that you'll have a creation of a system that is responsive to the whims of the government of the day.

And with education, just like with health care, this is something that's entrusted to provincial governments to look after their people. And in schools we take a great deal of pride in Manitoba in creating a system that is, indeed, responsive to not only local voice, but also the student need in the community.

And so what we have now is a muzzling of voices, especially from areas outside the city of Winnipeg, where they will have very little opportunity to really provide any direction to what happens to their local community schools.

I will say, I've received a number of correspondence from areas outside the city that are really concerned because—they're concerned that their small local school will be closed. So that small SCC that's saying no, we need this community school of ours to remain open because it's vital to our community, it's vital to attracting people to our community, it's vital for keeping local jobs in our community. They're wondering where their voice will be heard or not because, interestingly, in Bill 64 there's a—the moratorium on closing small schools has been removed. To what end? That's the question that's being asked: to what end?

* (11:30)

And for me, and based on a track record of this government, we see where this is going to take that local voice and that local choice. It's going to remove it and have it muted. And so, when we look at the provisions in this PMR, it talks about whereas parents' and caregivers' engagement is sustained by providing consistent tools and processes. Now what does that mean? Does the process mean a government's—a governance structure? What was wrong with the current governance structure? The commission, when it looked at the current governance structure, it didn't even recommend the complete elimination of school boards.

As a matter of fact, the commission looked at perhaps amalgamating existing smaller school divisions so that they can curate some kind of economies of scale where they can save some money on some services that are needed in our schools. As a matter of fact, one of the commissioners said, we didn't look at a complete dismantling and removal of that local education voice.

So when this government says it listens to people, engages in a sham of a commission that doesn't even take the recommendations to—and then put them in Bill 64, people are left to wonder what is the true

motive here. Just like with everything with this government. The true motive is power and control. School boards are pesky entities. They get to tax. They get to raise their voice. They get to put direction into where they want their schools to go. And that's an annoyance to this current government because it completely mutes their ability to control their voice when it comes to deciding the direction of education in this province.

And so when we have that local voice removed—and make no mistake about it, this is about power and nothing else—we'll have our communities, especially outside the city, really suffer under this new large creation of a provincial education authority, which runs in the face of small-c conservative values, if I understand them correctly.

I thought most of the voice is supposed to be localized down to the smallest levels possible, where you can have the most impact. And instead now they're creating this uber-PEA that will have control over the entire province. And how is that local person in small-town Manitoba supposed to get the attention of this large entity? That's the question that needs to be answered. And we still have yet to hear how that will happen.

And so, in closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is much that leaves to be desired, much that's left on the table here. Again, just like the previous private member's bill that came forward, well, no kidding parents are important in the system, but let's ensure that they have meaningful voice and ensure that we have a bill that responds to that.

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer this House six reasons to support parental engagement in education.

The first reason we support parental engagement in education is that it is a human rights issue. Article 26, subsection 3 of the United Nations international declaration on human rights, of which Canada is a signatory, states, and I quote: "parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." The world's foundational human rights document does not just affirm parental engagement but states it as a right and specifies parental choice and, by implication, input into their children's education as a human right.

Secondly, we can call support for parental engagement in education a matter of children's rights. Section 29, subsection (c) of the UN declaration on

the rights of the child states the following, and I quote: parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own. The UN here recognizes the importance of fostering a relationship between parents and education.

A third reason we may support parental engagement in education is to support Indigenous rights. We must learn from past mistakes. And I quote from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website: these government-funded church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural and spiritual development of Aboriginal children.

During this era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were placed in these schools, often against their parents' wishes. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practise their own culture. First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents had no input and no voice in their children's education during this time.

Meaningful input and meaningful parental voice in a child's education is recognized as important, and we are proposing to strengthen that and support this important finding of the TRC with our updates to education in Manitoba.

In the aftermath of World War II, with the fresh perspective of war and global conflict, the UN noted the importance of parental engagement in education. In light of global discussions about children's rights, the importance of the link between parents and education was reaffirmed, and some of the darkest chapters of Canada's own history show that the state detachment of parents from their own children's education was devastating. We must learn from the mistakes of the past. Children do not belong to the state, but to their parents.

A fourth reason we support parental engagement in education is to preserve diversity and culture. There is no closer link to cultural diversity than the families who make up Canada's diverse cultural landscape. There's no better way to ensure true culture is transmitted into classrooms than to invite parents into that classroom and to foster the celebration of culture.

It was my privilege, as principal of the The King's School, to serve such as head of such as diverse organization. Our student population of less than 300 students represented 45 nations, and I loved the international flavour of the school. The playground was like a mini-UN, with children from around the world playing with each other. Festivals were celebrated, stories from different cultures were studied, food was shared and language was respected. Friends and parents often translated for each other, and it helped that one of our vice-principals spoke three languages.

It was parents who helped us navigate culture. It was parents who told us and taught us about the challenges of their children. It was parents who made sacrifices to engage, despite often working several jobs.

One such parent I met when I came to the Legislature because they're a cleaner here, and I asked after their children; how their children are doing. They came to Canada as refugees in 2008; we welcomed them to the school and worked with them despite the challenges of the newcomer experience. So, I was thrilled, Mr. Speaker, to discover that the children are prospering; the children are studying at university; the children are pursuing a variety of meaningful careers in trades, education and other professions.

When parents get involved, good things happen. Parents should not feel helpless when it comes to what is happened to their children, to what they are learning at school and how they are learning.

* (11:40)

A fifth reason we should support parental engagement in education is to safeguard democracy. If public schools are to serve and reflect public interest, and if parents are the No. 1 experts on their children, who better to engage than parents in ensuring the school stays on track in terms of values and practice? Where is the forum for parents to engage, and why would we not take every step to increase that connection? There's no criticism in my comments here; I only note that it is a safeguard to us that parental engagement increases to offer grassroots care and input with the children's best interests in mind.

When it comes to education, parents are the foremost voice we should listen to. No number of degrees makes you a parent. And while I value higher education, we need parents to be meaningfully involved in the life of their child's school, not only professors to inform and shape our education. More

than half of the current school board trustees have no children in the public school system, and that is not what parental engagement looks like. We can do better. Democracy is not democracy if those doing the representing do not actually represent the best interests of those they are there to serve.

A sixth and final reason we should support parental engagement in education, is that children will do better. James Heckman, a Nobel Prize winner and academia's arguably second-most cited economist, is internationally recognized for his research on early childhood education. Last month he stated in an interview: These child-care programs I've looked at are only successful when they turn on the parents. That's the secret: engaging the family. Parents really do know what's best. The very nature of the parental relationship to a child, not to mention the quality and quantity of time spent with that child, yields far superior knowledge to any degreed expert.

Even the Supreme Court of Canada has acknowledged in numerous cases, most notably Chamberlain in 2002, that parents are naturally the best informed and best understand their child's needs and well-being. Thus parents ought to be, and by nature are, a child's primary educators. Any state policy or programs play a supporting role. This is well established in Canadian law as well as constitutionally protected in the Charter.

Another top 1 per cent cited economist, Ludger Woessmann—I hope I'm saying the name correctly—published a study in 2001 in a Harvard research journal of more than 250,000 individual students representative of 30 million students in 39 countries, at the time the latest, largest, the most extensive international student achievement test ever conducted, and the study found a student's family had the greatest impact on student achievement.

In 2016, in another of his many studies, Woessmann examined the international scores of 220,000 students from over 8,000 schools in 29 comparable countries, and, again, a host of family background variables were meaningful and statistically significant in explaining students' success. But again, the most powerful: family background indicator was what mattered the most. When parent engage, good things happen.

Woessmann's research reveals an institutional system in which all the people involved have an incentive to improve student performance is the only promise of positive effects. Some will say parental engagement is too hard, there are too many obstacles.

But I say, we say, with so much at stake, with so much to gain, we must do all we can to make sure these—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired. The member's time's expired.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): There is no doubt that parents are their children's No. 1 advocate and that parents want our school system to be a safe place where our children can have their needs met and thrive, both personally and academically. Parents have always been important to our education system through their feedback, engagement and volunteerism. But most parents also recognize that educators are the experts in curriculum, teaching and learning.

Contrary to the last speaker we heard from, the ability to reproduce doesn't make you magically a teacher of curriculum or understanding how learning works. Some parents have also served as elected school trustees, bringing the skills of policy development and budget oversight to the division, as well as representing the local voices of all community members invested in the education system, in addition to parents in those wards.

Throughout the pandemic, many parents and caregivers also took on the role of educators during COVID-19, balancing work, caregiving and other responsibilities. And for some, this was a welcome task. But to be honest, for most parents I spoke to, it was an impossible task. Most parents don't consider themselves education experts and most have other full-time jobs outside the home or they're parenting younger children.

Now the Pallister government is making further cuts on the backs of these hard-working parents through Bill 64. Their school community councils will rely exclusively on parent volunteers and, under this new system, busy parents will be required to volunteer much more time to take on the responsibilities of the school boards that you want to eliminate.

The member of Assiniboia imagines that it's just a matter of parent reaching out to parent to encourage involvement, but parental advisory committees are already well-established in our schools and, as every school superintendent knows, it's a challenge to get equitable representation within parent advisories. PACs tend to exclude parents who may be working multiple jobs to get by or caring for other family members. These parents don't have time to attend council meetings, and as with all Pallister government

decisions, marginalized families will be the hardest hit.

I have experienced attending central and inner-city PAC meetings and regional PAC meetings, and I know from that experience that it took a great deal of support to ensure diverse parental participation. That included having schools help with transportation, provide dinner and staffing supports, such as EAs to attend the meetings, sometimes to help parents communicate and feel comfortable engaging in budget reviews and other things that were discussed.

These efforts were made at the local school board level, but in no way do I trust this government to make those efforts. One thing I learned from these meetings after the media attended one night was that some parents felt unsafe having the meeting filmed because they didn't want their neighbours to know they weren't at home in the evening. This was about safety of their kids on their property. This may be hard to imagine as a very real concern for members of this House that know nothing about the very real experiences of marginalized urban families.

Bottom line is this: Manitoba parents are busy people with multiple concerns and often don't have the time or resources to pick up this government's slack on education. And who's to say the Pallister government would even listen to parents? Thousands of parents showed up at the education review and none of their advice was listened to.

This PMR claims to recognize parents' role in education but in Bill 64, this government only gives parents the ability to meet and advise, not make any decisions. Ultimately, all decisions will come from the minister and his hand-picked provincial education authority board. All the consultation in the world means nothing if the government has no obligation to listen.

Parents deserve better than a government that cuts resources to education, then tells parents to pick up all the work. One letter to the editor, printed on the weekend from a former superintendent and CEO at Hanover School Division, outlines how hard school boards have had to fight for everything they have. These education leaders, together with their school boards, have fought for every new school build, every portable, every dime invested in mental health. As this rural former superintendent indicated, there's great risk to rural communities and their local boards. With government cuts, it will be harder to keep smaller schools open and much harder without the help of local boards and superintendents.

I have a close friend in southern Ontario, in a small town near the one where I grew up, and at one time there was a rural school board representing a number of small communities, but it was merged with the urban school board and it does not fairly represent the rural schools. As a result, the high school that many of my friends and my friends' children attended, is no longer there. My friends led the fight to hold on to their small local schools but their government decided otherwise, and now all teenagers bus out of that community and eventually back again.

Without a local high school and long bus rides between communities, there are challenges for kids: getting to part-time jobs or back to their farm work quickly after class. There are decreased—or, sorry, increased barriers to participating in before-and-after-school activities and there's been, frankly, a loss to property values as people are less inclined to purchase a home in a community without its own school.

How do you think that folks in these small communities participate in those parent advisory groups? These are some of the things that are likely to happen in Manitoba, as this government focuses on cutting education funding, says they're listening to parents but silence is the voice of local government, who at least had the ability to lobby the government for change.

* (11:50)

What the Premier (Mr. Pallister) did to health care he's now doing to our children's education: he's putting education further away from the classroom, and it will lead to school closures. Sadly, this will be the remembered legacy of many members on the other side of the House.

The Premier's decision to dissolve all school divisions eliminates both the democratic system and parents' direct line with trustees to raise concerns. The member from Assiniboia just gave an example this morning that, when he was a trustee, parents stopped him to chat in the grocery store. That is a typical trustee experience, because trustees are local representatives.

I was always accessible by phone and email, at school events and other community events and yes, the grocery store. But parents will never again have that kind of access under Bill 64. Instead, parents will be forced to try to take up any issues with the Premier, and we have seen how this model has failed in Nova Scotia.

Look, we know that some members of this government favour private education and homeschooling

over a robust, high-quality public school system. The former Education minister made no pretense of this. But that is not what the majority of Manitobans want. That is apparent by the protest of Bill 64 that's rolling out across the province from all corners, regardless of political affiliation. Parents are vocal and angry and standing up against Bill 64, yet this government continues to ignore their outcry. If this—if there was any meaning to this private member's resolution, you'd be listening to parents right now.

Deputy Speaker, I've been listening to parents. Our team has been listening to parents. As a parent myself, a trustee who often listened to parents and attended education review meetings and now as an MLA, parents want a strong public education system. They want supports for their children with additional needs; they want good jobs for themselves that pay well and low-cost housing so they can pull their families out of poverty and put enough food on the table. Parents know that a full belly and a good, safe night's sleep are important ways to eliminate barriers to learning. They want safe neighbourhoods and accessible transportation to get their children to schools.

Parents want communication from schools that adapts to their needs in terms of literacy and language. Parents want to have open communication with their child's teacher and principal, and they want to know that there is an easily accessible local process to address conflicts. They want a welcoming school community and to feel comfortable knowing that their children are getting a good education while they work inside or outside their home. They do not want to be responsible for their children's education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, obviously, I do not support this resolution because it does not put educational needs and health and safety of our children first, ahead of budget cuts. The NDP is committed to reinstating the cap on K-to-3 class sizes, including a 15-student cap for all grades during the pandemic and investing in supports such as nutrition programs and more EAs to improve student outcomes.

We are committed to reducing poverty and other barriers to student learnings, and we are committed to continue listening to parents.

Thank you very much, and I will leave it there to allow someone else to have the opportunity to speak.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this resolution, as we absolutely believe in the importance of

having parent engagement in our education system. With that, though, it's weird that this legislation is coming from this government, who has only been making it more difficult for parental involvement—and I'm hopeful that this resolution is a turning of the tables.

So, this past weekend, I had the opportunity to be a panellist and discuss how recent education legislation affects Manitobans, and I specifically focused on three points around a student's ability to succeed. And these points pertain directly to Manitobans being engaged in our education system.

The first point I talked about is the role families and parents play in predicting a student's success. When parents get involved, students perform better on a standardized testing; they receive higher grades, feel better about themselves, which directly plays into their social skills and self-worth.

Evidently, students have better attendance when parents take an interest in their education and are more likely to take challenging classes and behave better at school and at home. Children are also more likely to continue their education after high school when they have a parent taking an interest in what they are doing in school. This also helps students through their academic careers, holding themselves accountable and finishing assignments and developing a love to learn.

And, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these aren't secrets. It is evident that a big part of a child's cognitive development happens during their school-aged years. And that is why, by taking an active role in their educational process, children are more likely to be equipped with the support they need to develop into their best selves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, parental and family involvement in their children's education also benefits the parents. Education becomes a connecting point for parents and children and has the ability to hold strong throughout the relationship. This connection is such an important component of a child's ability to learn and feel supported. And, further to connection, it creates a more positive experience for children. Ultimately, when parents and family are involved in early childhood education, children are more likely to have better learning outcomes and the supports they need to succeed.

Now, there are two other components that I talked about on this panel that pertains to Manitobans' involvement in our education system. One of them is

the community. By having community involvement, schools have more opportunities for short- and long-term benefits as well as a sense of safety.

Community engagement and involvement may look like volunteerism: everything from working in the lunch room, leading a patrol team, creating opportunities for students to volunteer at your workplace, speaking to classrooms, tutoring. There's many opportunities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And there's also another form of community engagement through donations. Donations are valued, as they often fund field trips, learning tools and uniforms, just as a few examples. By supporting community involvement, we're supporting parental involvement because oftentimes the parents make up a large portion of the community of the school.

The last and extremely important component that evidently relates to a student's success through education are our phenomenal school administrators, teachers, faculty, ECEs and staff. And I just want to quickly take a moment to thank all of them for their continuous efforts and adaptability, as they have gone above and beyond, tripling their workload and keeping students here in Manitoba safe through the pandemic.

So, ultimately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, aside from our basic needs of food, shelter, sleep and so forth, the three most important components to a child's success in education: parents and families, community and school supports.

And this resolution encourages parental engagement, which is why we are completely in favour of this support. And we are hopeful that this government is going to retract Bill 64, as it contradicts this resolution and puts up barriers for parental involvement.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding this resolution that the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Johnston) has brought forward. I'd like to thank him for doing that.

I think all Manitobans, and no matter what the party, know that there is huge value in having parental engagement strengthened in moving forward. And we're talking about different ways to accomplish that. I know that we've seen some various opinions, but I think one thing that the COVID situation has really done is drive home how much variance there is and how important it is to have parental engagement.

So I will leave that with a few comments and we can maybe move forward and have a vote on this.

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member from Fort Garry. The member from Fort Garry? *[interjection]*

The Opposition House Leader. *[interjection]* Oh, you're going to speak, sure.

So, the member from St. Johns.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm pleased to put on a couple of minutes, couple of seconds on the record in respect of this morning's private member's resolution. I think certainly it's important to talk about parent engagement—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 10 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

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