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

| Member | Constituency | Political Affiliation |
|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
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| ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon. | Union Station | NDP |
| BALCAEN, Wayne | Brandon West | PC |
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| WIEBE, Matt, Hon. | Concordia | NDP |
| WOWCHUK, Rick | Swan River | PC |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

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

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader): Please call for debate at second reading Bill 207.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader—acting government—or, Deputy Government House Leader has called Bill 207, the Islamic heritage month, commemoration of days, weeks and months act for second reading.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 207—The Islamic Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): Honourable Speaker, I, seconded by the member from Waverley—I move; pardon me. I move, seconded by the member from Waverley, that Bill 207, The Islamic Heritage Month Act, (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and

Months Act Amended), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Kennedy: I rise today to present a bill that holds significant importance for our province. The establishment of Islamic heritage month in Manitoba. This initiative aims to honour and recognize the invaluable contributions of Muslim communities to the fabric of our province's diverse tapestry.

Manitoba's rich history is shaped by the diverse cultures and traditions of its people. Today, we pay tribute to the enduring legacy of Muslim people and communities who have played a pivotal role in shaping our province. From immigrants who arrived in the early 1900s to present-day citizens, Muslims have made meaningful contributions to every aspect of Manitoba's society, be it in education, business, health care, arts or politics.

This history of the early Muslims in Manitoba has gone unacknowledged and forgotten for a period of time. They came as labourers who worked the land or as students looking for a brighter future. These new Manitobans would come together and form the Manitoba Islamic Association, creating a space for those Muslims who called our province home and a place of belonging for newcomers of the Islamic faith.

What's important to highlight is the vast diversity amongst people who follow the tenets of Islam: people from the Middle East, Asia and Africa. These folks come together under a common set of principles and formed a community that would contribute to Manitoba's cultural tapestry.

Manitoba is now home to over 20,000 Muslims. And as the population continues to grow, so do gatherings for Friday prayers and community projects, with the province's first mosque on Hazelwood Avenue being established in 1975.

Muslim Manitobans have existed for a long time, and I am proud to put on the record the amazing contributions the Muslim community has made and continue to offer to our province as we move forward with a new vision of hope, optimism and building a Manitoba people are proud to call home.

As a proud Lebanese-Canadian who grew up in a Muslim family, I am so thrilled to have the opportunity to recognize and honour the achievements of family, friends and the incredible community members and leaders in our province, some of whom graced us with their presence yesterday.

My family's journey to Manitoba is quite unique. My paternal grandfather and grandmother travelled from Lebanon to North America in search of a new life in the early 1900s. Settling in the Interlake, my grandparents were one of 10 founding Muslim families in the province. They were dedicated farmers and proud Manitobans, contributing to our province's social, political and economic diversity.

Leaving what they knew and loved, my grandparents integrated and became a fixture in their new community. Their courage and their ability to connect with others was incredibly invaluable. These are lessons I continue to carry throughout my personal life and political career.

They shared their knowledge about the Islamic faith by simply being themselves and actively participating with their local community. I know their experiences in Manitoba are not isolated. They reflect a reality for generations of Muslims.

While the Muslim population in Manitoba is growing rapidly, Muslims still experience various forms of othering. The resilience of Muslim people throughout the years is truly an inspiring feat that deserves recognition. It's not easy feeling different or excluded from the dominant culture.

Islamic heritage month shifts the societal imbalances so that the celebration of Manitoban diversity is considered the mainstream. Muslims have and continue to make up part of the vibrant, enriched tapestry that is Manitoba.

When I think of the Muslim community, I think of people like Shahina Saddiqi. She is a speaker, educator, author, spiritual counsellor and community advocate, who has committed her life to building bridges for faith and cultural communities in Manitoba. In her experiences, Shahina has identified Muslim youth in Manitoba feeling grief and exclusion at school, in their neighbourhoods and on their social media pages. They deserve to know they are accepted and celebrated as they are.

Many Manitobans, like Shahina, are proud to know this bill will help our youth feel like they belong, feel like Manitoba is their home. We need to take action to ensure they know their Muslim heritage

matters. As a grandparent, Shahina shared how excited her grandchildren are to know they have a government that is willing to take concrete steps towards solidifying their community's role in Manitoba's history.

* (10:10)

Unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation about what the Islamic faith truly is and what Muslim communities really believe. With the passing of Islamic heritage month, our NDP government will join in celebrating Islamic heritage and history, combatting all forms of Islamophobia, racism, discrimination and violence against Muslim communities, and promoting inclusivity for all Manitobans.

This bill will celebrate the historic 'accomplishment'—accomplishments of Muslim Manitobans and allow neighbours to learn they are not so different, and we share common values such as understanding, acceptance and unity.

I grew up learning about the important values of the Islamic faith: being charitable, caring for community and our elders and the value of family. When I watched my parents and grandparents interact with their community and neighbours, it was clear to me they acted with kindness, strength and compassion, not for ulterior motives but instead because they possessed a moral compass that appreciated the value of being a good person.

The way in which they chose to live their lives, in alignment with the Islamic faith and with kindness, reflects the Manitoba I see today. I am so proud to be a Manitoban, and I could never imagine living anywhere else.

A big aspect keeping me in our beautiful province is our mosaic of people. Our cultural, ethnic and religious diversity is one of Manitoba's greatest strengths.

As an MLA, I recognize that it is the responsibility of a government to acknowledge and honour the distinctiveness of our people and the unique qualities they bring to our province. This bill intends to do exactly that.

The Muslim community is a fraction of the greater Manitoban population. Recognizing and celebrating the existence and contributions of Muslims is a vote towards solidifying Manitoba's collective future. When Muslims hurt, Manitoba hurts. And when Muslims succeed, so does our province. When

we choose to uplift our Muslim neighbours and celebrate our common values together, we create a better, more equitable Manitoba for all.

I know Manitobans are no strangers to celebrating and learning about diversity and inclusivity. It serves as a reminder of the importance of fostering understanding, respect and harmony among all within our province, regardless of faith or background. The introduction of today's Islamic heritage month bill, like all days and months that celebrate people of various faiths and communities, does just this.

This bill also emphasizes the importance of education and awareness regarding Islamic heritage. It provides an opportunity for Manitobans to learn about the rich tapestry that is the Islamic faith, its contributions to human progress and its shared values of compassion, tolerance and social justice. Through educational initiatives, public events and cultural exchanges, we can foster greater understanding and appreciation for the diverse perspectives that enrich our collective identity.

In conclusion, I urge all members of this esteemed legislator—Legislature to support this bill and recognize October as Islamic heritage month in Manitoba. Let us come together to honour the past, celebrate the present and build a future where diversity is embraced and inclusivity thrives for all Manitobans. Together, let us ensure our province remains a welcoming and inclusive home for all its residents regardless of their background or beliefs.

Thank you, merci, miigwech and shukran.

Questions

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

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I want to thank the member for Assiniboia for bringing this important bill forward.

A simple question to start off with, obviously: Who has the member consulted with drafting this bill?

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): I'd like to thank my colleague across the way for the thoughtful question. I have consulted with many people throughout the Muslim community here in Manitoba. Many

imams who are spiritual leaders, Shahina Siddiqui, who is the director of Islamic heritage—or, history month in Canada, and certainly other folks of the Muslim faith, who are all in great support of this bill and are looking forward to this bill being coming law.

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): It's a privilege to ask my colleague from Assiniboia questions on this very important bill.

What inspired you to propose the Islamic heritage month bill, and what do you hope it'll achieve for the community?

MLA Kennedy: I'd like to thank my colleague for such a thoughtful question.

The reason for introducing this bill is really to highlight the contributions of the Muslim community in Manitoba. Like my family, Muslims have called Manitoba home for almost 100 years, and they've come, you know, as workers and as students looking for a new life and new opportunity. And it's my hope that this bill is to celebrate the work and history of those who came before us and those who contribute to Manitoba today.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Turtle Mountain): I want to thank the member for bringing this bill up into these—Chamber here.

And I just want to have one question that—what is the member's personal experience with the Islamic religion? I know she mentioned it a lot in her speech, but I just to know more about how much you contribute to your own religion here.

Thank you.

MLA Kennedy: That's an interesting question. I wasn't expecting to speak directly to my own faith. However, like I said in my speech, my family is actually the longest enduring Muslim family in Manitoba, the Abas family. It's my grandparents who moved here in 1914. They were here, invited by the homesteaders act and settled in pioneered land in the Interlake, just outside Fisher Branch. And so, they were the only Muslim family in the whole community.

I grew up being, also, the only—part of the only Muslim family in the community full of Indigenous folks near Peguis. Fisher Branch has a lot of Ukrainian folks and so, we added another flavour—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

MLA Devgan: What are some key highlights or features of the Islamic heritage month bill that you

think will have a positive impact on our community here in Manitoba?

MLA Kennedy: I thank my colleague for the question.

This bill will allow for the fostering of community understanding among all Manitobans, which I think is very important. And by 'recognising'—recognizing October as Islamic heritage month, I think we're taking further steps to celebrate Manitoba Muslims and their history and the common values that we all share.

Mr. Khan: A question for the member opposite is: Previous recognition months have generated great cultural celebrations in this building. Just last year with the Sikh Heritage Month was a fantastic celebration; the Turban Day was fantastic and previous other celebrations in this building. Does this member plan on continuing this tradition in this building?

MLA Kennedy: Honourable Speaker, I'd like to thank the member from Fort Whyte for his question. Certainly, the point of this bill is to celebrate Manitoban Muslims, their contributions to Manitoba, which is—went from 10 families in the early 1900s to now almost 25,000 people living in Manitoba. It's a remarkable feat and, of course, we are wanting to celebrate the contributions that Manitobans have made who are of the Islamic faith, and we will certainly do so.

MLA Devgan: Why does this bill designate, specifically, October as Islamic heritage month?

MLA Kennedy: The federal government designated October as Islamic History Month in 2007. And so we are wanting to follow suit and use October as the month to celebrate Islamic heritage month here in Manitoba.

* (10:20)

Mr. Piwniuk: What else can the government do to celebrate the Islamic heritage month more broadly in this province?

MLA Kennedy: Thank you to the member across the way for their question.

I think what's really important aspect of this bill is—are looking at educating the public about the contributions of Muslims within Manitoba, and certainly a part of it is combatting any type of form of racism or discrimination, especially against Islamophobia, and providing education and awareness to the general

public about the Islamic faith, and I think that will be an important thing to do throughout the province.

MLA Devgan: My colleague touched on this a little bit earlier, but what are some of the contributions Muslim Manitobans have made to our province?

MLA Kennedy: Manitoban Muslims have contributed a lot to our province in terms of arts, culture, health care and the economy and to politics. And many Muslims in Manitoba have come as workers and students, both of whom contributed to our province's economy. We have many professionals and people who work within a variety of sectors, and they contribute to our economy and to the rich tapestry that is Manitoba's history.

Thank you.

Mr. Khan: In this bill, you're wanting to recognize Islamic heritage for their important contribution in education to Manitoban society and throughout history, as you mentioned in your speech.

But can the member please explain why Islamic education was left out of the curriculum when other religious and minority groups were added to the curriculum just this past year under the NDP government? And, for the record, providing a tool kit is not the same as adding it to the curriculum.

MLA Kennedy: I appreciate the question from my member across the way.

Certainly, this is part of the reason that we're going to be introducing this bill and have introduced this bill, because it really does focus on combatting Islamophobia, which our NDP government finds is very important and certainly something I'm very passionate about and am a part of this NDP government. So we will be reaching out and utilizing the educational tools and resources to ensure that we combat the issue of Islamophobia that many Muslims in Manitoba are facing.

MLA Devgan: How do you anticipate this bill will positively impact the cultural awareness and understanding within Manitoba?

MLA Kennedy: I appreciate the question from my colleague.

The introduction of this bill will celebrate diversity and inclusion and promote education and awareness, as I just had discussed earlier. The bill will also ensure that Manitobans have the opportunity to learn more about Islamic heritage.

What I think is really important for people to understand: this province is certainly no stranger to promoting and celebrating diversity and inclusion, and this will certainly go towards making that a part of Manitoban culture, celebrating Manitoban Muslims.

Thank you.

Mr. Khan: Given the crisis that's happening in Gaza and Israel, do you think that creating an Islamic heritage month will help diffuse or increase tensions within these communities, given especially what happened here yesterday, which was obviously political games, with the calling of a ceasefire, and then the NDP rejecting the amendment we made yesterday?

MLA Kennedy: My answer to that is of course this means a lot to the Muslim community here in Manitoba. I have consulted with many folks who are excited to see our NDP government solidify the contributions that Muslim Manitobans have made in this province for more than 100 years.

I believe that it is important to celebrate people who have contributed to our province, and certainly there are no political games being played here.

I think what's really important is that we actually are a government who represents and listens to all people. And certainly this bill is something to celebrate with regards to the Manitoban history of Muslims.

Thank you.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for allowing the opportunity to stand up and talk about this important bill. And I want to thank the member opposite, the member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy), for bringing this bill—very important bill forward. I'm really happy and proud and honoured that I'm part of the Assembly when she brought that forward, so, thank you very much for doing that. I do also echo the comments that, you know, the—bringing this bill forward is not political games. This is something that's important, something that's needed, so thank you for bringing it forward.

I also want to apologize sincerely to the member from Assiniboia. I was not aware that she was part of the Abas family until last night, so I apologize for that, and I was genuinely unaware of that. So, I did read online they grew up in a Muslim family. So, I apologize if any of my comments yesterday came

across as rude or insincere as far as being the only Muslim in this Chamber. I was sincerely, genuinely unaware of that until last night and then, again, further reminded today that you are part of the Abas family, which is a foundation and a staple in this province. Anyone who knows them—for 100 years; I wasn't aware of that. I thought it was more 50 years, but 100 years, wow.

Along with a great many families that have really laid their roots and foundations here in Manitoba, not only for their family, but for generations to come. And not only for the Muslim community, Islamic community, but for all of Manitoba.

If you look at not only the work the Abas family has done, that El Tassi family, Albert. If you look at what the Zeid family has done with their Food Fare locations and all the philanthropic work they do, with Sheik Ismail and the work he's done with Islamic Social Services Association, with MIA, Manitoba Islamic Association, and Idris and Sufiyan [*phonetic*] and all the board members over the generations that have worked there and the great work they've done to make this province better.

So, it's nice to see this bill come forward and recognize that and solidify that here in this building and here in this province where Muslims can celebrate and be proud of their culture and heritage and be recognized for that.

So, again, apologize to the member opposite if I at any point yesterday offended with any of those comments. I was sincerely and genuinely unaware of that lineage. You know, I made it—sorry, fasting again today, day two. So I will get better as we go, and hopefully I won't have to pause as much to get my breath back.

The Islamic heritage and being a proud practicing Muslim is something that I've obviously made well aware. I wear it as a badge of honour to stand up and, you know, represent the community to the best I can. And also the greater community, not just the Muslim community, but all of Manitoba.

I've always been proud to call myself Manitoban and a Canadian first and foremost, and then, you know, whatever else comes after that, whether it be a Blue Bomber, entrepreneur, father, Muslim, Pakistani, from a Pakistani family. You know, all those things to me have always come after being a proud Canadian, Manitoban.

This bill, this act, really gives the Islamic community—I had this question from one of my colleagues,

and I'll just clarify. Someone said, you know, so what's Muslim and Islam, and are they separate? And I said, well, it's kind of like people get Christianity as the umbrella, and then you have Catholicism, Protestant and whatnot underneath it. It's Islam is the umbrella, and then Muslims are the people that practice the faith of Islam. So I am Muslim; I practice the faith of Islam. So a little clarification for people who just wanted to understand that a bit more.

My family immigrated here in 1978 in Ottawa—again, I've said this story a few times on the record—but came here to make a better life for their family and their kids, and I was born in 1980 and, you know, we—it was a tough life coming here. It was tough.

As I look through the history of Manitoba here in this province, and I think back at my family when they came there, there was only a handful of families, as well. Moving to a different country, setting up your roots, not knowing the language, not knowing the cultures, the traditions, the foods. I mean, imagine trying to fast back then, and you're being the only one.

* (10:30)

Now it's accepted and it's appreciated and it's understood from whatever faith you're from, from whatever background you're from, it's celebrated in this province. And that's something to be proud of.

I am very proud to stand at the Legislative Building and be a Muslim Canadian Manitoban and have my colleagues support me, have my colleagues ask questions about, hey, what does this mean? And hey, what does that mean? Not have my colleagues laugh at me or heckle me or make a passive-aggressive comment. To really be genuine in their understanding of the faith.

Hey, where does the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, fit into this? Where does Jesus fit into this? Where does God fit into this? Where does—what are the tenets of Islam? And, through having this conversation, through having an awareness, a month—bought up—man, really—you really don't know how thirsty you get when—until you're fasting; your mouth gets dry.

Having this is fantastic. It is really special that we can use this opportunity. I remember a time when I played for the Blue Bombers, I was in the locker room after a game—actually it was after a practice. And we're all sitting around in—you know, CFL's a great mix of people from all over. And there was a bunch of us, as in 20 of us, and they said, hey, what's a Muslim? Never met a Muslim before. What is that? What do

you guys do? And we had a—it was about an hour, two-hour dialogue on just talking about it, what it meant. And they—you know, everyone left that conversation laughing and feeling better about themselves, having greater understanding. And they genuinely said, I had never met another Muslim before, I just hear about them on TV. And we all know what we hear on TV isn't the most flattering thing in the world.

Bringing a bill forward like this, I think, will help breakdown those barriers. This province has done that time and time again. This building has done that time and time again, celebrating heritage months to educate on various groups and histories and the contributions that they make. From Ukrainian month to Filipino month, Asian Heritage Month, Black History Month, Sikh Heritage Month, Jewish Heritage Month, and I can go on and on and on about how many great cultures, great groups that are celebrated in this province.

So now, it's an honour to add Islamic heritage month to that list. You know, there are so many amazing things to celebrate about Islamic culture and traditions and heritage, I can go on for 30 minutes, but I just realized I only have three minutes left. I've been so used to speaking for 30.

From times of poetry to film, art, spirituality, philosophy, you know, the Islamic faith has played a pivotal role in getting society to where it is today. And some people say, oh, what does that actually mean? I'm going to skim through the last couple pages here.

But you look at surgery. Dr. Al Zahrawi published a 15-page illustrated encyclopedia, which was one of the first ones on detailed procedures on how to perform bodily surgeries.

Coffee, enjoyed around the world, since the ninth century. It was first brewed in Yemen. In earliest days, coffee helped Sufis, Islamic mystics, stay up during late nights of devotion and prayer.

The flying machine, ibn Abbas Firnas [*phonetic*] was the first person to make a real attempt at flying constructions and, later on, that schematic was taken to actually succeed there.

Algebra, math as we know it, was designed—was created under, you know, at that time, under the practising Muslims' Islamic culture at that time, ninth century. You know, at a time—Baghdad was the centre of the world when it came to education and innovation. Optics, music, universities, you can go on and on and on about the contributions that Islam—the toothbrush was, I mean, historically, this is what they

say; it was one of the first cultures to use it. The use of the modern crank. Hospitals as we know it today were first originally found to be in Egypt.

You can go on and on and on about the contributions that this—Muslims have played throughout history. So having this bill go forward, I believe, is a great step forward for this province. I'm happy the member from Assiniboia brought it forward.

In the minutes, I will echo sentiments of, though, the concern—and I know this bill touches on it a little bit, but that education will help combat Islamophobia. It will help combat ideas of racism, prejudice, of misconceptions. But more needs to be done when it comes to that.

I alluded to this in the question, that, you know, if this government is really concerned about combatting Islamophobia and making Manitoba a more inclusive place, then instead of providing a tool kit, the Islamic education should have been added to the curriculum. And that's something that I hope we can have further dialogue for and further combat these barriers of Islamophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, whatever they may be—making Manitoba a purely and truly inclusive, diverse, welcoming home like we call it: friendly Manitoba. This bill is one step forward to that.

And for the 25,000-plus Muslims out there, I think this is a great step in the right direction. So, Ramadan mubarak [*have a blessed Ramadan*] and again, thank you to the member from Assiniboia for bringing this forward.

MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond): Honourable Speaker, I am honoured to rise to represent Fort Richmond and speak in support of Bill 207, The Islamic Heritage Month Act, brought forward by my colleague, the member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy). I would like to thank the member for Assiniboia for giving us this opportunity to highlight the importance of this matter.

Manitoba is home to over 20,000 Muslims. In south Winnipeg, much of the population is within the Muslim community. They make great contributions to our society every day. They are entrepreneurs, business owners, provide social services, are professors and academics and educators, and lead in the arts. They are all Canadians, and they are all Manitobans.

Many are raising kids and families in south Winnipeg. I am always grateful for the diversity of south Winnipeg, especially my Fort Richmond constituency. We must always be celebratory of each

other's differences, as difference makes us—our community—rich, interesting and strong.

By commemorating Islamic history—heritage month, we reaffirm our commitment to building a society where every individual feels valued, respected and empowered to contribute to the common good. Embracing Islamic heritage month is a reminder of the importance of fostering understanding, respect and harmony among all Manitobans, regardless of their background or faith.

Honourable Speaker, I have had the privilege of meeting with numerous Muslim committee members within the past 10 years in different capacities. As a school board trustee and vice-chair of the Winnipeg School Division, I brought forward a motion that unanimously passed to condemn bill 21 in Quebec and to reaffirm school board's position as a safe place for all students.

Just for the background, bill 21, the secularism law, which has been in place since June 2019, prevents certain civil servants, such as teachers, police officers and government lawyers, from wearing religious symbols while on the job, such as hijabs worn by Muslim people—sorry—Jewish yarmulkes and Sikh turbans.

Many civil liberties groups argue that the law especially discriminates against Muslim women who wear head coverings and goes against the human rights of so many in Quebec. It was important to myself, the learning community, to families and friends, that I condemn the outright Islamophobia that was passed in Quebec through bill 21.

I know that our public service in Manitoba is enriched when they welcome people from diverse backgrounds, ensuring protection against discrimination and celebration of one's background. I have also heavily interacted with the Muslim community in my role as an advocate. I worked with Auntie Shahina Siddiqui, who the member for Assiniboia mentioned earlier, and the Islamic Social Services Association to teach anti-racism training to law enforcement and educators.

We can all be advocates in our communities, fighting against injustice and standing up for one—for others' human rights, especially those who don't have a voice at the table.

Islamic heritage month is more than a commemoration month. It is a powerful platform for dialogue, understanding and mutual respect. As we commemorate, let us also embrace the opportunity to build

bridges, to learn from each other and to strengthen our communities.

Currently, in my role as an MLA, I have met with numerous committee members and listened to their experiences. I know that the Muslim community is experiencing a distressing time. The ongoing war in Gaza is taking a toll on Muslims in Manitoba.

* (10:40)

Incidents of Islamophobia has risen since the beginning of the war. Many Muslims are afraid to talk about the situation with their non-Muslim friends, neighbours and co-workers. They fear that their community spaces will be unsafe and hostile if they express their concerns and grief. In Fort Richmond, where a large number of Muslim communities reside, a number of incidents have happened including incidents happening near schools and at university.

This is why education and awareness are so important, especially now. Education should not be the sole responsibility of the Muslim community. That is why we should continue to have the conversations, pursue the education and officially recognize the Islamic heritage month.

As a first generation immigrant myself, I think of my children, who were born in Canada. I want them to interact with all cultures as much as possible, but I know not enough is made readily available. I felt this when I was invited to the house of a Palestinian family with high school age children in south Winnipeg. How the parents lovingly wanted their children to be able to relate, understand and know their Islamic faith.

The Manitoba Islamic Association owns and operates the historic first mosque in Manitoba in south Winnipeg. The Manitoba Islamic Association offers a number of community educational programs for children and families which include the Islamic elementary school from kindergarten to grade 4, and a daily program for preschool ages in Arabic and Islamic culture through active-activities. They also offer charitable assistance to those in need and social and cultural programs for women, young people and other ages.

Honourable Speaker, I have had the pleasure to meet and talk to many constituents of Fort Richmond and south Winnipeg from the Manitoba Islamic Association board and active members: president, Khawja Latif; vice-president, Muaaz Jutt and Raheen Aziz; secretary, Delvinder Zamir and Hady ElNagar, Tasheem Vali; and researcher, Youcef Soufi and many

more. They are always accessible and approachable to everyone in our community.

I have also had many conversations with Abdi Ahmed, who works at front line in the newcomer and refugee community for many, many years, and brings policy change to the local community in Winnipeg as well as in Canada and internationally. I have also met Mr. Ahmed Shire, a Somali Muslim gentleman who served as a former global director of humanitarian emergencies with UNHCR, who is also a constituent of Fort Richmond.

All these people are so dedicated. They told me that although Muslims are prominent worldwide, Islamophobia continues to be the issue growing over different platforms, whether physical or online. Healthy Muslim families, which is also located in south Winnipeg, strengthens and empowers families through education, workshops, services and support in line with Islamic values. They offer such as public education, awareness webinars, and use skills and leadership program. Every year in October, Healthy Muslim families celebrates Islamic History Month through their annual Islamic art gala, that showcases the rich tapestry of Islamic artist-artistic traditions, bringing together artists and enthusiasts across Canada.

We must continue to ensure that all Manitobans feel that their cultures are celebrated by their communities. We have so many incredible people that make us—that make up this province. We should always challenge ourselves to learn more about other cultures and to be vigilant against prejudice. That's what makes education so important for the Islamic heritage month. It is our kids that will be living in the world we create today. Let's create a world where divisive tactics are met with strong forces of unity, and where knowledge of those who are different from us is readily available. We are gifted in Manitoba to have so many organizations that are doing the work of educating the next generation to feel connected with their culture, heritage and background.

As always, we stand with unity over division. The more people know each other in this province, the more we will appreciate and respect one another. I see how the people of south Winnipeg celebrate one another and I wish that for the whole province.

Bill 207 is an incredible step forwards, a future where our kids are not afraid when they are met with an opinion, a person or a belief that is different than them. Where instead, they meet the difference with interest, compassion and the desire to understand.

And I want to end my speech to quote Auntie Shahina Siddiqui's words here: my vision for Winnipeg is that by the next century, we would have been successful to purge racism, anti-Indigenous discrimination and the othering and the demonizing of the racialized groups, religious minorities and the public sectors.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): First, I'd like to thank the member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy) for bringing this Bill 207 forward, Islamic heritage month. It's so important that a province like Manitoba, we have such diversity in our province, and it's so important that the respect that we have for each other.

Like what—like the member said, she had—her grandparents came, her family came back around the turn of the century to the Interlake region and grew up Islamic, grew up Lebanese. And the importance of being diversified throughout this whole province is so important.

Like my own background, I—none of my grandparents were born in Canada. Both my grandparents on my paternal side came from Ukraine. One came when she was—my grandmother came when she was only two or three years old, and my grandfather came when he was 17 by himself, to come to this country from Ukraine before all the conflicts started in World War I and World War II.

So I'm thankful for him that he came to Manitoba. And the thing was, I—my mom's side, my maternal side, my grandparents came from England; Yorkshire, England. And my grandfather came here to Manitoba, firstly to come to look for a dairy farm for his parents, who—they were going to sell their dairy farm in England to come to Russell, Manitoba.

And so, when my grandmother, who was married to my grandfather, before she came to Canada, she lost her mother during the pandemic of 1918. And she came to live with her sister, who was actually married to my grandfather's brother. So, two brothers married two sisters.

And so the interesting thing was my grandmother, who came from England as a young girl—she was only 14 years old at the time. And—14? Yes. And so, the thing was, my cousin—my mom's cousin in England did a family tree, and the family tree indicated that my grandmother had discovered that my—her grandfather had separated from his first wife to marry somebody who was—had Roma background, which Roma means,

is the Romas that came to Europe were from Punjab, India.

And they came to England—to Europe, and they assimilated with the population. And a lot of times, they took the name or they took the religion of the area that they actually settled in. And so my background, we realized that we have Roma blood in our—in my grandmother.

And so, the thing was, the importance of that was back in the day, you know, I have an interracial marriage. I married my wife, who is Jamaican—half-Jamaican. My mother-in-law, who just passed away recently, came from Jamaica and she—we—again, she was not just my mother-in-law, she was more like my mother. And I'm going to miss her very much because she believed in me.

And the thing is, that is so important—why we have to really embrace the differences in this province when it comes to diversity, especially the Islamic population who come here for opportunities, much like my grandparents came at the turn of the century.

It is important that we embrace all our—everybody that comes to this province to make sure that they are productive in our society, that they have education, you know, to make sure that we respect each other is so important because this day and age there is such a—more and more division that's happening right now.

* (10:50)

Polarization is important, but we have to come together as one, as—for Manitobans. And I really believe that working together and making sure that this is a better place for our youth, our children.

Because at the same time, I have to say, you know, learning—having the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) who joined us a few—about—just about two years ago now, has been a really good addition to our caucus. And I've learned so much from him when it comes to Islamic and Muslim—the importance of certain days of the year that's important to them as much as when it comes to Christianity has important days that we have, when it goes—when we go forward here, Mr. Honourable Speaker.

And again, we see right now, like, you know, the thing is we're seeing more the Muslim, Islamic population, coming into rural Manitoba which is good to see. We want to see that diversification.

You know, they're buying businesses in our small town. Like, they're buying hotels. They're buying gas

stations. They're buying businesses that are flourishing and we—it's important that we have the next generation of youth that—and we need to populate this province because when it comes to the baby boomers, they're saying right now when the baby boom was born, there was four kids per baby boomer family, and now we're seeing that Canadians are only having 1.5 kids.

So, the importance of growing the economy, making sure that the economy—that we have jobs, we actually look after our seniors—it's so important for immigration to come in this province to make sure that we replace some of the workers that are retiring in the next decades. And when it comes to that, we need to make sure that we embrace everybody that comes into this province, if it's doctors, it's professionals, if it's truck drivers, it's every other industry out there, if it's heavy mechanic operations. We got to embrace immigration that comes to this province for making sure that we grow the economy.

And it's so important that, you know, the contributions that immigrants bring to this province and no matter what religion you are, what ethnic group you are, it's important that we all have one common goal here: to have a better place for our youth, our next generations. Because it's so important that we have acceptance. And that's the key thing that I want to bring here today, and making sure that when it comes to the religions.

You know, I grew up Catholic, most of my—throughout my whole childhood into my adult life. And, like, my grandparents who were Anglican, my mom's side. Met my wife; she was Anglican so it was just easier for me to go with the Anglican side, to respect it. But, you know, I do go to the Catholic church once in a while to make me sure that, you know, to embrace the—my background, my heritage, my religion.

And it's so important that we all have the respect for each other when it comes to our religions and again, the Islamic population, you know, has now—like the member from Assiniboia said, that she was one of the few families that came to Manitoba, her family, her ancestors. And now we see about 25,000 people here in Manitoba.

And that's important. That's amazing to hear those statistics because the fact is, you know, it's nice to—you know, I went to New York City in June of this past year and I saw the diversification. They say that New York is one of the most diversified populations in North America.

Well, you know what? I just go to Winnipeg here, and I see the diversification. It's almost as much like New York City now because of the population coming in. And I really feel that, you know what, Manitoba has now welcomed so many new immigrants.

And like I said, you know, when my ancestors came from Ukraine back in the turn of the century, you know, they came in between 1901 to 1911 and now we have now another influx. It's—I always say history doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme. Now we're seeing a lot of refugees coming from Ukraine, coming here to this province. And I believe the numbers are up to about 25,000 just of Ukrainians coming to this—to this province in the last two years since we opened up, making sure that we had the refugee welcoming centre for the Ukrainians.

And so, it's important that we make sure that we have all these resources when it comes to bringing in people from around the world, coming to this province to have a better life. That my grandparents came here for a better life for myself. And I feel so honoured that I can be here representing this at the Manitoba Legislature all for my grandparents who came to this country for a better life. And I want to thank them for what they did for me and for my other members of my family.

And I see that with many other peoples out there when it comes to different ethnic groups from different parts of the world, and making sure that they have their generations, their third generation has the opportunities that I had in this province that, you know, I did well in business and I was fortunate because, you know, my grandparents took the chance. They gave my parents work ethics. They passed it on to us. I'm passing it on to my children, and hopefully it goes on from generation to generation, because it's important that we actually encourage immigration to this province.

And Honourable Speaker, I just want us put few words on the record here, and I want to thank you and have the opportunity to do so.

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): It is my honour to put some words on the record today in support of Islamic heritage month, and I thank my friend and colleague, the MLA for Assiniboia, for bringing this important piece of legislation forward.

As we gather here today to speak on the significance of proclaiming October as Islamic heritage month in Manitoba, I am reminded of the rich, multifaceted tapestry of humanity that thrives within our province.

When I began my journey in politics, I wasn't completely sure what to expect. But as I began the process of speaking to community members door after door, day after day, I was so uplifted by the varying life stories that were shared. I quickly realized this would become one of the great privileges and gifts of my life. I am so grateful for the openness and willingness of community members in Waverley from all walks of life to share their life stories with me. They have taught me so much.

This bill, which I am certain we are poised to embrace unanimously, is more than a legislative gesture. It's a profound affirmation of our collective commitment to a society that values diversity, encourages understanding and upholds the dignity of every individual's heritage.

I'd like to share a personal story and connection that I believe underscores the essence of our discussions today. My cousin, who grew up Catholic actually, embarked on a transformative journey in her 30s, embracing Islam. Her path to becoming a devout Muslim, alongside her husband, opened a new chapter of enlightenment and understanding in her life and, subsequently, in mine.

So, through their experiences and their openness in sharing them with me, I have been afforded the window into the rich traditions, profound ethical teachings and the vibrant community life that Islam nurtures. Their journey is a testament to the power of faith. Faith that transcends previous boundaries, forges new identities and enriches one's life with new meaning and direction.

It's a narrative that reflects the broader story of countless individuals who find in Islam a source of spiritual fulfillment, ethical guidance and communal belonging. Their story has illuminated for me the profound principles of Islam. Principles that champion peace, advocate for justice and call for unwavering compassion towards all of humanity.

And, you know, these personal experiences with my cousin and her husband have not only enriched my understanding but have also deepened my appreciation for the Islamic faith and its contributions to our shared societal fabric.

And so, I am so pleased to stand in support of this Islamic heritage month bill, and I am so proud of the member from Assiniboia for bringing this forward, and I look forward to this Chamber voting for it unanimously in favour.

Thank you so much.

The Speaker: The House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 207, The Islamic heritage month, commemoration of days, weeks and months act amended.

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

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Is there a will of the House to call it unanimous?

The Speaker: Is there a will of the House to call it unanimous? [Agreed]

The bill was passed unanimously.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 3—Louis Riel

The Speaker: The hour being 11 o'clock, the time for private members' business has passed. We'll now move on to private members' resolutions.

The resolution being put forward by the member for St. Boniface.

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): I move, seconded by the MLA for Seine River,

WHEREAS in 1869, the Métis people of the territory known as the Red River Settlement established a Provisional Government adopting a List of Rights based on a multicultural, bilingual and inclusive vision of a province that respected the rights of Indigenous peoples and minorities; and

WHEREAS Louis Riel has been recognized as a founder of Manitoba and the Métis were instrumental in the entry of Manitoba into Confederation; and

WHEREAS Manitoba has been a province for more than 150 years and it is an appropriate time to further recognize the significant contributions of Louis Riel and the Métis; and

WHEREAS Louis Riel is regarded as a hero, a defender of French culture, and Manitobans are encouraged to learn about the deep history and impact of the Francophone community; and

WHEREAS on Louis Riel Day, February 19, 2024, the Provincial Government honoured Louis Riel by hanging his portrait in the Manitoba Legislature with a plaque reading "First Premier Louis Riel;

March 1870-June 1870; Founder of Manitoba. Proud Red River Métis.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to unanimously affirm its commitment to reconciliation through the recognition of Louis Riel as the first premier of the Province.

Motion presented.

MLA Loiselle: C'est un honneur en tant que Métis francophone du Manitoba d'adresser la parole ce matin à la Chambre.

J'aimerais reconnaître qu'en 1869, le peuple métis qui habitait le territoire connu sous le nom de « la colonie de la rivière Rouge » a établi un gouvernement provisoire, Monsieur l'honorable président, et que ce gouvernement a adopté une Liste des droits fondée sur une vision multiculturelle, bilingue et inclusive d'une province qui respecte les droits des peuples autochtones et des minorités; que Louis Riel a été reconnu comme l'un des fondateurs de la province du Manitoba; et que les Métis ont joué un rôle déterminant dans l'entrée du Manitoba dans la Confédération; qu'il y a maintenant plus de 150 ans que le Manitoba est devenu une province, et qu'il s'agit d'un moment propice pour reconnaître davantage l'importante contribution de Louis Riel et des Métis; que Louis Riel est considéré comme un héros et un défenseur de la culture francophone, et que les Manitobains et Manitobaines sont encouragés à s'informer sur la riche histoire et l'influence considérable de la communauté francophone.

J'aimerais aussi reconnaître que, lors du Jour de Louis Riel, le 19 février 2024, le gouvernement provincial a honoré Louis Riel en accrochant au Palais législatif du Manitoba son portrait accompagné d'une plaque sur laquelle était inscrit : « Premier Premier ministre Louis Riel, mars 1870 à juin 1870. Fondateur du Manitoba. Fier Métis de la rivière Rouge ».

Alors, Monsieur l'honorable président, la loi puissante désignant Louis Riel en tant que premier Premier ministre honoraire du Manitoba a été un moment historique dans l'histoire de notre province. Cette loi, qui a été élaborée de nombreuses années—pendant nombreuses années, avait été présentée par notre premier ministre, l'honorable Wab Kinew, au courant des deuxième, troisième, quatrième et cinquième session de la législature précédente.

Évidemment, nous savions que ce projet de loi devait être adopté. Et notre équipe—

Translation

As a French-speaking Métis from Manitoba, it is an honour to address the House this morning.

I would like to acknowledge that in 1869, the Métis people who inhabited the territory known as 'The Red River Settlement' established a provisional government, and that this government adopted a List of Rights based on a multicultural, bilingual and inclusive vision of a province that respects the rights of Indigenous peoples and minorities; that Louis Riel has been recognized as one of the founders of the province of Manitoba; and that the Métis were instrumental in bringing Manitoba into Confederation; that it has now been over 150 years since Manitoba became a province, and that this is an opportune time to further recognize the important contribution of Louis Riel and the Métis; that Louis Riel is considered a hero and defender of francophone culture; and that Manitobans are encouraged to learn about the rich history and considerable influence of the francophone community.

I would also like to acknowledge that on Louis Riel Day, February 19, 2024, the provincial government honoured Louis Riel by hanging his portrait in the Manitoba Legislature along with a plaque that read: "First Premier Louis Riel, March 1870 to June 1870. Founder of Manitoba. Proud Red River Métis."

Honourable Speaker, the powerful legislation designating Louis Riel as Manitoba's honorary first Premier was a historic moment in our province's history. This legislation, which had been in the making for many years, had been introduced by our Premier, the Honourable Wab Kinew, during the second, third, fourth and fifth sessions of the previous Legislature.

Obviously, we knew that this bill had to be passed. And our team—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I just have to remind the member that you can't refer to another member by name. You have to use their ministerial title or their constituency.

MLA Loiselle: Donc, évidemment, nous savions que ce projet de loi devrait être adopté, et notre équipe a donc continué d'avancer avec ce projet, depuis 2019 pour finalement réussir en 2023.

C'est donc pourquoi notre gouvernement a choisi de faire de la loi Louis Riel la première loi adoptée par le 43^e Législature du Manitoba. Aux côtés de la Fédération des Métis du Manitoba, de l'Union

nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba et des membres de la communauté métisse, nous avons été fiers que cette loi reçoive la sanction royale le 7 décembre 2023.

Il s'agissait d'une étape importante, Monsieur l'honorable président, dans la reconnaissance de la profonde histoire métisse du Manitoba. Il s'agissait également d'une étape importante pour renforcer les relations de notre gouvernement avec la Fédération des Métis du Manitoba, afin que nous puissions contribuer à collaborer sur les questions importantes auxquelles sont confrontées notre province et sa communauté métisse.

Monsieur l'honorable président, au cours de l'été de 1869, des arpenteurs fédéraux se sont installés dans la Colonie de la rivière Rouge, cherchant à évaluer ses terres avant le projet de confédération. En réaction, la Colonie de la rivière Rouge et les régions avoisinantes mettent sur pied le Comité national des Métis, dont le jeune Louis Riel est le secrétaire, et plus tard le président à l'âge de 25 ans.

Plus tard, au cours de l'automne, le comité réussit à arrêter les arpenteurs, et se met au travail pour défendre les intérêts des habitants de la Colonie de la rivière Rouge auprès du gouvernement fédéral. Le 26 janvier 1870, la première réunion d'une longue série se tient pour discuter de la possibilité d'une confédération fédérale avec 40 délégués de toute la Colonie. Quelques mois plus tard, cet organisme se reconstitue sous le nom de « gouvernement provisoire d'Assiniboia » avec les pouvoirs législatif, exécutif et judiciaire.

À la fin de la Résistance de la rivière Rouge, quatre listes successives de droits sont rédigées par le gouvernement provisoire d'Assiniboia, la quatrième et dernière version devenant l'Acte du Manitoba du 1870.

Cette liste de droits présente une vision multiculturelle, bilingue et inclusive d'une province qui respecte les droits des peuples autochtones et des minorités. Elle consacre les droits linguistiques constitutionnels pour l'anglais et le français, Monsieur l'honorable président.

Le nom « Manitoba » a été proposé par Louis Riel et choisi par le gouvernement du Canada comme le nom de la province. Le nom dérive du cri « Manito-wapow » ou de l'ojibwé « manidoobaa » qui signifient tous deux « le détroit de Manitou, le Grand esprit ».

La continuité historique et juridique entre le gouvernement provisoire d'Assiniboia et le gouvernement du Manitoba est indéniable. Avec la Loi sur Louis Riel, nous reconnaissons officiellement ce que les Manitobains ont toujours su: Louis Riel a été le premier Premier ministre de notre province. Nous sommes assis ici aujourd'hui, suivant son héritage et celui du gouvernement provisoire d'Assiniboia.

Louis Riel est le père de la confédération manitobaine, ce qui fait de lui une figure centrale non seulement pour la communauté métisse, mais aussi pour l'ensemble de la communauté manitobaine.

Louis Riel incarne les luttes des Métis, des Premières nations et des francophones à travers le Canada, les tensions raciales entre les colons blancs et les peuples autochtones—et en tant que fervent catholique, il s'est également mêlé à l'histoire religieuse du Manitoba. Grâce à Louis Riel, nous pouvons voir que l'histoire des Métis et l'histoire du Manitoba ne font qu'une seule et même histoire.

Lors du dévoilement du portrait et de la plaque reconnaissant Louis Riel comme premier Premier ministre, le président de la Fédération des Métis du Manitoba, David Chartrand, a partagé les mots suivants de Louis Riel, qui sont également gravés autour de la statue de Louis Riel juste à l'entrée de l'Assemblée législative et la rivière Assiniboine.

Et je cite: « Je sais que, par la grâce de Dieu, je suis le fondateur du Manitoba. [...] Je crois que, par ce que j'ai souffert pendant 15 ans, par ce que j'ai fait pour le Manitoba et les habitants du Nord-Ouest, que mes paroles valent quelque chose ».

Aujourd'hui, ces mots sont encore d'une valeur inestimable.

* (11:10)

Après la cérémonie, le Premier ministre du Manitoba et le Président Chartrand se sont rendus sur la tombe de Monsieur Riel à la Cathédrale de Saint-Boniface. Plus tard dans l'après-midi, des membres de notre caucus ont assisté à la Marche des Métis au Festival du Voyageur. Des gens de toute la province sont venus à nos côtés pour manifester leur fierté à l'égard de la communauté métisse du Manitoba.

Dans de nombreuses communautés à travers le Canada, Riel est commémoré par des noms de rue, d'école, de quartier, de statue et d'autres bâtiments. Riel est commémoré par le pont piétonnier de l'Esplanade Riel qui relie le Vieux Saint-Boniface à Winnipeg. Il existe aussi la Division scolaire Louis Riel,

la statue de Louis Riel juste à l'extérieur du Palais législatif, l'avenue Louis Riel dans le Vieux Saint-Boniface, l'avenue Riel dans le quartier Minnetonka de Saint-Vital, et même sur les t-shirts « Keeping It Riel » vendus au Festival du Voyageur.

Compte tenu de rôle central joué par Riel dans la création du Manitoba tel que nous le connaissons, dans le développement de la communauté métisse et dans la promotion des droits linguistiques et des droits des minorités, nous avons également pris des mesures pour modifier les guides d'études afin de reconnaître Louis Riel comme le premier Premier ministre du Manitoba.

En apprenant à connaître Louis Riel, les élèves du Manitoba apprendront l'histoire de notre province, du peuple métis et des droits des minorités linguistiques.

Merci, Monsieur l'honorable président.

Translation

Obviously, we knew that this bill would have to be passed, so our team continued to move forward with this project, starting in 2019 and finally succeeding in 2023.

That is why our government chose to make The Louis Riel Act the first statute passed by the 43rd Legislature of Manitoba. Along with the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba and members of the Métis community, we were proud to see this legislation receive Royal Assent on December 7, 2023.

This was an important step in recognizing Manitoba's deeply Métis history. It was also an important step in strengthening our government's relationship with the Manitoba Métis Federation, so that we may work together on the important issues facing our province and its Métis community.

Honourable Speaker, in the summer of 1869, federal surveyors moved into the Red River Settlement, seeking to assess its lands in anticipation of the Confederation project. In response, the Red River Settlement and surrounding areas set up the Métis National Committee, of which the young Louis Riel was initially secretary before later becoming its president at the age of 25.

Later that autumn, the committee succeeded in stopping the surveyors and set to work defending the interests of the inhabitants of the Red River Settlement before the federal government. On January 26, 1870, the first of many meetings was held to discuss the possibility of a federal confederation, with 40 delegates

from all over the Settlement. A few months later, this body was reconstituted as the Provisional Government of Assiniboia, with legislative, executive and judicial powers.

At the end of the Red River Resistance, four successive Lists of Rights were drafted by the Provisional Government of Assiniboia, the fourth and final version becoming The Manitoba Act of 1870.

This list of rights presents a multicultural, bilingual and inclusive vision of a province that respects the rights of Indigenous peoples and minorities. It enshrines constitutional language rights for English and French.

The name 'Manitoba' was proposed by Louis Riel and chosen by the Government of Canada as the name of the province. The name derives from the Cree 'Manito-wapow' or the Ojibwe 'manidoobaa', both of which mean 'the strait of Manitou, the Great Spirit'.

The historical and legal continuity between the Provisional Government of Assiniboia and the Government of Manitoba is undeniable. With The Louis Riel Act, we officially recognize what Manitobans have always known: Louis Riel was our province's first Premier. We sit here today due to his legacy and that of the provisional government of Assiniboia.

Louis Riel is the father of the Manitoba confederation, which makes him a central figure not only for the Métis community, but for the Manitoba community as a whole.

Louis Riel embodies the struggles of Métis, First Nations and Francophones across Canada, the racial tensions between white settlers and Indigenous peoples—and because he was a devout Catholic, he is also intrinsic to Manitoba's religious history. Thanks to Louis Riel, we can see that the history of the Métis and the history of Manitoba are one and the same narrative.

At the unveiling of the portrait and plaque recognizing Louis Riel as Manitoba's first Premier, Manitoba Métis Federation President David Chartrand shared the following words of Louis Riel, which are also engraved around the statue of Louis Riel just outside the entrance to the Legislative Assembly and the Assiniboine River.

And I quote: "I know that, by the grace of God, I am the founder of Manitoba. . . . I believe that because of what I suffered for 15 years, because of what I did for Manitoba and the people of the Northwest, that my words are worth something."

Today, those words are still invaluable.

After the ceremony, the Premier of Manitoba and President Chartrand visited Riel's grave at St. Boniface Cathedral. Later that afternoon, members of our caucus attended the Métis Walk at the Festival du Voyageur. People from across the province joined us to show their pride in Manitoba's Métis community.

In many communities across Canada, Riel is commemorated in the names of streets, schools, neighbourhoods, statues and other buildings. Riel is also commemorated by the Esplanade Riel pedestrian bridge linking Old St. Boniface to Winnipeg. There is also the Louis Riel School Division, the statue of Louis Riel just outside the Legislative Building, Avenue Louis Riel in Old Saint-Boniface, Avenue Riel in the Minnetonka district of Saint-Vital, and even on the Keeping It Riel t-shirts sold at the Festival du Voyageur.

Given Riel's central role in the creation of Manitoba as we know it, in the development of the Métis community and in the promotion of language rights and minority rights, we have also taken steps to amend study guides to recognize Louis Riel as Manitoba's first Premier.

By learning about Louis Riel, Manitoba students will learn about the history of our province, the Métis people and the rights of linguistic minorities.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we move on to the question period, I'd like to acknowledge some students in the public gallery. We have seated in the public gallery, from Henry G. Izatt, 66 grade 9 students under the direction of Alex Kozub. The group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan).

Welcome, everyone.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. 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 rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer may exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Will this resolution necessitate an amendment to the bill that was passed this fall?

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): That's a very good question. Are you asking in regards to the translation, or—I don't exactly understand the question.

Mr. Johnson: Well, last fall we recognized Louis Riel as the honorary first premier in Manitoba, and the bill was brought forward and passed.

Now this is—this resolution is asking for him to be recognized as premier. So would this resolution passing require an amendment to the bill that was passed this last fall sitting?

MLA Loiselle: I don't believe so. I think what we're asking here is a commitment to reconciliation by all members in a unanimous manner.

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): After so many years of trying to get this bill passed, what do you think it means to the Métis community and to Manitoba as a whole?

MLA Loiselle: Thank you for that question.

Obviously, the history of the Métis is intertwined with the history of Manitoba. This is an important resolution speaking to the path forward in regards to reconciliation.

Over the years, the Métis have been persecuted. A number of great wrongs were inflicted onto the Métis, and I think the only path forward for Manitoba, recognizing that over 100,000 Manitobans are Métis, is to recognize Louis Riel as the father of Manitoba and recognize the important path forward in regards to reconciliation.

The Speaker: Are there no further questions?

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Could the member give some examples of what will be added to the Manitoba curriculums?

MLA Loiselle: Well, thank you for that question. I have a quote here by David Stevenson [*phonetic*]: a lie is a lie even if everyone believes it, and the truth is the truth even if no one believes it.

Over years and years in schools, kids have been taught that Louis Riel was a traitor when, in fact, he is not. He is not only the first premier of Manitoba, he is the father of Manitoba and a father of confederation.

So I think what we have to do in the learning guides and curriculums is teach the truth in regards to Louis Riel and the fact that he was a great hero, and

we wouldn't be sitting here today if it wasn't for Louis Riel.

MLA Moroz: Can you talk a little bit about how this act was developed in conjunction with the Manitoba Métis Federation?

MLA Loiselle: I'd like to add that not only was the Manitoba Métis Federation consulted, but Union nationale Métisse Saint-Joseph was also consulted. So all Métis across Manitoba, through different organizations, were consulted.

And as I mentioned previously, this is a resolution that we tried to pass in the past but were unsuccessful, and I'm very proud that we're able to do it today.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle) for bringing forward today's resolution. I think it's excellent that we had the opportunity to speak so much about Louis Riel since resuming session about five, six months ago now, Honourable Speaker.

My question for the member is: I was hoping he could just elaborate a little bit on his own personal experience; how he feels about this resolution, why he is the one in particular bringing it forward.

MLA Loiselle: Well, thank you for that question.

My family has deep roots in Manitoba. In 1743, my first ancestor actually came to Manitoba as a voyageur from Montreal all the way to Fort Paskoya, which is now The Pas or Le Pas. And unfortunately in my family, given that the Métis had to go underground for so many years, I didn't really find out the root of my culture or the importance of my Métis culture in my family until I got my Métis card in 1990. And I was the first one to do so.

And since then, everyone in my family, uncles, aunts, nephews—

The Speaker: Time has expired.

Mr. Johnson: The member talks about additional education stuff as part of it. I would like to ask the member, well, if you follow MMF on Twitter or X or whatever they call it nowadays, you have a word of the day there—Michif word of the day.

So I think that's important. And ladies from my community actually composed a dictionary of Michif that has taken the traditionally spoken language and made it into writing.

So, through these educations and in the curriculum, what languages are you considering to—what languages would the member be considering to add to the curriculum, French, English, Michif, et cetera?

MLA Loiselle: Well, thank you. That's an excellent question. In fact, my daughter Natassja just took Michif at the University of Winnipeg as a language course.

So the Manitoba Métis Federation is encouraging, I believe what's called heritage Métis, which is a mixture of, of course, old French and some Saulteaux and Cree words.

And I encourage all efforts, you know, by the Métis federation working with the Department of Education to teach heritage Métis.

Merci.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram).

The honourable member for River Heights.

MLA Moroz: How do you think the passing of The Louis Riel Act has allowed Louis Riel Day to take on a new meaning for our province?

MLA Loiselle: Well, I can tell you that, on Louis Riel Day this year, Métis across Manitoba were unanimous in celebrating leur fierté or their pride in the fact that they are Métis, that we're an important part of the foundation of this province.

* (11:20)

I had the opportunity to walk with many of my members—with many of them at Festival du Voyageur in a marche avec les Michif [*walk with the Michif*] through Voyageur park and everyone applauded incredibly. It was fantastic, and I know that that was resonated across the province.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Honourable Speaker, bill 202, The Louis Riel Act, was passed unanimously in the fall. Why was this resolution not brought forward at that time, while we were having these very important discussions?

MLA Loiselle: I think the history of the Métis is one that needs to be told more than once. It needs to be celebrated more than once. Obviously, a number of wrongs have been perpetuated towards the Métis in the past and the path forward of reconciliation is not—will not be resolved in one day, in one week, but in

a number of years. And I think that's why it's important to continue to speak about Louis Riel and the importance of Louis Riel in regards to Manitoba.

MLA Moroz: Can I get you to talk a little bit, please, about what the passage of The Louis Riel Act signals to the rest of Canada, where Louis Riel's accomplishments and legacy are not as widely known or understood?

MLA Loiselle: Well, thank you for that question.

Actually, Louis Riel is a very important figure of Confederation. In Quebec, they speak of Louis Riel in regards to, you know, minority rights, language rights and whatnot. And even though Louis Riel was a very controversial, you know, hero, not only of the 1870s but of today, I think it's important that we continue revisiting the history of Riel and reaffirming the fact that, you know, we can be proud to be Métis, we can be proud to be Manitobans and we can be proud of entering into Confederation.

In fact, Manitoba's the only province that entered into Confederation thanks to Indigenous people, the Métis of Manitoba.

Mr. Wowchuk: Could the member maybe share of the many contributions that Riel made, what would he feel would be the greatest to the people of what would become Manitoba?

MLA Loiselle: Well, I think the vision of Riel was clear: to create a bilingual, all-encompassing, diverse, Indigenous culture where everyone can live in peace. And that basically is the foundation of Manitoba, where each and every one of us has a place of respect, of recognition, and where we can raise our families right? Without fear of persecution.

So Louis Riel, Monsieur le honorable président, est un visionnaire, et je crois que c'est important qu'on continue à le reconnaître en tant que visionnaire et père du Manitoba.

Translation

Louis Riel was a visionary, and I think it is important that we continue to recognize him as a visionary and a father of Manitoba.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I am really proud to be here today, speaking of the historical

importance of Louis Riel. Too bad we couldn't have extended question period just a little bit more.

The member spoke of the importance of bilingual. I think trilingual would be—I'm sure he meant trilingual as Michif should be included as part of these teachings. So I am sure he meant that French, Michif and English as well for us lay ones here.

But as people in the Chamber are probably quite aware, my community of St. Laurent is exciting—excited to see that Louis Riel is getting recognition that, you know, has been missed over the years. And St. Laurent is the largest Métis community that is left in the world. And as a matter of fact, I think I spoke at the Louis Riel bill, but I'll just remind members in the Chamber here as well that so much so, that St. Laurent was given a space at the Smithsonian museum in Washington, DC.

Now, I was privileged to visit the museum, but only after—after the exhibit had returned home to St. Laurent. Just for those that are listening, they're still fundraising to create a space to show that exhibit in St. Laurent where it originally came from. There is a life-size Bombardier—a real Bombardier that is used in today's commercial fishing, and it's been used for years. A lot of these machines, although they look fairly new, they were actually built back in the '40s, '50s, '60s, and I don't think they've made them—very few past the '70s.

So, that heritage is still well and alive right here in Manitoba today, and it's very important to get the recognition in the Smithsonian on the community.

And again, I mentioned one of the heritages that has evolved is fishing. So I live in the area, I live in my constituency and I live in St. Laurent, the RM of St. Laurent. And so out my window, I'm privileged to see every day throughout the winter commercial fishers that are still earning their livelihood from commercial fishing. And so much so this year that the—Lake Manitoba, actually, it's very healthy at the moment. And the commercial fishers reached their quota, their lake quota. So that's all exciting. But also little disheartening, because their fishing season was cut about a month or five weeks short.

So we have people that work in the building that also—that used to reside in the community of St. Laurent, and I think we all know Denise right outside here at 2-6-6-9, and she resided in St. Laurent for 55 years before moving to the city, and she's still contributing to the community here today.

But some of the stories that our elders have—and I don't mean to call Denise elder, but she is older than myself, so—but it's those stories that we have to encapsulate and put down in print so that our children and our children's children are able to continue to tell those stories.

And it's not just the stories, it's also the language. And I spoke a little bit about that in question period, about hopefully Michif would be included in any curriculum activities that are brought forward. There's a lot of work gone from ladies in my community—predominantly ladies—there's—that have worked on it, and some have passed since their accomplishments. Some are still with us, and I was able to actually recognize them in the community this past summer. And so I just want to talk a little bit about what they've done for the community in encapsulating the Michif language in now a written language.

So, I guess it takes me back a long time ago when I was still in my two-room school. Patsy, or Patricia Miller, was my teacher, and I still have a hard time saying the first name; I still call her Mrs. Miller, as probably most of us do with our teachers. Even the students in the gallery here, if they run into their teachers years down the road, they'll probably still refer them to—to them as their—as they've known them in school.

So, my point—the point of Mrs. Miller, bringing her up is, like, she's been a life-long giver in the community, giving back through teaching. But also, she participated in this book, which has—she has now passed. And—but a part of her is with us in this book alone.

So, there's also the three that I recognized, and I think it's only fair that their names are on the official Hansard in the record in Manitoba to be here forever. So, that's Lorraine Couta-Lavallee, June Bruce and Agathe Chartrand. They all worked so hard in ensuring that the Michif language does not die.

I think we all have probably had our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents that have spoken a different language at some point, in—the majority of us—at some point in our heritage. And for myself, Icelandic, Swedish, those languages are lost and gone. I have—could only probably muster up 10 words. I would be able to probably muster up more Michif words than I could Icelandic words.

* (11:30)

So, I just want to recognize these ladies and their hard work in putting stuff in writing. If stuff isn't in

writing, it's in our memories. And as we move on to the next life, if you will, those memories are gone or, as we age, those memories fade. So, I feel it's very important to recognize these ladies for the outstanding work that they've done.

So, I was, well, born in Winnipeg, but, you know, since couple days old, I was in Oak Point. That's my hometown, which is a neighbouring town to St. Laurent. So, obviously, there was a lot of mixing of cultures there. So, I feel we are very, very diverse in being able to make bannock or make harðfiskur.

Harðfiskur is just fish jerky, for those that don't know the delicacy—one of the delicacies that Icelanders make. But, bannock is also a delicacy if you have a taste for it. I love it, myself, and my kids still make it as part of their heritage, but they had to be taught that.

That didn't get passed down through the generations, so we had to teach them that after their mother had passed away and it—this book as well has significant importance, because now they can reclaim their language as well. They can pick up the Michif book and study what their ancestors have spoke and, again, I say spoke because it was never a written language until now. So, I think it's very important that people make commitments to the community like this.

Now, my kids, they do practise the fishing, hunting, gathering, and we still all probably love a good old Manitoba saskatoon. And they traditionally do all of that, and I'm proud of them for living off the land. I think we all probably make a stop at the corner store. We—they don't a hundred per cent sustain themselves off the land, but they make a very good effort through all their hunting and gathering.

So, again, I want to—I just want to thank all the people involved in the history book—well, dictionary—there's a previous history book that I didn't mention, but I see I don't have enough time to get into that. But the dictionary, in specific, I wanted to talk about today with the Michif language, that has been preserved now for people in the future just to be able to pick up that book and learn from it.

I know I asked the member about education. Now, that will give teachers tools where they can pick it up. But, you don't expect an average teacher to know Michif and—but now they have the tools in their toolbox where they can actually pick up this dictionary and talk about the historical language that was spoken, that my kid's ancestors have spoken, and I think it's very important to have that preserved in history.

So, thank you, Honourable Speaker, and thank you for the time today to talk about this important matter.

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): Honourable Speaker, I'm proud to stand and speak to this resolution, not only as a Métis woman, but as a former Indigenous education teacher.

I understand the importance of being a truth teller in all aspects of my life. It is something that—it's a responsibility that I take seriously, and it's a responsibility that I hope that everybody in this room takes seriously.

And so, by declaring and designating Louis Riel as the honorary first premier of Manitoba, we have done that truth telling. A historic moment in the history of this province. It was many years in the making. Many members might not be aware, but our Premier (Mr. Kinew) had introduced this bill in the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Session of the previous Legislature.

It's a type of legislation that we all know needed to pass, and so our team has continued to work on making sure that it came to fruition. Our government chose to make Louis Riel act the first piece of our legislation in the 43rd Legislature.

Alongside the members of the Manitoba Métis Federation and members from the greater Métis community, we were proud when this piece of legislation passed royal assent on December 7, 2023. It is a very important step in recognizing Manitoba's deep Métis history. It's also an important step towards strengthening our government's relationship with the government of the Métis people, the Manitoba Métis Federation so that we can continue to collaborate on important issues that face our province and the Métis community.

As folks likely know, I am the MLA for Seine River, which means I have the great pleasure of representing the citizens of St. Norbert, citizens who take great pride in the history of their community, understanding that Louis Riel and the provisional government were formed in St. Norbert.

In the summer of 1869, federal surveyors moved in on the territory known as the Red River settlement seeking to assess the land, to survey the land, to break up the land ahead of proposed Confederation. In response, the Red River settlement and outlying areas established the Métis National Committee in St. Norbert, with a young Riel as its secretary and later president.

Later that fall, the committee was successful in halting the surveyors and set to work advancing the interests of the people of the Red River settlement vis-à-vis the federal government. There is a monument in St. Norbert, a small one, near the bridge that crosses the La Salle River where the Métis stood on the surveyors' equipment to prevent them from moving forward.

On January 26, 1870, the first meeting of many meetings was held to discuss the possibility of federal Confederation with over 40 delegates coming from across the settlement. A few months later, this body would reconstitute itself as the provisional government of the Assiniboia, with legislative, executive and judicial branches.

That is something to consider, that government existed prior to this place existing. As an Indigenous education teacher, I always spoke the truth of what Indigenous people's contributions were to government and democracy. Many may not realize that the oldest democracy in North America is from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, also known as the Iroquois Confederacy. That confederacy was the model for many governments around the world, including the US government.

And so it's important to recognize that Indigenous communities, including Métis, were people that believed in politics, in government, in representation and democracy.

When the Red River Resistance came to an end, four successive lists of rights were drafted by the provisional government of Assiniboia, and the fourth and final version becoming the Manitoba Act of 1870. Those lists of rights presented a multicultural, bilingual and inclusive vision of a province that respected the rights of Indigenous peoples and minority rights.

Louis Riel believed in immigration. He believed in working as community. He believed in one Manitoba, just like our government does.

The name Manitoba was submitted by Louis Riel and chosen by the Government of Canada as the name of this province. The historical and legal continuity between the provisional government of Assiniboia and the Manitoba government is undeniable. With The Louis Riel Act, we formally recognize what Manitobans have always known. Louis Riel was our province's first premier. We sit here today following in his legacy and the legacy of the provisional government of the Assiniboia.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting four schools in St. Norbert. As a former teacher, it was an opportunity to kind of get back into a classroom and spend some time with students. I brought a book to each school that talked about Louis Riel Day. Not only did I read the book, but I made sure that I offered the teachers and students my time as an Indigenous educator in the hopes that I could further educate on the true history of Canada and Manitoba.

What I found surprising is that many students didn't understand who Louis Riel was. This was extremely disappointing when you are speaking with grade 4, 5 and 6 students. That is why this is so significant that our government is going to make sure that we strengthen the curriculum in Manitoba to ensure that students understand who the first premier was.

In grade 4, students learn about the history of Manitoba and living in Manitoba. Louis Riel and his accomplishments are touched on, but not quite deep enough. In grade 5, students start learning about the fur trade and Confederation. But oftentimes they are learning it from the point of view of settler Canadians, of a European westernized viewpoint.

* (11:40)

Louis Riel was not only the father of Manitoba Confederation, I would argue he is the father of Canadian federation—the Confederation. He is an essential figure in Canada's establishment of the West. He is someone that we can look to for his leadership and his example that he set so that we can move forward in a spirit of reconciliation that is actionable and meaningful.

Louis Riel embodied the struggle of the Métis, First Nation and francophone peoples across Manitoba and Canada, the racial tensions between white settlers and Indigenous peoples and, as a devout Catholic, he also intertwined with the religious history of Manitoba.

Through Louis Riel, we can see that Métis history is Manitoba's history. It is not a separate history. When you talk about history, it is so important that we look at individuals who made bold moves, who set precedents, who put themselves in vulnerable situations to fight for the rights of others.

Often, we look at history in terms of events, rather than looking at the people living during that time. If we truly want to understand history, we need to look at individual accomplishments and sacrifices.

At the unveiling of the portrait and plaque recognizing Louis Riel as our first premier, Manitoba Métis Federation president David Chartrand shared some words that Riel had previously written, and I quote: I know for the grace of God I am the founder of Manitoba. I believe by what I suffered for 15 years, by what I've done for Manitoba and the people of the Northwest, that my words are worth something.

Here we are in 2024, speaking Louis Riel's words. Words that we should all be proud of, that we should all align with. Words are everything. Our words have consequences.

I was proud to have a moment to speak with president Chartrand and many of the Métis ministers on the day—on Louis Riel Day. I can share with this room that those folks were moved by what we did as a government, by declaring the truth, by making Louis Riel our first premier. It is something they have been fighting for forever.

My grandmother, who was a proud Métis woman, who I lost over 20 years ago, never believed that this truth would happen, never believed that the Métis people of Manitoba would be honoured or respected in any way. She always claimed we were the forgotten people.

And as a consequence, I was forced to do some code-switching. And for those of you that don't understand what it means to code-switch, it means that I had to hide the—my true identity in specific situations. Imagine being a young child and you're asked who you are, how you identify.

The truth is, I was always told to identify as Ukrainian, like my father, and to never divulge that I was a Métis woman. That changed through education, through truth-telling that others gave to me. I am now proud to stand here and say that I am Métis. I am proud of Louis Riel and I am proud of my people.

Thank you.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): It is my pleasure to rise in the House today and put a few words on the record in respect to the private member's resolution brought forward by the member from St. Boniface on this very important bill.

There are so many great men and women who have contributed to the historical fabric of our country and our great province here in Manitoba. Bill 202 passed unanimously in the fall session, which was a historical day for those of us here in Manitoba.

This past February 19, we celebrated this very special Louis Riel Day. Not only did we celebrate Louis Riel, but it was also a special day for me personally, as I also celebrated my birthday with family and friends.

On that day I also attended a Louis Riel family day in my community in my constituency of Agassiz. Many families were out and enjoyed the many outdoor activities at this community event. They had warm hot chocolate, hot dogs over an open fire and, you know, it was a first for some of those that were in attendance to actually cook their own hot dog over an open campfire, so it was pretty special for some. And it was great to see so many young families out to take part in these activities. They had sleigh rides and skating as they got together and enjoyed this historical day. There were a lot of happy children enjoying some of these activities for their very first time, like I said.

In our province, we have many cultural celebrations and events recognizing the contributions to our communities and our cultures. In—here in Winnipeg, we have one of the largest winter festivals in western Canada that celebrates French and Métis heritage. The Festival du Voyageur includes traditional music, food, highlighting Métis artists in our province and beyond. I know many Manitobans look forward to this two-week-long event. I know many schools bring their classrooms in to the festival, allowing an opportunity for students to see and learn history of the French and Métis first-hand—excuse me.

This year, the Festival du Voyageur enjoyed unusually warm weather, which presented some challenges in the activities that they were holding. But, Manitobans here, we are resilient, and people turned out in record numbers to take part in the activities. Many come to enjoy in the great food—we all know food brings people together as well as entertainment of local and national groups.

Festival du Voyageur is a family-friendly event and continues to grow. It brings Manitobans of all cultures together to celebrate as one. This festival is a great example of how Manitoba can work together, play together and celebrate together.

Last week, alone, we celebrated International Women's Day. This is a special day that is set aside as an opportunity to recognize the very special women in our lives who have played an important role and have made a significant impact in our communities and organizations. I know last week I made some special deliveries to the women in my life who have been in—played an important part; some who have known me

my whole entire life, others who have been lifelong friends and others who I know just for a number of years and some that I've got to know 'morse'—most recently but have already had an impact.

We see history being made right here in our Chamber with the females that have been elected, both past and present. They have been trailblazers for all women entering the political world. Many of these women have demonstrated strong leadership, courage and perseverance throughout their careers. I'd like to thank them for their work, their contribution and dedication to their roles in public service. The commitment and sacrifice these women have made to leadership and governance has been significant and has contributed to the shaping of our province and where we are today.

We have a unique opportunity in this House where we're able to stand up and deliver a private member statement. This recognizes the important work of people and/or organizations in our constituencies, province and much broader. This statement is recorded and on permanent public record. Statements like these are an opportunity to 'properly'—properly acknowledge the leaders, the trailblazers and the unsung heroes of our individual history. These are the heroes in our organizations, communities and province who have contributed to the betterment of our province, country and globally.

* (11:50)

I take great pride in having the opportunity to rise in this House, to represent, to speak and deliver for my constituency and the many great people here in Manitoba. We are a very cultural diverse province here in Manitoba, and we love to celebrate each unique culture and their contributions of our province.

In this Chamber, it is important that we continue to support reconciliation, collaboration and opportunity. We saw this support in the fall with a unanimous vote on bill 202.

I again want to thank you for this opportunity to speak about our great province, recognize our diversity and the importance of bringing people together.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): It is a privilege to rise to commemorate the life of Louis Riel, a man who brought Manitoba into Confederation and fought to protect his people from encroachment on Métis land. He is known for his selfless actions that truly demonstrate the reason why he is the father of our great province.

Honourable Speaker, with the establishment of the provisional government, Riel knew and understood the danger of the work that he was doing. He was accused and labelled as a rebel and a traitor by the Canadian government. However, what happened at Red River was not a rebellion; it was an uprising. It was an act of resistance for a—for fundamental rights that we, as Manitobans and Canadians, enjoy today.

Riel trusted that the institutions of government would work for the Métis people, and they did not. Honourable Speaker, this is why Riel led the charge for an assertion of rights, rights for people who were in favour of joining the Confederation, but to do so on the terms of equal treatment and fairness, so that they were not simply ruled over as British subjects.

Riel was not only a fighter for rights, but a true believer of justice and the rule of law. He wanted to make sure that there were fair rules to govern Métis and that power should not and could not be centralized in the hands of the few. Because when power works for the few and not the many, that is not democracy.

Honourable Speaker, Riel was at the forefront of some of the most important conversations that we continue to have today, conversations about democracy, representation and voting rights. It was his provisional government that led the charge, and we can thank him for fighting for the basic fundamental rights that we as Manitobans enjoy today.

It is truly an act of reconciliation when we recognize the true history of Manitoba, Riel as its founder, the first premier and a true leader who shaped not only our province, but our entire country for the better. And I know each and everyone here today continues to be inspired and grateful for Riel as a pillar upon which the ideals of Manitoba were built upon.

I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this morning's resolution and for the opportunity to speak to it.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Je voudrais un grand merci pour mon collègue MLA Loïselle pour avancer cette résolution

Translation

I want to thank my colleague MLA Loïselle for moving this resolution.

The Speaker: Order, please. You can't use the member's name.

MLA Altomare: It's almost like our first rodeo around here, Honourable Speaker.

But this is an important bill.

Et je voudrais un grand merci pour mon collègue, le membre de Saint-Boniface (MLA Loïselle) pour avancer cette résolution, tout en français.

Pour quoi c'est très, très important pour nous écouter la langue française dans cette Chambre.

Translation

And I want say a big thank you to my colleague, the member for St. Boniface, for moving this resolution, all in French.

Because it is very, very important for us to hear French in this House.

English

I can say that when I was in St. Laurent earlier, when we were first elected, had the pleasure of opening up Li Pchi Pwayson, their early childhood education centre. I was there with the Red River Métis government and noticed the pride that they exhibited in opening that particular child-care centre because one of the main components of that child-care centre, Honourable Speaker, is going to be the opportunity for them to teach the Michif language.

They had a number of elders present that have committed to that centre, that they were going to move forward with that because, as many members that have already risen here today—and I do want to acknowledge the member for Gimli-Interlake for putting words on the record that talked about the importance of language.

Language is the transmission of culture. That is how history is passed, and that is because it is rooted in the land. The land informs our language, and that's a piece we can never forget.

I can tell you, with the rising numbers of people that do speak Michif and are able to put it down on paper, it's really important, especially when we get the opportunity to transmit that with the teaching that we have in early childhood education centres like the one that'll be—that is now opening in St. Laurent.

I also do want to say that the curriculum in Manitoba is being revised with, and in conjunction with the Red River Métis government. We met yesterday with their minister of education Joan Ledoux and her team in my office, where we have them now as a part of our redesign of the grade 11 curriculum,

Canadian history. They were going to a part of ensuring that the Michif language, that Red River Métis history is accurately portrayed in our curriculum.

There are many places right now, at grade 2, grade 4, grade 6, grade 8 and of course at grade 11, where we honour the people that were here on this territory for hundreds of years before Manitoba was incorporated.

I do want to say, Honourable Speaker, that this is an important piece that I'm very happy to have my colleague advance today.

I'm also very proud to be part of a caucus that has a number of Red River Métis citizens on the team. We notice that, as we move through, and saw that in our ability to advance bill 202, earlier in the fall session, our first sitting of this Legislature. It was very important because, as you know, Manitoba's history is intertwined with the history of the Métis, the history of the Red River Métis and the history of the people that were here before us.

I do want to report that we will bring this forward and ensure that curriculum reflects this true history, and that the Red River Métis will be a part—a significant part of moving this forward.

I want to—je voudrais parler en français tout le temps ici dans la Chambre mais est très—difficult—pourquoi j'ai besoin tout pratique avec la langue français.

Merci, Monsieur le président pour cet mot.

Translation

I want to speak French all the time here in Chamber, but it is very difficult for me, which is why I need all the practice I can have in French.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for these words.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I wish I would have had about 25 minutes to talk on this, unfortunately, on this very important issue, because I want to thank the member from St. Boniface.

And hopefully, I can share just one thing. Culture, as an educator for 35 years, maintaining culture—when it dies, it dies. And it's so important to be able to maintain it.

And I just want to share this. My four-year-old grandson goes to the Elbert Chartrand Child Care Centre in Swan River. And he looks so forward to going to that every day when he gets the opportunity. And just from one experience, part of the culture is going—is fishing.

And so they were going on this big fishing trip Monday, and he has a medical appointment, and he is working very hard to get out of his medical appointment so he can go on his fishing trip.

And those are the important things. It makes it fun to learn culture, but it's also important, because Louis Riel had done many things as the founder of Manitoba. And I know, as an educator, when I taught environmental management—

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

The hour being 12 o'clock, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

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