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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 7, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated, and good morning, everybody.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Madam Speaker: I would like to indicate, as previously announced, this morning the House will be considering the—oh.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 211—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: As previously announced, this morning, the House will be considering the first selected bill for this session from the official opposition, Bill 211, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

I recognize the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) to move the second reading motion.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from St. Johns, that Bill 211, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lindsey: It's a honour for me to introduce this bill to the House so that Manitoban parents can access all of the benefits that are announced in the federal changes so that 18 months of parental leave can be enjoyed, taken by Manitoba parents.

This bill will allow Manitoba parents to have a better chance at getting their kids into the short spaces for daycare because the child will be a little older when they are ready to go back to work.

It's very important for this province to make sure that mothers and fathers in this province are afforded every opportunity to be with their children as long as possible, recognizing the reality that so many Manitobans face, that both parents have to work, or, in the case of single parents, certainly the single parent has to work.

We've heard this government say previously that, well, they can just go to their employer and ask. Clearly, many of these—if any of the members opposite in the government—haven't worked at low-wage jobs where working people really can't just go and have a little fireside chat with the boss and everything be lovely. That's why we have unions.

Fortunately, a lot of unions are probably already looking at increasing this child-parent benefit in their next round of negotiations. Oh, if only this government hadn't froze benefits going forward for so many Manitoban parents. It's kind of a shame that this government governs only for the wealthy and leaves out so many—so many—parents.

So, really, for parents in this province, they need to know that this government is looking after them, has got their backs, is ensuring that they've got the best interests of those Manitoba parents in their hearts and in their minds while they're making legislation.

And, quite clearly, Madam Speaker, Manitoba parents, as with so many Manitobans at this point in time, do not have that sense that this government cares about the people of Manitoba. They care about their business friends; they care about the elite. Clearly, so many Manitobans are regretting the decision they made a couple years ago and are looking forward to the next election so that they can have us reverse course on what this government has done with so many things where they continue to cut—cuts that hurt Manitoban families.

Just today, I was reading in the paper where the majority of things that this government has done have had negative effects, primarily on women in this province, and here's another example of this government not caring, primarily, about the women, the mothers, who are the majority of people that take parental leave. As the world changes and progresses, certainly more fathers are opting to spend that

quality time with their newborns as well. So this government really doesn't have the best interests of Manitobans at heart and clearly doesn't have the best interests of newborn Manitobans at heart either.

You know, we've heard from so many Manitobans that this is the right way to go. It's unfortunate that, really, when we introduced this bill, we caught the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade flat-footed—had no idea that the federal government had introduced legislation, had no idea, clearly, that the legislation was kicking in.

We've offered them the opportunity to pass this bill quickly so that Manitoban families can take advantage, and we will again afford the minister and the government that opportunity to pass this bill today, to move it to committee as quickly as possible and to get this law into effect so that Manitoba parents can enjoy the time with their newborn children that they so rightly deserve.

With those few remarks introducing this bill, I'm sure that there will be a spirited debate, although I can't understand, really, why there should be. I would hope that all members of the government and the independents will stand in solidarity with parents, with Manitobans, with the hard-working backbones of this province, that continue to suffer the ill effects of this government. Here's a chance for them really to stand up, do the right thing and make sure that Manitoba parents have the best opportunity for their children going forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam 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.

*(10:10)

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I'm just wondering if we could ask the member if there are additional benefits to be paid out. Right now, there's a benefit period for 12 months. Is he suggesting there should be additional benefits paid out in this additional six-month period?

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Thank you for the question, and, really, I'm surprised. It's a good question from the minister.

Right now, there is no extension or increase in the benefit, but certainly I'm sure this government could do the right thing and increase benefits for parents.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, we're seeing a productive debate already. The government's coming to—coming forward with great suggestions to—for top-ups on maternity leave and paternity leave. Why didn't we have this debate sooner so we could do more to help Manitoba families?

Just wondering if, you know, our colleague from Flin Flon could tell us a bit about the importance of, you know, this leave to parents. You know, we know that working families want to be able to spend more time with newborns, the little ones that join their families. So how would this help them?

Madam Speaker: I'm already having trouble hearing the comments that are being made, the questions and answers that are being made. So I'm going to remind everybody right now that I do need to be able to hear. I've got my sound system turned right up, and despite that, I am having some difficulty hearing the questions that are being asked, and so I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please, that we could have respect for the Chair so that I can properly hear the debate that is going on on the floor.

Mr. Lindsey: Thanks for that really good question.

Certainly, in the first part of a child's life is the most important part for parents and children to bond. It gives parents the opportunity with this extended leave to make sure they have a job to come back to and to make sure that they have more time to get their children into the scarce spaces for daycare, because this government hasn't really increased those spaces like they said they would.

So this is critically important for Manitoba families to make sure that they have the time to get things ready for the best outcome for their children's future, and I wish the government had the same concept in mind.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): As many of us know, pay equity and the pay-equity gap between men and women is a significant factor, not only here

in Canada, but around the world, and requires extensive consideration. And so I'm wondering what consultation with feminist groups and advocates for closing the pay-equity group did the member opposite have in relation to extending parental benefits for 18 months.

Mr. Lindsey: In fact, we've reached out and heard from over 15,000 Manitobans on this bill and the importance of family leave for those Manitobans, you know. So the minister talks about pay equity. Certainly—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —from my perspective, I came out of a unionized environment where we had pay equity, and I think that all Manitobans should be able to enjoy that benefit, which really helps them in their path to having a productive family life.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I want to thank the member for bringing this important bill before the House to debate. I do think we're making some progress here today. I know the minister's talked multiple times about the importance of LMRC, and of course we recognize the importance of bringing labour together with employers and making sure that everyone's at the same table.

It seems, though, that this process could have been started much earlier than it has been, and I'm wondering: Was this a snap decision or a snap change on the federal level that's brought this change here to Manitoba?

Mr. Lindsey: That's a very good question, and I thank the member from Concordia for that.

As we know from how things happen in this House, there's no such thing as snap decisions, and certainly everyone was well aware that the federal government was bringing in this legislation. Well, I shouldn't say everyone was aware. We were certainly well aware, which is why we brought in this bill. Clearly, the government was not aware, which is unfortunate. But today they have the opportunity to do the right thing, pass this legislation and get things on the go for Manitoba families.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member—actually, the honourable Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Pedersen) had been up earlier.

Mr. Pedersen: The member threw out a rather large number, but could he be more specific as to who he consulted with prior to introducing this legislation?

Mr. Lindsey: We—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —talked to Manitobans. I don't have the list of names here today, so I'm not going to table a list of names of who all we talked to. But unlike the government's, you know, phony online surveys that they fill out themselves, we phone individual Manitobans and talk to Manitobans.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to thank the member from Flin Flon for bringing forward this excellent bill.

My question is, can he explain to us the benefit of the extended time of parental leave?

Mr. Lindsey: Certainly, I thank the member from Burrows for that question.

The more time that new parents get to spend with a newborn, making sure that it gets the best start in its life, is critically important. The reality of today's world is that parents have to work. Guaranteeing that they have a job to come back to after a period of parental leave and making sure that that leave is as long as possible is the right thing to do. It prepares children for a better future, as well as Manitoba families for a better future.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I do just want to congratulate my colleague from Flin Flon on bringing forward this really important bill.

So I would ask the member what he feels are the implications to Manitobans if this government fails to pass this legislation.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, the biggest implication for Manitobans is that they will now fall behind in parental leave provisions that other parts of Canada—that other parents in this country will enjoy. This will lead to Manitoba not being the most improved province, and it's kind of a shame that this minister and this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government don't want to lead the provinces and don't want to stand in support of Manitoba parents, making sure that them and their children have the best shot at a bright future.

That'll happen in two years, though.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Madam Speaker, the honourable member talks about doing the right thing and that the NDP would increase benefits for the additional six months. I'm wondering if the

member could advise how the NDP would collect the additional revenue to pay for those six months.

Would it be an additional payroll tax on Manitobans? Would it be an increase in the PST or would it be simply added to the provincial debt? So exactly how would these revenues be acquired for the additional six months that they're committed to Manitobans?

Mr. Lindsey: As the member opposite may or may not be aware, EI benefits are a federal jurisdiction.

Ms. Fontaine: I would like to ask the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) why is job security and extended parental leave crucial to maintain gender equity in the workplace?

Mr. Lindsey: A very good question and I thank the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for that.

The important part here is that parents need to know—particularly, mothers need to know—that after parental leave, they'll have a job to come back to. We heard the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Pedersen) say, well, they just go and talk to their employer. And, clearly that doesn't happen with majority of employers, particularly big employers that don't have the best interests of their employees at heart.

* (10:20)

We on this side of the House believe in standing in support with Manitoba families. We believe in standing in support for Manitoba women to make sure that they have the best opportunity for their children.

Mr. Pedersen: I'm just wondering why the member didn't come to me prior to this to take it up with the LMRC. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. I'm having some difficulty hearing.

Mr. Pedersen: It seems that this member has made it a priority, but he's already skipping a step which has been a long practice in this province, is to take issues like this to the LMRC first and to have their input.

So I'm just wondering why the member did not do that, why he's trying to avoid the LMRC.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, as the minister pointed out, he didn't do his job; we did it for him. We pointed out to him that this change was coming, and we're not saying he can't take it to the LMRC.

How many other things—reports from the LMRC is the minister currently sitting on rather than acting on? That's why we want this done now.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I'm very pleased to put a few words on the record this morning regarding Bill 212 and, more broadly, about the notion of having an extended parental leave.

Now, there were a few things that members opposite had just said and—in response to the questions that we posed to him that really deserve a little bit of unpacking, and most recently he said, you know, we know that big employers in this province do not have the best interest of employees. And I really want to wonder, is he referring to, you know, some of the big employers in our province, some of those employers that have grown their businesses in Manitoba, who have been committed to Manitoba, providing jobs and expanding the workforce? I wonder if he's referring to some of the industries in Flin Flon, if he believes that those employers are not operating in the best interest of the employees in his region.

And I wonder if he's, you know, taken steps to address some of those things, because I do believe, in Manitoba, when we do have a situation where we've got, you know—quote, unquote—to use the member's phrase—big employers who are not taking care of their employees or do not make decisions in the best interest of their employees, that there are mechanisms in place. And just like how he circumvented process in regards to bringing this bill to the floor today, it does bring about some suspicion that maybe he's not a process guy.

And I understand that, that process may not be his thing, but I would hope that if he has specific incidents in—where big business has not been acting in the best interest of his constituents—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —I would hope that he would do his constituency work and, you know, go through the process of ensuring that his constituents who may be employed by one of these big employers and—that are not acting in their best interest—that he would actually bring that forward and work to finding

resolution instead of just using it as a cheap political talking point or trying to score some cheap political points on that regard.

So I wanted to just unpack that statement that he made a little, but then he also said mothers need to know after parental leave that they are guaranteed a job after their parental leave, and I just find it really interesting that members opposite right away link mothers to this parental leave, and that brings to mind the whole notion of pay equity.

And, again, I'd ask the member opposite how many feminist organizations did he consult with prior to bringing this bill here. And I do, in—at first blush, want to think that anything that expands parental leave, where parents can have more time at home with their babies and to bond with their babies, is definitely a good idea. But I also think that if the member is really honing in on how this should be mothers taking that parental leave and that the 18-month absence from the workforce—I wonder if he is consulting with others and if he is committed to, perhaps, sharing some information with families as they're about to make this choice about the ramifications of an 18-month extended leave from the workforce for the mother.

And, when I talk about parental leave, I talk about both mothers and fathers. I think that, in order for women to achieve equality in the workplace and achieve equality in society, they must have equality at home. And I say that with the utmost belief.

And, when I talk to young ladies who often say to me, you know, what is the best thing that I can do for my career and to ensure that I have—that I'm on a good career path? I always say that the most important thing you can do for your career is, if you decide to have a partner, to choose your partner wisely, because if you do not achieve equality in the home, if women are taking on a disproportionate amount of unpaid labour, there are consequences in the workforce.

And so, if the members opposite is certainly labelling this as benefits for the mother and not looking at it as being split between both parents or ensuring that that choice is there for the parents to split between parents—mothers and fathers equally—then he needs to answer to—to answer the question more fully as what feminist organizations, what women's groups has he consulted with, and how has he looked at this bill through a gender-based lens, and how has he looked at this bill in terms of what

would this mean for women re-entering the workforce.

And while, again, I cannot stress enough that I would always support any motion that would ensure a woman's opportunity and a man's opportunity to bond with their children after the birth of a child, I certainly do think that we have to look at it from a feminist perspective. And I really question whether or not the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) has bothered to look at it from that perspective, or even consult with his other colleagues in caucus who would have that gender-based lens to certain policies that he would bring forward to this House.

And so I just encourage members opposite, that when he does want to bring about bills or resolutions or motions, that he just be a little sensitive to the feminist perspective and maybe broaden his scope beyond his lens and maybe talk to some women about it. And I encourage him to do that, and I certainly hope that he does that in the future when he brings issues to the floor.

And then the other thing that he had said that I wanted to explore a little bit more, is he says we on this side of the House clearly have not worked at low-wage jobs. And that's another important distinction that I think needs to be unpacked a little and really look at it from how does this—how do parental rights and an extended leave look like in the context of people who do work in lower—if they're the lower wage earner in the household and if they are in a low-wage job.

I know that extending your benefits—and I know the figures right now because my one daughter-in-law is on maternity—or, parental leave right now. She was in a lower wage job, and she's now taking those benefits over the 12-month period. And at 55 per cent of her income spread out over a year, it's not a robust amount of money, and if it were to be spread out over 18 months, it would be even less.

And so, there are certainly those considerations that—is this bill—how is it helping lower-income families? It is certainly for privileged families—and I'm very pleased to know that there are many of us, perhaps, in this House that would qualify in that situation, that if I were having a child today, I would certainly—possibly be able to look at extending my benefits over an 18-month period and being out of the workforce for a more extended period of time because of the career that I have attained at this level in my life.

And—but, of course, that is not the case for everyone that we're talking about today, and we certainly have to really consider how this applies in the context of low–lower income earners and how—whether or not they would be afforded the privilege of taking a 12-month pay and having it spread out over a longer period of time.

* (10:30)

And again, you know, the member opposite clearly states that he's never worked in a low-wage job. I, myself, have. I've spent a great deal of my life working in—as a waitress, and I've worked as a secretary, and I have made very, very low incomes in my life, and very proud of the work that I have done in those careers because they have been beneficial and they have afforded me a lens that I perhaps do not see coming from members opposite. When I look at—when mothers talk to me about their experiences in low–lower paying jobs, I can certainly relate to that, and I know what it's like to try to get by on a very, very limited budget. And so my heart certainly does go out to all of those families that are dealing with that circumstance.

And, again, I'm certainly in support of anything that would allow parents—mothers and fathers equally—the right to be at home in—after the birth of a new child and to bond with them, but I certainly do also think that it requires a bit of a feminist lens that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) certainly does not have. And it's clear to me by the comments that he put on the record this morning that he has not talked to any women in consultation of this bill, and I would just hope that he would expand his horizon and reach out and maybe talk to women before he brings another bill to this House.

So, with that, I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, respectfully and gently to the Minister for Status of Women, I kind of want to deconstruct a lot of what she just said, but also just mainly get up to put some words on the record in respect of Bill 211.

And again, I do want to thank the member for Flin Flon for bringing forward this bill that I think is a very important bill. It's a very timely bill, quite obviously. And, you know, today—on this particular day, the government could choose to support this bill, the government could choose to

actually fast-track this bill. We could actually get the bill brought forward to third reading and do all the things that we need to do today if there was a will—a willingness from members opposite.

I also do just want to, before I get into some of that other stuff, I do also want to correct for the record, Madam Speaker, when the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade asks the member for Flin Flon why he didn't let him know earlier—let's be perfectly clear, here: it's not the member for Flin Flon's job or role or responsibility to tell the minister how to do his job.

The minister should know that this legislation was coming down the pipe in the same way that the government knew that the cannabis legislation was coming down the pipe but are now scrambling to get their ducks in order. But the minister knew—or maybe the problem is—[interjection] What was it? What did I say? Ducks? No? [interjection] Ducks. Okay. So—or, more problematic, Madam Speaker, the minister actually didn't know that this legislation was coming down the pipe. And I think that that is a quintessential example of some of the concerns that we've had on this side of the House in respect of, you know, not only that minister but many other ministers in respect of understanding what their roles and responsibilities as ministers are.

So I just want to clarify for the record the comments made by the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade; it is not the member for Flin Flon's job to tell him how to do it. However, I would suggest that if the minister does need help doing his job, all of us on this side of the House would be willing to give up some time to spend with him to go through legislation that's going down the pipe or just, you know, even when we're dealing with a variety of different things in the North. We're willing to do that, to spend time with the minister and explain to him how to do his job.

So, again, I want to congratulate the member for Flin Flon, who was actually doing his job and actually fighting for Manitoba families and trying to put the infrastructure in place so that Manitoba families who choose to take an extended 18-month parental leave have the ability to do so in our province. And I think that that is a testament to, again, every member on this side and our commitment and dedication and passion for Manitoba families and for fighting for their rights to make their daily lives a lot better, and particularly

give them those opportunities to spend more time with their children.

I do take exception to the Minister of Status of Women criticizing the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) that he didn't apply a feminist lens when he brought forward or introduced this bill. That is actually nowhere near the truth. In fact, there were many, many women that were consulted with in respect of the development of bill—of this bill. But, more importantly, I think that it is a testament to the Minister of Status of Women's inability to see some of the things that she has done in this House which, in my mind, and I would suggest to the House, does not apply a feminist lens in any way, shape or form. And allow me to put some on the official record.

You know, I would ask the Minister for Status of Women in this—you know, when she's juxtaposing who the member for Flin Flon met with and applied a feminist lens—who did she meet with, who did she—which feminists, in quotations—which feminist organizations did she meet with when she cut \$120,000 from the North and—or, the North Point Douglas Women's Centre. Who has the minister applied—or, who has she met with, which feminist organizations? How did she apply a feminist lens when she continues to thwart women's ability in the province to have full control over their reproductive health and not allow for the full and robust distribution of Mifegymiso in—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would just caution the member to be careful with some of the language she's using. Commenting on nowhere near the truth is actually coming very close to being unparliamentary because it is an inference on lying, and those are not words that are acceptable in the House.

So I would just urge some caution in members when they're making their comments here to just be careful with the language that they're using.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, Madam Speaker, for the clarification. In fact, I can't even remember when I said that, but miigwech, I will be more careful with my—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, miigwech for the caution and I will be very careful in respect of my words. I apologize to the House and to the Minister for Status of Women if there was any misconstruing that. I apologize.

So I do want to continue on in respect of the Minister for Status of Women and this argument of applying a feminist lens or consulting with feminist organizations. So, as I indicated, we still don't know where the minister is in respect of a full and robust distribution of Mifegymiso. And so when the Minister for Status of Women questions the member for Flin Flon in who he met, I would ask the Minister for Status of Women to put on the official record who she's actually met with in respect of feminist organizations in respect of the distribution of Mifegymiso.

So I would—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, actually, the Minister for Status of Women is indicated that she's met with the Women's Health Clinic. No doubt she probably has, but I'm pretty sure that the Women's Health Clinic would not advise the Minister for Status of Women not to apply a robust infrastructure for Manitoba women and girls to be able to access the abortion pill. I'm pretty sure that that's not the discussion that she had with them.

You know, I would ask the Minister for Status of Women as well, Madam Speaker, in respect of, again, putting on the record that the member for Flin Flon did not consult with any feminist organizations: Who did the Minister for Status of Women consult with, in respect of feminist organizations, or what feminist lens did she apply when her Premier (Mr. Pallister) and her government chose to close the women's mature—the Mature Women's Centre?

* (10:40)

Again, I would suspect, and I would suggest to the House today, that any feminist organization would never say to the Minister for Status of Women or to the Premier or to the Minister of Health, yes, you know what, go ahead and close the Mature Women's Centre. Nobody would ever say that.

So, again, I guess I would ask the Minister for Status of Women in respect of which feminist organizations did she consult with, and how was a feminist lens applied when the Minister for Status of Women and her government and her Premier and the Minister of Health decided to look at closing emergency rooms here in the city, which has a fundamental impact on women in low income and their ability to get to the services that they need for their health. Who did she consult with in respect of those feminist organizations?

So, Madam Speaker, I mean, I don't think it's fair. I take 'excepton'—exception that the Minister for Status of Women would question the minister for Flin Flon, who actually is standing up for—the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), soon to be the minister. Two more years.

So, I mean, I just want to put it on the record, here, Madam Speaker, that the member for Flin Flon is standing up for Manitoba mothers, is standing up for Manitoba fathers, to be able to have choice in respect of raising their children, their newborn. And I think that it is something that the government and the members opposite should seriously consider when we have our vote in a little bit to stand on the side of—in—on the right side and stand with us on this bill and support this bill so that we can get it passed.

And I would also suggest, Madam Speaker, that we expedite the process today, and let's get it passed today.

Miigwech.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to your remarks, and I completely agree. I wonder—you know, in this place, we've heard expressions like mansplain or 'womansplain'—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

The member is off topic right now. We are dealing with a specific issue. I have dealt with it, and I would also point out the member that that issue is under advisement, and so cannot be raised in the House.

* * *

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to thank the member for Flin Flon for bringing this bill forward, and I just wanted to provide my own two cents that there is a way to debate this bill and be kind to all women. We don't need to be putting each other down in order to have a debate.

We know that time is precious, particularly time between new parents and their newborns, and this past Sunday, the federal government made a good—made good on a promise to extend parental leave

from 12 months to 18 months, and it was an excellent decision.

This extension gives parents more time at home with their newborn, and how could someone possibly argue against this? It puzzles me why this government is dragging its heels on what seems to be a logical step in supporting Manitoba families.

Madam Speaker, it's also puzzling why the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Pedersen) appeared to know nothing about this legislation and appeared to find out just days before the federal legislation came into play.

Regardless, I don't want to speak long because I do truly believe we need to vote on this bill today. The proposed changes to the Labour Management Review Committee can be submitted immediately, and we want to allow for Manitobans to use the extended parental leave. So I urge this government to call for a vote immediately and vote in favour of the bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to make a few brief comments on Bill 211. I've listened carefully to the comments from my colleagues opposite, and to say that their comments are inaccurate would be quite accurate.

The member for Flin Flon made the comment that no one on this side of the House—I think he said clearly have not worked at low-wage jobs. I think the member could learn by simply having a conversation with 'mamy'—many members on this side of the House. I know the minister for—responsible the Status of Women has shared in this House her story of being a young, unwed mother, the government housing that she lived in and that, Madam Speaker. I think she has shared that story, so to put those sort of comments on the record is truly, truly unfortunate.

The members opposite, the NDP, tell us and put on the record that the government should extend benefits for the full 18 months, but of course they don't talk—well, they call that the right thing to do, that, you know, if they were government, the right thing to do would be extend those benefits, but they don't explain exactly how they would pay for that, whether it would be a new payroll tax, whether it would be a death tax, as the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) has previously called for, whether it be an expansion of the PST, whether it be a—maybe the creation of a provincial EI system in

order to offer that. Maybe all of the above, Madam Speaker. We clearly don't know.

But what caught me most, Madam Speaker, was the member opposite had talked about the feminist lens and, you know, what feminist lens was looked through in reference to comments made, in reference to legislation made and that. And so you have to wonder, Madam Speaker, you know, what feminist lens did the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) look through when he said, and I quote, the waitress bringing me lunch is wearing a Star Trek uniform, hashtag 'jizzin' in my pants. End quote.

I wonder what feminist lens the Leader of the Official Opposition was looking through when he made those very offensive comments, those comments that create—and I use the phrase by the leader—or, by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), who, in a recent debate, talked about the rape culture that women exist under in our world, in our environment, in—and in our country, Madam Speaker.

I wonder what feminist lens the Leader of the Official Opposition was looking through when he said, and I quote, it's a new day, so I don't know whose mouth my blank is in. End quote. Again, Madam Speaker, you have to wonder what feminist lens the Leader of the Official Opposition was looking through.

Again, we talk about a feminist lens, Madam Speaker, and again, the Leader of the Official Opposition, quote, was drunk-dialed by a woman who wants to know when I'm coming to town so she can arrange child care, LOL, SMH. End quote. Again, a direct quote from the Leader of the Official Opposition, who, through his feminist lens, believes those are appropriate comments to make. It's absolutely shameful that those kind of comments are being made by the Leader of the Official Opposition.

So it's always interesting when members opposite in the NDP get up and they talk about a feminist lens and they get up and they talk about supporting women and they talk about, you know, the need to defend and promote women issues.

The member opposite, Madam Speaker, very conveniently, I remember, when her male colleagues were actually shaming female Legislature—legislators on this side of the House, conveniently had no idea that the conversation had occurred, you know, claimed ignorance, said, you know, I never saw it; I never heard it.

It actually, you know, in one instance—and I'll give the Leader of the Opposition credit—actually went out in the hallway and said, you know what, I have to tell the truth that my colleagues said those things, that they actually stood in their—and they actually shamed female legislators and that he called out all of his colleagues, including the very colleague that denied that it ever happened, the very colleague that stands in House and talks about the feminist lens, who denied that her colleagues shamed female legislators.

And it took the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) for clearing the record, and if the member for Fort Rouge actually hadn't, on that one occasion, gone out, they would have continued their long history of denial.

I remember the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) actually—when he was asked questions about this, Madam Speaker, actually hid in the NDP caucus office and waited until the media went away. So, again, I guess maybe he was in the NDP caucus office looking for his feminist lenses.

Madam Speaker, we talk about—you know, members opposite talk about doing the right thing. They talk about—and again, one of the comments the members opposite said is, if the House here Manitoba, the Manitoba Legislature, doesn't pass this legislation, we will, quote, fall behind in 'prevental' leave provisions. End quote.

*(10:50)

Well, you know what, it's always interesting, Madam Speaker, that the members opposite don't talk about what are their brothers and sisters in, say, British Columbia doing. Well, British Columbia currently offers 12 months of protected leave. Eighteen months? No. Twelve months. That's very strange.

So, you know what, Madam Speaker, maybe their brothers and sisters in Alberta, you know, the NDP government there, surely they must be at the forefront of ensuring that the parents and that the mothers and fathers in that province have that full 18 months there, looking through that feminist lens to ensure that kind of job protection.

But, wait a second. Alberta, no, no, no, they offer 12 months of provisions. So, Saskatchewan, 12 months. Quebec, 12 months. Newfoundland, 12 months. P.E.I., 12 months. Nova Scotia, 12 months. New Brunswick, 12 months, Madam Speaker.

An Honourable Member: What about the Yukon?

Mr. Martin: So, for—well, I'm sure, you know what? I didn't go into the territories, so I'll simply say to my honourable colleague, I don't know. But that being said, Madam Speaker, I think it's interesting that members opposite—and they will say publicly that, you know, if Manitoba doesn't do this somehow, we will far—fall further behind, and nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, apparently, their feminist lens is a bit clouded, Madam Speaker, because, again, when their same brothers and sisters in two jurisdictions in which they currently hold government aren't prepared to pass this very legislation that they're bringing forward today, it would suggest that there may be more to this legislation than meets the eye.

There may be actually unintended consequences in collective bargaining; there may be consequences that we need to look at, Madam Speaker, that there may be processes to look at, like the Labour Management Review Committee. Processes that, you know, the members opposite had no problem taking advantage of and using up when they were in government and wanted to make sure that they were getting a full understanding of a particular policy from both the labour and management perspective, whether it was minimum wage, whether it was the extension from six months to 12 months. They don't talk about in this House that they took that same policy to Labour Management previously, and yet they want us to run roughshod and simply ignore the process and push this legislation through. Again, it's very important to note: legislation that their own brothers and sisters in two jurisdictions, in British Columbia in NDP have yet to bring forward, have yet to pass and have yet to enshrine in their law.

You know what? They talk about this legislation will also help parents, Madam Speaker. And you know what? And they talk about—it's interesting. I don't know how many parents could possibly survive because you extend out the 18 months of EI. You're looking at probably about 35 per cent of wages. I was very fortunate as a father that I took four months of parental leave. A wonderful, wonderful experience, but I can tell you, at 55 per cent under the EI program—and I wouldn't trade that opportunity up and I wouldn't go back and undo it—but it was a financial struggle, and we all can't earn.

And I don't begrudge the Leader of the Official Opposition, who has income of excess \$200,000 a year. I mean, but not all of us, not all families are in

that super rich category that can afford taking eight months of parental leave. And, again, I don't begrudge his success as an individual. I think that's, that is quite something. It's—it is terrific that he has achieved that success, that he has—that by demeaning women and the LGBTTQ community, and he has actually made money off that. I mean, it's a bit of an odd way to make money. It's not a way that I think that I would want myself to make money or I would want my children to make money. But, again, that is his feminist lens and we will leave it to that, Madam Speaker.

So, Madam Speaker, I think it's incumbent upon all of us in this House to take a good look at this legislation, to ask ourselves, you know, how can we ensure that all parents in this province are being supported. Are they being supported through our employment legislation? Are they being supported through our tax policies? There are a whole host of ways, health care, education, Madam Speaker.

I look forward to hearing continuing debate on this important file.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just a simple question, you know. The government needs to tell Manitoba families once and for all, do they support 18 month parental—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order

In accordance with our rule 24, and as previously announced, I am interrupting this debate to put the question on selected Bill 211.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 211, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Could you summon the members for a recorded vote, please?

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order, please.

The one hour provided for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I am therefore directing that the division bells be turned off and the House proceed to the vote.

The question for the House this morning is second reading of Bill 211, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allum, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Swan, Wiebe.

Nays

Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 13, Nays 34.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Yes, Madam Speaker, I would like to canvass the House to see if there is consent to approve with unanimity the 'electorial' divisions amendment act, Bill 204.

Madam Speaker: Could the member clarify for the House: Is he asking the House to—he's used the word consider.

Mr. Fletcher: I'm asking for leave of the House to consider at all stages unanimous consent to approve Bill 240–204, the 'electorial' divisions amendment act.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 7, 2017

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