

Third Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

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	Man.
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
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen, Hon.	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
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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	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 4, 2018

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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Good morning, Madam Speaker.

I would ask leave of the House that this morning we would debate Bill 224.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave this morning to debate Bill 224? [*Agreed*]

Leave has been granted.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 224—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(No Disclosure Without Consent)**

Madam Speaker: Moving, then, to Bill 224, The Public Schools Amendment Act (No Disclosure Without Consent).

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I move, seconded by the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), that Bill 224, The Public Schools Amendment Act (No Disclosure Without Consent), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, good morning, Madam Speaker, and good morning to my colleagues. I am pleased to rise this morning, and I'm extremely pleased to bring forward this very important bill before the House and a bill that I'm sure members on all sides will have lots to say about and a lot of comments to make.

Of course, this bill, Madam Speaker, is very important. It amends The Public Schools Act to include a provision that a pupil involved in a gay-straight alliance, or a GSA, may withhold their consent to disclose that information about their participation to the school board and then to their parents and/or guardians. The student also may withhold their consent to the disclosure in the case of bullying based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

As I said, Madam Speaker, this is an absolutely crucial bill. It is a timely bill. It is a bill that has been discussed and debated across this country, and we do believe that this is the next step in bringing our LGBTTTQ* community together and helping them as they move forward in their lives as they disclose the information about their sexual identity to their friends and their peers and their family.

This really is something—as I said, is a continuation of the work that's already been done here in this province, and I know that there are a few members here still that were part of the bill 18 hearings in the Legislature when it was the previous government who brought forward a protection to students who wish to form a GSA, who wish to come together to form a gay-straight alliance within their school. And I was one of those members who sat in on those public hearings for that particular bill and was able to chair a number of those meetings.

And I can say, in my time being here in this Legislature, I can't think of another issue or bill that brought forward, you know, more inspirational stories and some difficult stories from folks who had lived this experience as a young person who wished to participate in a GSA or wished to come out in their schools.

And as I said, I'm not the only one in this Chamber, and I do believe that this morning we may hear experiences from the folks who were there who were in those committees, who heard from those people first-hand, who heard those experiences first-hand.

But I also think, maybe more importantly, we may hear from others in this Chamber who weren't here, but understood at the time, maybe because they had someone in their own family who was a—who

was in that situation where they were being bullied or felt that they needed to be a part of that community and felt to feel supported within their school, or maybe they just knew a friend or a neighbour. But I would say, Madam Speaker, that probably everybody in this Chamber has some personal experience; and as I've said many times in the past, I do believe that makes for the best debate when folks can talk about that personal experience.

So it was a difficult process going through the process of bill 18. I do hope that we've come a long way, and I do hope that this is a bill that we can, as legislators, see as the next step, come forward together in a spirit of bipartisanship and pass and support collectively, because this is so very important to students and for young people in our province.

We believe that all people regardless of how young they are deserve to decide when and whom—to whom they disclose their sexual or gender identity. The LGBTTQ* community and the youth are particularly vulnerable, we believe, Madam Speaker, and so we think that it's our responsibility as legislators to do our best to protect them. Our top priority for schools is to make them safe and welcoming places for all students regardless of their sexual identity, their gender identity or their gender expression. We want a safe space for them to learn and to grow.

Gay-straight alliances, Madam Speaker, are student-led clubs. Of course, they provide a sense of community, a sense of safe, supportive space for those young members of that community and, importantly, I think, to note, their straight ally peers. GSAs provide the opportunity for students and for staff to educate themselves and the broader community, and to work together to promote equality and to end stigma.

This bill will ensure that students are protected from having their sexual orientation or gender identity outed to their parents by their teachers, who will be made legally unable to notify the parents if their children participate in a GSA. The amendments in this bill make clear that the job of school teachers and administrators is to support students and to facilitate a safe and open environment for those students to learn in. It is important for school staff to recognize that it is not their prerogative to out their students' sexual and gender identities. That right belongs firmly to the students themselves to make that decision in their own time.

This bill will provide clarity to teachers, which is important, in regards to whose interests they must protect. They will no longer have to consider competing pressures either from parents or from third parties, as the case may be. They will be able to say, with legal authority, that their actions must be taken in the interests of their students and their students' privacy and security.

* (10:10)

We recognize that parents love their children, first and foremost, and they want to remain informed about their lives, but it is clearly our position that it should be up to the individual students to decide when they feel safest and most comfortable revealing their identities to parents. It is clear, Madam Speaker, that for a young person, it is probably one of the most difficult scenarios that they have to face. We certainly want to support them in absolutely every way we can. We do understand that the supports need to extend to parents and to schools, and I think that work needs to be done as well. But as a first step, we must prioritize the rights of those children and those young people who are making that difficult transition.

The act of coming out is a personal one, and the circumstances of it should be in control of that person who is doing it. People who choose to disclose their identities to others, they know best when it is safe for them to do so and the manner in which they'd like to do that. It's not responsible to continue to allow teachers to out their students, to tell the parents that they are a member of the gay-straight alliance. It can cause confrontations. It can cause difficulties for that student beyond the school environment, which can be very difficult for a student to navigate.

Teachers and school staff will never be equipped with enough information on the home lives of those students to decide how it is appropriate, when it is appropriate for them to disclose such sensitive information. And it's difficult for teachers to see what the home life of that particular student might look like.

Outing students, therefore, has the potential to be dangerous, in fact, to the welfare of children, and once a child has been outed in their home, that home life might be unsafe.

Madam Speaker, as I said, this is a timely piece of legislation. This does grow from work that's already been done in this province, but now we have

fallen behind, and we are no longer at the forefront of protecting the youth in the LGBTTQ* community. In fact, there is legislation in Alberta that have—has been put in place. So this has been implemented in other provinces. This is something that we need to move forward on. We need to continue to push for safety and prioritize the safety of children, first and foremost, in this province.

As I said, you know, at the time of bill 18, there was a lot of debate and a lot of discussion in this Chamber. And, in fact, I think most of the debate centred around how can we do more for children, how can we extend the legislation or make it more robust? I think there was other voices at the table, but I do believe that legislators in this Chamber had that goal in mind. This is an example of a way that we can push this legislation forward; we can move it ahead; we can protect youth; we can catch up to the rest of the country and ultimately we can show ourselves in this Legislature as allies of the LGBTTQ communities, specifically of youth, that we can stand together with them to understand their needs and push this forward here in this province.

Thank you very much, 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.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): I thank my colleague, the member for Concordia for bringing forward this legislation. I'd like to ask the member to further explain how this legislation would impact children with developmental disabilities or those who have suffered abuse or trauma or mental or emotional health challenges, and if school should be legally barred from engaging their parents regardless of their individual circumstances.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It's good to see my colleague here. We saw each other this morning at Agape Table with—serving those in need, and so it's nice to see him here in the Chamber, and hopefully that goodwill can continue here this morning.

As I said, this specific legislation is to protect those who are participating in GSAs, in gay-straight alliances, within their schools. And I think that it's

the next logical step, and I do think it's important legislation.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I thank the member for introducing this bill, which I think is a good contribution. I would like the member to talk a little bit further about the application of this to instances of bullying and where and when it might apply relative to this bill.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and again, my colleague from River Heights was at Agape Table this morning as well, so it's great to see him here in the Chamber.

This in no way would change the supports that would exist within the school system. So I think that's important to note. So the schools still have the same ability to support the students who are being bullied regardless of the reason.

And in the same way, when communicating to the parents, bullying is—it can be identified still and the supports can still be there with regards to the bullying. It's simply the disclosure of their participation in the GSA or their sexual identity that would need to remain confidential.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I want to thank my colleague, who was also, also at Agape Table this morning, for bringing this really important motion forward. I feel very fortunate to have, of course, a very large contingent of LGBTTQIA* community members in my constituency.

Could he say a little bit more about the inspiration behind this bill and the importance of it in today's context?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much, and it is good to see my friend who, I believe we were in his constituency this morning. I know he has a very close relationship with the folks at Agape Table.

It is something that, as the member identified, is something that I think that all of us have heard about or seen as legislators, but, again, I would say that everybody within their own family or in their friend circle has heard of examples where, you know, they understand the pressures that young people have when coming out. That is a big part of, for me personally, why this is important.

But, you know, in the same vein, I would go back to bill 18 and the hearings and the experiences that I had there. I do believe that every legislator has a duty to move this forward.

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): I guess I'm the first one who wasn't at Agape Table this morning. Russell, I'm sorry about that.

I'd like to ask the member: Does he recognize that every child is unique, that the unique circumstances of each instance where this bill might apply may be too heavy-handed, may be too much? And does he recognize that perhaps there are different circumstances where this bill may interfere with the safety of a child?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I've got to admit, Madam Speaker, I may not have heard the question correctly. I heard the member ask about—saying that every child is unique, that every situation is unique. I think he may be supporting this legislation because that's specifically what this legislation talks about, how it is in the interests of the child, that it is up to that youth to make those decisions, and that every case is individual.

For some youth, they have come out to their parents; this is—and to their family—this is not an issue. For others, it is a very big issue, and those are the children that we're trying to protect.

Mr. Gerrard: I want to thank the member for his earlier answer. But I'd like a little bit—to take this a little bit further. If a child is being bullied, that bullying is on the basis of gender, then the school can talk with the parents about the bullying but mustn't mention anything related to the gender of the individual or the circumstances related to gender. Can you clarify this?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, and that's exactly how this legislation is crafted, this amendment is crafted. And that is that in many cases, you know, as I said, in certain cases the gender or the sexual identity of a student is known, and in that case that could be information communicated to the parent. Not in all cases, though. In some cases, it actually would compound the problems or make them worse.

If the student or the youth thinks that this is something that would be useful in addressing the bullying and moving forward, I think those supports need to be there for the students. But not in all cases, and those are the children that we want to protect.

* (10:20)

Mr. Altemeyer: I certainly hope that this worthy proposal is met with speedy passage this morning. Difficult for me to understand how anyone could

either intentionally or unintentionally block this from moving forward. It would be such an important step.

Could the honourable member please explain how this is going to even improve further inclusivity for the LGBTTQIA* community in our schools and in our province as a whole?

Mr. Wiebe: And, you know, this is the kind of legislation that I think, you know, as I said before, is non-partisan or can be non-partisan, and we've seen that in other places; we've seen that in other parts of the country where there's been a move to move quickly and implement this legislation as quickly as possible. I do feel that this is an opportunity for us to do that here in this province, to work together with the school divisions, with teachers, and all of those who want to move forward to protecting children.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, I see the member of Concordia—what I see in this bill is that we have highly trained administrators and educators who are used to dealing in the best interests of the children, but we're putting them now in a conflict of what they can, cannot disclose. This could be a personal conflict for some of these administrators and teachers, and does the member really believe it's better to take that from those people that know best what might work with—for the child and take it to politicians who know nothing about what the children are going through?

Mr. Wiebe: No. In fact, we see the role of teachers and administrators as absolutely crucial to this—to the success of this, but what this, in fact, does is simply clarify what their responsibilities and their rights are, and what it does is it shifts the onus or the understanding of each specific youth's home situation or personal life to the student themselves, protects them first and gives the teachers a little bit of more leeway in terms of deciding how they can best help and support that student.

Mr. Gerrard: Just one more reflection on this issue of bullying. Am I correct that if a boy in a school bullies a girl because she's a girl, or a girl in a school bullies a boy because he's a boy, that even if there are no LGBTQ* issues involved, that the principal or other administrator would have to be very careful about mentioning whether this was a boy/girl issue, or just be able to talk about the bullying issues?

Mr. Wiebe: And I do appreciate that the questions coming from the member, I believe, are genuine in clarifying and understanding this bill.

As I said, this is legislation that protects students who are being bullied because of their sexual orientation or their gender identity, and I do believe that the circumstances of the bullying would need to be understood by the school and by the teacher before any disclosure is made, but, again, I think the onus is on the child or gives the—sorry—the power or the control to that youth and that child, and I think that's the first and most important part of this legislation.

Mr. Altemeyer: And, again, I mean, I view this proposal as human rights legislation. We are ensuring the human rights of children who may be in a vulnerable situation are being protected. I will listen very attentively on any argument that would try to state otherwise as to the intent of this.

Also concerned to hear that of course we have fallen behind in Manitoba on this front in recent years.

Could the honourable member please inform the government members in particular of things their government could and should be doing to further promote the human rights of vulnerable children?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, as I said, Madam Speaker, many in this Chamber were part of the bill 18 public hearings. I know that my colleague from Wolseley was certainly there and, you know, speaking to folks. As he said this is unfortunate that we have fallen behind in Manitoba, that we are no longer at the forefront in protecting children who are facing bullying or discrimination based on their sexual identity.

I think that this is the first step, but as he said there's much more work to do to protect those children. And during those hearings, I heard nothing but support for children. I hope we hear the same today.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired. Debate is open.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): It's always a pleasure to rise and participate in the democratic process.

Before I get into comments on my colleague, the member for Concordia's (Mr. Wiebe) proposed legislation, I think it's important that all of us in this House acknowledge and honour the many missing and murdered indigenous women and girls who've been taken from us all, all too soon. And I know

that's an acknowledgement that will occur today, and I think it's important that we recognize it every day.

That being said, mister—or, Madam Speaker, we have the opportunity in many instances—and the member did indicate that he liked to consider this piece of legislation, Bill 224, as a non-partisan piece of legislation. And there's many instances where we, as legislators, come together in a non-partisan manner. The member for Concordia cited our activities this morning at Agape Table. The member of the second official opposition party and the official opposition party were there, as well, serving meals to those in need. And again, it's an—it's a great example of legislators from across—both sides of the Chamber coming together and working together for a common cause.

Madam Speaker, it's interesting, the—listening to the—and I did listen to the minister—or, to the member for 'cordia's' comments. I believe his heart is in the right place. I believe strongly that we as a government and we as legislators and we as individuals—and myself as a parent—we need to do everything we can to support the LGBTTQ* community. When—one only needs to look at the health outcomes of members of the LGDTTQ community and you will see higher rates of depression, you will see higher rates of anxiety and, unfortunately, you will see higher rates of suicide, all linked to, often, the trauma that can occur from either an inability or—to bring oneself out in a safe manner. Or, in some instances—in too many instances—violence that is perpetuated towards members of the LGBTT community for simply being who they are as individuals, and born that way.

So I don't—like I said, I don't—I do not question the member for Concordia's sincerity when it comes to the legislation—the legislation that he said was, quote, an absolute, crucial bill, end quote, Madam Speaker. But again, it's always passing strange when a member who's part of a government for some 17 years bringing forward legislation that says, you know, it's absolutely crucial that we have this legislation. And yet not once did they bring forward or even discuss the idea of similar legislation during their entire time in office, nor during the election campaign. So it makes one wonder about the—how crucial the member feels or whether or not—and I think it's telling how—who the member had second the bill as to maybe the agenda behind the legislation. The member for Concordia had the leader of the opposition second the bill. And hopefully he will put some comments on the record.

But the member of the official opposition, Madam Speaker, has a history of derogatory comments towards the LGBTTTQ community, of slurs towards that community as well as openly advocating violence towards members of the LGBTTT community. And it's—it is—it has been suggested that perhaps this legislation is the continuing effort of the rehabilitation—or, at least the perception of rehabilitation of the leader of opposition when it comes to his lengthy history of—and negative attitude towards the LGBTTT community.

* (10:30)

So I would hope, Madam Speaker, that that is not the intent of the leader of the opposition—official opposition—seconding the bill, that it is a true understanding and that he is turning away from his history of slurs and advocating violence towards this community.

Now, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe)—and, as I indicated, I did listen carefully to his comment—he did indicate that it is not responsible to continue to allow teachers to out students, which—that being said, and he—the member for Concordia didn't cite a single example of a teacher outing a student, Madam Speaker, and so if—it's almost like he has a solution searching for a problem. He wasn't able to cite a single circumstance here in the province of Manitoba, nor, actually, cite a single circumstance this entire country of Canada, which this may—this legislation may be of value or benefit.

And so one wonders whether or not, again, the—if the bill is simply a political ploy, again, to give that perception of rehabilitation for the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) or a true effort to improve the lives of children who are members of the LGBTTTQ community, because what the member opposite didn't reference at all in his comments on his legislation is that under The Public Schools Act, Madam Speaker, of which you have a former minister of Education of the former government here, they should know, had they done their research, that if a school has concerns that a child may be in danger, currently, under the act, that the school can refuse to disclose any information on sexual orientation that might be included in the pupil's file.

So the authority already exists. And that is section 42.3(2), Refusal of access. And (c) notes that "a school board may refuse to provide access to all or part of a pupil file where disclosure could reasonably be expected to"—again, section (c)—"cause serious physical or emotional harm to the pupil." Now, I

would suggest, given—and given the member for Concordia's comments about the difficulties that some members of the LGBTTTQ community have in expressing themselves and having a safe place in which to disclose, again, should they wish, would be covered off by section 42.3(2)(c), already within the act. So, again, he didn't identify how his private member's bill would somehow add to legislation that already exists.

So it's an amendment to an act of which you're trying to amend and put forward a redundancy within a piece of legislation, so, again, a failure on the part of the member to identify where the current act fails members of the LGBTTTQ* community, again, a community that I and this side of the House and 'memby'—many members across the way support and believe in the value of all individuals and the belief that we need to support not only in—through a safe space but through all—through words and actions, those individuals, no matter the circumstances.

So, again, Madam Speaker, I don't doubt the member's sincerity with his bill, Bill 224, The Public Schools Amendment Act, but I do, unfortunately, question where the act is coming from, whether, again, whether or not it's the—that belief that somehow if they keep putting forward legislation that—and that references the LGBTTTQ community, somehow that community and Manitobans will forget about the language and action of their leader. And I—it would hope that that's not the reason behind the legislation, that they somehow want to whitewash the record of their leader, whom, obviously they have supported despite, obviously, his denials on many, many files.

But that being said, Madam Speaker, my time is closing. I do want to say that, from myself, and whether it's my children or their friends, I believe that anyone who identifies as a member of the LGBTTT community deserves our safety, our respect and our love.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Happy to rise in favour of this excellent proposal from my colleague, the always hard-working MLA for Concordia.

I really do hope that the government understands the importance of human rights in this province, and that in that understanding they recognize that this is human rights legislation. To intentionally or inadvertently block this from proceeding would send a very, very negative message to all Manitobans, not

just to those who are directly connected to the community involved, but to all of us who care about the sanctity of human rights in our province and in our world.

We have a lot of positive history when it comes to human rights. We have a lot of dark chapters, and one of those dark chapters was, absolutely, the opposition to bill 18 when we were in government. And the then-opposition Conservatives of the day did pretty much everything in their power to bully, intimidate, shame and block those who were proposing that the human rights of our children be protected.

We are additionally exceptionally concerned that one of the leaders in the Conservative caucus in that effort in the fight against bill 18, which was ultimately unsuccessful—we did pass the legislation despite their unsubstantiated attacks—that that individual now serves as the Education Minister and, of course, this legislation would fall directly under his purview. If he wishes to atone for the mistakes that he made—and I will repeat them on the record momentarily—there would be no better way than to signal to his caucus that they should sit down in time to allow this legislation to pass this morning. And if that's not the case, he should bring forward the same legislation as a government bill, and I'm sure we will be quite pleased to support our MLA from Concordia in seeing that that is passed.

The—that type of inaction might actually go some way to redressing some of the behaviour which I will remind all members took place during the fight in favour of human rights and in favour of bill 18. His opposition to the bill was well known. He was very public about his opposition, and his intolerance was clearly on display when he mentioned that he'd never been more proud of his own community when 1,000 individuals got together to oppose gay-straight alliances in schools. It is one thing for members of the public to have their opinions. When those opinions contravene basic human rights, it is the responsibility of an elected official to stand up for human rights, and he failed miserably.

I am not making this up, Madam Speaker, unless the Winnipeg Free Press made it up on February 26th of 2013, when all of this was very clearly documented. After a meeting at his church, he went further and said it's always the right thing to stand up for what is right. That was on March 15th, 2013, and he's not alone.

The Conservative MLA for Midland at the time, now a—also a Cabinet minister, believes that the demands of religious leaders should trump the safety and inclusivity of all students in our public schools. He actually put it in writing in something he calls: A view from the Legislature—a dim view—that, quote, this legislation threatens the religious freedom of faith-based schools. Bill 18 imposes requirements on schools to provide services contrary to their religious beliefs.

I can only say that if those services are actually human rights, then the path of what he should support should be clear.

* (10:40)

Furthermore, another MLA, the always interesting Conservative MLA for Emerson, who thankfully is not in Cabinet—probably never will be—has suggested the solution to cyberbullying is that students simply should not go on the Internet.

It would not surprise us that the MLA for Emerson is not overly familiar with the Internet or schools. But I have students in public schools in Manitoba, and they are actually required to use this thing called the Internet in order to do their homework.

His quote, however—his solution in 2013—I think the Internet had been invented by then, Madam Speaker—he told the Winnipeg Sun, quote: If you're being bullied on cyberspace, don't go there. Simple as that.

Since then, of course, his own Twitter account has landed him in trouble. He evidently found cyberspace and decided to use it for the same atrocious reasons that Donald Trump does: to bully and intimidate people he does not agree with.

This government has a long way to go to atone for its past behaviour. And I recognize there are many new members in this Chamber who were not here when this despicable behaviour took place. I place it in your court, as well, to step forward and inform your colleagues of their mistakes, to remind them that we do live in the 21st century, that we do live in a province which very proudly has the Canadian Museum for Human Rights just down the street.

And you need to pass this legislation and many more to make sure that we are laying forward a positive path for our province and not the negative

one based on hate and ignorance that we have seen previously.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I want to start by thanking the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) for bringing this resolution forward. It is important that we are active in advancing measures which will protect children in our schools and make sure that they have the optimum environment in which to grow and to develop. And this bill will protect children as they grow up. It will also clarify the optimum way to support LGBTQ students who are attending schools in Manitoba.

It is really important for children to have safe spaces in their schools, and this, indeed, is what the gay-straight alliance clubs offer. These safe spaces, the gay-straight alliances, are there for students to socialize, to have and to share support for each other and to talk about issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in a safe space.

In passing, as has been done in an earlier measure in this Legislature, the support for gay-straight alliances in schools, we took an important step forward in advancing this bill. I hope we will be able to take a further step in ensuring that we are providing the safe spaces for students.

It is also really important that we are preventing and addressing bullying. Preventing and addressing bullying is important part of improving the mental health of young Manitobans and preventing the development of mental and brain illnesses.

Clearly, one of—with the concerns which are very widespread in our society today about the high incidence of mental health issues and our understanding that some of these mental health issues derive from instances of bullying during childhood or bullying in schools, that it behooves us to make sure that we are doing everything we can to prevent such bullying and to make sure that when it happens we're able to address it effectively.

This bill does not take away from the parents' right to know that their child is being bullied. It does make sure that the child is the one who is able to talk about their gender identity to their parents, should they choose to. And this is putting the ability to participate, the ability to share information, in the right place. It is important that children, when they are in school, know that they are protected from—

when they are in safe spaces, that they are protected from be—having to, you know, explain their gender identity to their parents until they're ready to and have the support of others through organizations like the gay-straight alliance clubs in order to proceed.

So, Madam Speaker, as Manitoba Liberals we are—believe this is to be a good measure, and we certainly support this measure in moving forward and hope that it will be accepted by all members and passed in the Legislature before the end of this session.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Merci.

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): It's a pleasure to be here now that we're back in session after a wonderful time in our constituencies. Of course, in Garden City some of the most diverse people possible. Of new Canadians who have just arrived, refugees and people in my block who bought their house in the late '50s, when it was all farmers' fields.

And I was very happy over the summer; you get to meet with your constituents. And now I'm able to take my daughter out. These diverse people—we're able to go to my friend's house—new friends. He and his husband invite us over for wonderful home-made pizza and—well, and I know—someone mentioned how they enjoyed their summer, some craft beer. It was wonderful and it was a great opportunity.

And so this is the kind of community that my daughter gets to grow up in. The community where, hopefully, she's free of the bigotry and hatred that has existed for a long time in our country. We've seen some hatred even this morning. I believe the member from Wolseley labelled everyone who doesn't agree with him ignorant. Well, that's quite an ad hominem way to win people over to your side. Just label them as stupid, and they don't understand. Oh, they're the fools. We've figured it out. But no, I don't think that's what we come here for. I think we come here for discourse, discussion.

I did ask a question: If there were cases where this legislation could be too blunt, and it wasn't addressed at all. I think there is potential. I think the current legislation that exists that it is up to a school board that can refuse access of information of a pupil's file when in the case that serious injury can be—befall that student. I think it is well enough language where students who potentially could be outed as membership of a club could harm themselves or be the harm of others. I think this already exists.

I have not heard from my friends in the LGBTTQ* community that this is a pressing need. Sometimes we talk about how, in the world right now, it is the death penalty to be a homosexual man, that there are countries like Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia where death could be the answer for your way of life, for your very existence. For wanting to hold your loved one's hand in public, you could be killed. Now, members opposite, I think, must hear this and think, well, Canada is the same because we don't have this legislation that potentially is redundant. I hope they're not making that conclusion. Maybe they're not, and I don't want to slander that position. Some people do make that position, and you will hear in the media that it must be the worst time ever.

When there are people who flee their countries where they could be killed, like Iran—like a fellow I met this summer who fled Iran because he was a homosexual man. And now he's in Canada and he said, I'm in paradise. I thought, well, this is one of the coldest pride parades I had been to yet, and I thought, well, sorry about the weather today. He's like, you live in paradise.

This is a wonderful place to live because his life is not at threat for being who he is. It's a horrible circumstance. Terrifying, really. This is something where, when we work on LGBTTQ* issues, we wonder where is the progress that we are going, that we have a welcoming place.

One of the means that refugees can come to Canada is through help like the Rainbow Resource Centre. And there are also initiatives like summertime when we have our charity runs. I like to try to get to a few of them. Perhaps I've been lacking this last summer. Certainly, it was better than the summer before, but not as good as my first. But the first time I got to go to a charity run as a politician—and remember that I had a job previous where I was almost never in the city of Winnipeg during the summer, I was off training across Canada.

*(10:50)

So I'm in the summer, I'm in Winnipeg, the first run is the Pride Run. It's a newer charity. And I get there, and I wasn't too sure—I introduce myself as a politician or just say, hey, I'm Nic, here we go. And, sure enough, at the front booth, a friend of mine, he's taking a picture here—so Claude, I don't think he would be unhappy. He was there; Claude is one of the organizers for Pride Run. It's a wonderful—we go around The Forks; it raises money to help LGBTTQ

refugees. And just—I was at Minto Armory, and I return there once in a while to see my old friends. Claude was there, we're at the mess, and the first thing he says: This is Nic. He's the politician who goes to Pride Run every year.

And I just thought, I don't appreciate that our influence can have that ability over people where we can represent not just our communities but we're representing this building, we're representing maybe even all politicians. And I kind of thought, for me, it's a fun experience. We go for the morning. I brought my family last time. My good friend from high school, he's a teacher now, he brought his gay-straight-alliance class there last year, and I decide to walk with the class. My friend commented that I just didn't want to run or that maybe I couldn't run, but I enjoyed being able to experience that with a GSA, with his school there.

And these are things where we take for granted. These are the initiatives that I think are critical when we're dealing with these matters, and I'm very glad to be able to represent people on the behalf not just of myself, the people of Kildonan, but of course this very building.

One thing that concerns me in the language we heard, of course, that it seems that members opposite want to relitigate bill 18. I was not here for that. Certainly one thing I read in the local newspaper was that bill 18, of many things that it could do, it was meant to end all bullying. That's what it said: No more bullying. We have this piece of legislation. It's done.

Well, a smarter person than me once said that you cannot legislate away the hate in someone's heart, that laws cannot prevent people from having their feelings, and often negative feelings, that that's not how we can conduct ourselves, that we must recognize that there will be a situation where a parent does not accept their child for many reasons other than sexuality, and this legislation talks about that. And I wonder, why is it confined that way. Perhaps this is truly just a continuation of something that the NDP were trying to do before, and I wonder, there are many various things.

When in school, I, being more right-of-centre than some of my peers, certainly felt less comfortable in some situations, and the professor who fled Argentina because of the sad state of the military junta that killed many, many people there in a savage, brutal dictatorship gives talks on what it means when you can have legislation curtail

freedoms, when you can have the law prevent people from identifying with various groups. And his sister was one of the disappeared, and her body is never found. She was part of her student organization that—it had no merit of why she was—what the organization was doing, she simply was a member on paper of a student organization.

And so it was something in this discussion. We talk about Dr. Lemkin who invented the word genocide. He specifically made note that political affiliation is certainly a category that people can be identified. We think of genocide, we think of, certainly, race. We also think of, say, things like mental ability or things like, say, sexuality.

But political affiliation is something as well, and we know now more than ever it seems that political affiliations are things that are turning into slurs. This is not ideal. This is something where everyone in this Chamber—we already heard that all three recognized official parties had representatives assisting our less advantaged Winnipeggers at Agape Table that does wonderful work, where they do not ask you who you are or what you are before you're getting a meal there. They recognize, when you enter Agape Table, you need something to eat, and all political parties here agreed this is something that can be helpful.

This legislation is not something that was discussed beforehand. It was brought out. The member from Wolseley decides he's going to be using his virtue-signalling shame mongering to try to terrify people. If it's not this bill, then nothing else—nothing else—will stop the violence. This is the bill. Oh, this is it. It's done. History's over. As soon as this bill is passed, no more legislation must be needed.

The tone that the member from Wolseley does not said is something where we are looking to work together on these issues. There is no discussion of violence that has befallen people and how they flee to Canada to enjoy themselves in this country. It seemed, again, that there was a desire to try to shame others into their way or nothing else, and, if it isn't their way, then you must be evil.

This is the rhetoric that does not help us improve the lives of young people. This does not help set policies that better—that there is less violence to young people.

Not too long ago there was a small child, not much older than my own baby, that died because of the hazards that happened. We still don't know all the details, but a young child died. This will happen.

Police have investigated. There is someone who has been charged. And I at first was terrified thinking of my child who's not much younger than this one, but we must not pretend that we can set a law that prevents all horrors from happening. But we can work together to limit, to reduce, to work on ways that we can communicate better.

And at the end of the day, this bill does not do any of those things. Does not communicate a better vision for how we can protect people who can be harmed by their own family, like the child that was killed by their—by a family member. We do not have in this bill the full spectrum. There is nothing beyond relitigation of bill 18 that the members opposite seem content to continue to bring up over and over again, something where there is no progress there. It is digging up into their past, it is digging up into something that they themselves were divided on.

This is unhelpful for advancing the freedoms and needs of the LGBTT community and the needs of our young people in school.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise to speak in the House today about Bill 224, The Public Schools Amendment Act. It's an interesting piece of legislation and reminds me much of the nanny state that we saw in the 17 years of NDP rule, Madam Speaker.

I've heard much in the Chamber today of accusations of individuals who said what, and I just think that this would add to that conflict of school administrators or teachers that would know information that would be helpful and in keeping children healthy and is not able to disclose that information, Madam Speaker. It indeed would cause, I believe, conflicts for those individuals, and not something that I believe we need to do—add to the level of things that the administrators and teachers are trusted in dealing with now.

You know, I certainly was present for much of the discussion of bill 18, most of it I believe. And was interested in the discussion from the then-minister of Education telling us that—absolutely guaranteeing us—you can find it in Hansard, in the media several times, that bill 18 would stop all bullying in schools, Madam Speaker. Despite our best efforts to include much more modern aspects of bullying like cyberbullying in the bill—in the bill which the NDP wanted to ignore—still stuck in the past.

And I was struck on the steps of the Legislature when the minister was there speaking to the crowd, and then the minister of Finance came on and said, Jennifer Howard at the time, and admitted, she said there are flaws in the bill that should be corrected.

And struck by the conflict within the NDP caucus at that time, Madam Speaker—and of course we know that conflict continued, that the rebel five or six or seven, or however many they ended up rebelling against the then leader, and that was indicative of some of the conflict that we saw that they did not agree with legislation in their own caucus and it did indeed break the caucus apart.

So I appreciate the intent of the member bringing this forward, however, I do believe that it will cause—would cause some conflicts in the school system that we currently have.

The wonderful thing about children, Madam Speaker, is that they are indeed all different, and need to be treated, and deserve to be treated differently and uniquely. This bill would treat everybody the same which is not the aspect that I found in raising children.

I'm very fortunate to have four children with my lovely wife, and they are indeed all different. And I am thankful for that because they bring unique challenges to parenting, and we all learn from those challenges as we move ahead.

I want to make sure that everybody is open to discussion with their children and make sure that things of that nature are open. I know there are obviously people that are threatened by certain things, Madam Speaker, but we don't educate people by sweeping things under the rug. I think it's much more necessary to be open with these situations and have discussion that can make sure that everybody is treated fairly—

* (11:00)

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

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

DEBATE ON RESOLUTIONS

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private member's resolutions.

The honourable member for Rossmere on House Business.

House Business

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Madam Speaker, on House business, would you canvass the House to see if there is leave to transfer sponsorship of private member's resolution No. 16, Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day, from the honourable Minister of Crown Services (Mrs. Mayer) to the honourable member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé)?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to transfer sponsorship of private member's resolution No. 16, Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day, from the honourable Minister of Crown Services to the honourable member for Dawson Trail? *[Agreed]*

Res. 15—Protecting and Promoting French Language Services

Madam Speaker: The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on protecting and promoting French language services, brought forward by the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade who has five minutes remaining.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): This resolution was brought up during the spring session, prior to the St. Boniface by-election and so it's interesting that the member for St. Johns doesn't realize the by-election's already happened.

Congratulations to the new member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont).

And there—but I just want to bring up a few of the great things that are happening in St. Boniface. Within my department is Travel Manitoba. And Travel Manitoba has—one of their initiatives is called the place branding program. St. Boniface has worked with Travel Manitoba on a place-branding and it has been very, very successful.

The amount of tourists that are coming to Winnipeg and then taking in the sights and sounds and tastes of St. Boniface has been incredible. And Travel Manitoba has done this across the province to—in different communities and it is a really good initiative and we look forward to even more tourists enjoying the sites and sounds of St. Boniface.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Gimli has also got a place-branding program. Portage La Prairie has a place-branding program. And in fact, in Portage La Prairie what they've done, is they've incorporated the place-branding with their economic development and making one logo and promotional item out of—what came from the place branding program. So this is a good program

Many other communities across Manitoba are working with Travel Manitoba on place branding. And as tourism continues to grow across Manitoba—all across Manitoba, including Winnipeg, in the North—it is—it's a really exciting industry to be involved in right now. And we look forward to even bigger and better things happening.

In regards to St. Boniface also, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) seemed be a little misinformed about CDEM—that's C-D-E-M—the bilingual municipal association. Our government has a great working relationship with CDEM and will continue to. And we work together on projects. They are doing exceptional work at CDEM.

In my own constituency, I have a number of French communities that are working very closely with CDEM also. And so there is just no basis at all in this resolution for what the member is putting in her resolution. But that seems to be fairly normal for her, so.

The other one that was mentioned in here is the World Trade Centre. World Trade Centre, led by my good friend Mariette Mulaire, is doing exceptional work, in terms of attracting businesses to come to Winnipeg, businesses from around the world.

We have a good partnership going with World Trade Centre. And we're looking to strengthen this partnership in the coming time. And, again, it's unfortunate that the member for St. Johns always chooses to look at the negative on this. Manitoba has a lot of great things happening right now. I guess when they brought forward this resolution, they were trying to concentrate on retaining St. Boniface for the NDP. That didn't work out so well for them.

And so maybe now that the by-election's over, they can begin to realize all the great things that this government is doing with both the French community through—*[interjection]*—in St. Boniface and the other communities across Manitoba and the French language, which is a vital part of all Manitoba.

So we look forward to keeping up our good relationship with the French community and strengthening it in the future, and despite the negativity from the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), Manitoba has lots of great things going, and so we'll continue to work on that on a positive note.

So thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): At a time when French immersion enrolment is growing and there's a shortage of French immersion teachers, the provincial government has been dismantling French language education services, the Bureau de l'éducation française, or BEF, and forcing cuts at the universitaire de Saint-Boniface.

Students and staff at USB are both 'faying'—facing layoffs, tuition hikes by \$250 a year, and international students are losing health care. Across the province, the Pallister government has cut—or, the government has cut \$5 million in bursaries—

An Honourable Member: You can say Pallister government.

Mr. Lamont: Am I allowed to say that?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Lamont: Okay, thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Minto.

Every time Pallister talks about the need—the First Minister talks about the need for cuts, we should remember that the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Sorry, it's—I just want to remind the member from St. Boniface that he can't use names of individuals in the Chamber. It has to be under the—their title or their constituency.

Mr. Lamont: I stand corrected. I stand corrected, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I'll sit corrected as well.

And again, every—we have—we should recall that the federal government has actually increased annual funding of the Province in terms of transfer payments by \$434 million-odd in the last two years alone. This includes federal funding dedicated to education, including French language education, health care, infrastructure and more. Tens of millions of these funds are not being invested or even being used to reduce the deficit. Instead, the government has been proceeding with multiple measures to cut

taxes for high-income Manitobans, which actually adds to the deficit rather than reducing it at a time where many people are being forced to take to—or, asked to tighten their belts.

And I think what is happening with the French education in Manitoba is a perfect example of the way this government is undermining critical programs across Manitoba. As one person told me, if we're not investing in our young people and in education, we're not investing in our future.

Education in Canada's official languages and French in Manitoba is a constitutional right at the provincial and the federal level. It is not a luxury or an extra or a duplication. Being bilingual has many benefits. Personally, my life has changed infinitely for the better because my parents chose to send me to French immersion, and I happened to meet my wife because we both spoke French.

I went to École Sacré-Coeur. J'avais l'opportunité d'aller à l'École Sacré-Coeur. C'était la première école d'immersion au province du Manitoba. Mes parents étaient partie d'un groupe de parents qui ont lutté pour que l'École Sacré-Coeur devienne partie du système public. Et c'était vraiment—c'était une école absolument extraordinaire et c'est non seulement pour des étudiants, mais pour notre province.

Translation

I had the opportunity to attend École Sacré-Coeur School. It was the first immersion school in the province of Manitoba. My parents were part of a parents' group that fought for École Sacré-Coeur School to become part of the public system. And it was really—it was an absolutely extraordinary school, not only for students but for our province.

English

Being able to speak French opens up new worlds, new opportunities across Canada and around the world, and Manitoba is unique in Canada. Alone among the provinces, it was founded after a democratic uprising led and brought into Confederation by Louis Riel, an indigenous leader. Riel secured a commitment in the Manitoba constitution that Manitobans would have the right to educate their children in their own language and their own religion.

Riel sought to secure rights not just for his own people, not just for French or Catholic or Metis, but for everyone, for English, Scottish and Protestant as

well. But for decades, these rights were denied. Francophone education in Manitoba was suppressed.

I was taught by teachers in French immersion at Sacré-Coeur who had to hide French books from school inspectors, and I—and on the campaign trail, I met many people who had undergone the same experience. This happened within living memory.

So what we are seeing with the current government's cuts to French education is a rollback of 50 years of progress. It's a denial of the principles on which Manitoba was founded. There are French schools across Manitoba—not just in St. Boniface. There's a francophone school in Thompson, for example. And I would add, however, that, as in so many cases, the current government is making these cuts to institutions that were already fragile due to underfunding and lack of support from the previous government.

* (11:10)

The Manitoba NDP's tuition freeze and then freeze to inflation was paired with the inadequate funding for post-secondary educations. While the NDP froze undergraduate tuitions for a while, they let tuitions skyrocket by up to 400 per cent in other faculties, and there are areas where post-secondary funding in Manitoba has not increased since the 1970s. The capital grant for the University of Brandon, for one, is at \$300,000 which is the same level it was in the 1970s.

When it came to francophone engagement the NDP drafted an agreement to consult with Manitoba's francophone community, but never signed it. The PC signed it, but have completely ignored it. I'll add that when Jean Charest proved that French language rights in Manitoba were a reality with his historic Supreme Court case, it was decided that public money would be better spend on providing French language services than to simply translating, then spending it on translators and translating laws.

But I have heard that this is—the extent to which French services are important is illustrated because I have heard that elderly patients with dementia who have been bilingual most of their lives are sometimes losing their English and can only still communicate in French. If we do not have people who can care for them in French they will be left alone, and that's unacceptable. French health—so health-care services for them are absolutely essential.

I have spoken with Canadian Parents for French who also are extremely concerned about that what's happening here in Manitoba is happening all across Canada because we have inadequate support for French education both in French milieu as well as French immersion. And it's also important to realize that this government receives federal funding that is supposed to be dedicated for French education, but as with so many issues of accounting with this government it's not clear where this money is going.

I spoke with Canadian—again, I spoke with Canadian Parents for French and I also raised this issue with Prime Minister Trudeau when I met with him last month. Manitoba's French community and French services should not be treated as a luxury to be cut. They are an essential service and a right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): It is an honour to rise in the Chamber here today. It's my first chance to speak since the return of the new session. Again, we're coming up to the Thanksgiving weekend so I do want to wish everyone a very good and happy Thanksgiving.

We had a opportunity this morning with a number of members from all sides of the House to help out at Agape Table for their Thanksgiving breakfast this morning, and I know that it's a very humble reminder of how there are many people in this province who are not as fortunate to be able to rely on a constant supply of food for themselves and their family. So I do appreciate all my colleagues who were there this morning and encourage others to continue to do that great service for the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to speak to this particular resolution. I do find it interesting that when the member from St. Johns rose to spoke on this issue it was—I would have preferred to see that done in both official languages, and that didn't seem to happen. So I thought it was a bit strange that someone introducing a resolution on the French language wasn't speaking French. Perhaps that could change and maybe that's something that the member from St. Johns would like to put some French on the record here for the benefit of the whole House and those who speak French throughout our province.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unfortunately, I do believe that this was somewhat of a wedge issue aimed at winning the St. Boniface by-election. Unfortunately, for the opposition, or the official opposition, that didn't work. So I do welcome the

new member from St. Boniface from—who is also the Liberal leader of the party to our Chamber.

So, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that if this was a partisan attempt to win a by-election, well, I guess, Manitobans rejected that as they rejected the premises of the NDP in 2016, which saw a record majority government for our Progressive Conservative caucus. And I guess the NDP caucus hasn't learned any lessons from 2016, and I'm guessing in 2020 they won't learn either. So I look forward to how that does shake out.

You know, as our government here, on this side of the House, we do appreciate the valuable contributions that the Franco-Manitoba community makes to our province. And like all Manitobans, francophones saw their taxes increased under the NDP caucus for 17 years when they had a record debt, decay and decline that have plagued this province for almost two decades in this great province of Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am very proud of the work that's being done on this side of the House, and that we've seen recently that there's a record reduction in the deficit, bringing the deficit down and bringing our finances closer to balance every day—means more money in the pockets not only for Manitobans, but for our children and grandchildren, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know that a deficit is nothing more than deferred tax to the next generation, and we'd like to see that change and the direction change in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as many of my colleagues know, my wife and I are now expecting and we have—*[interjection]*—thank you, thank you. In March I'll be expecting a young child. We don't know the gender of the child yet, but of course I can't fathom having this child come into the world knowing that we've just handed my son- or daughter-to-be a tax bill for something that's—or for services that never—that no one ever benefited from and certainly something that they won't benefit from in the future.

So again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I speak on behalf of all Manitobans when we say that the future of this province is important to us, and that includes the financial security of not only our province but all of Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Franco-Manitoba community is—plays a vital role in this province. We've seen that—evidence of that going back to the early days of our province, of course, and I know that it's not only one of Canada's official

languages, but, again, it's very much ingrained in the social cultural fabric in this province.

I look no further than the Festival du Voyageur, and I know many of my colleagues here have partaken in the activities at the festival, and we've—this government is very supportive of that culture. I mean, it's one of our founding cultures in the province, and going back to the fur traders here in the province, it's about as Manitoban as you can get.

So I don't know why this particular resolution, or what value this particular resolution brings to the table other than—and I alluded to earlier—it's a political—used for political purposes to try and win a by-election that didn't even work out in the first place. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't see why we need to be debating this particular resolution, but nonetheless, it was brought forward in spring and I'd be happy to—I'm happy to put some words on the record with respect to this resolution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, like I said, the Festival du Voyageur does bring in quite a tourist attraction for the province of Manitoba, not only like I said for Manitobans, but for others across the country, and many people—I have friends in Quebec who were surprised to hear that, you know, there was such a large Franco-Manitoba community in the province, and that we actually have one week a year to—set aside to celebrate that very culture.

In fact, as we know, there's a—quite a diaspora of culture in this province, ranging from Anglo-, Franco-, Indo-Manitoban, Filipino. It's quite a broad spectrum of cultures in this province and it's continuing to grow. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that it's important that we recognize all cultures and all languages at—or in this Chamber and of course as a government.

I think it's important to recognize that much of that cultural diversity can be attributed to our Manitoban nominee program that, of course, was introduced by the Filmon government, the Progressive Conservative government in the '90s and continues to this day to not only benefit us culturally but also economically. And I very am proud to say that that was something that a Progressive Conservative government has introduced and we continue to support it, and not only support it, but improve its functioning as a program here in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would like to suggest that this resolution is—although I appreciate perhaps some of its content,

again, I do question the motives behind it, and so I would have some more questions that—you know, if the member from St. Johns would care to answer, I would appreciate hearing some answers from her on that, and of course, again, if the member would care to perhaps discuss or speak to this particular resolution in both official languages, that might bring some credibility to the—to this resolution and especially considering it's a resolution that's aimed at protecting and defending the French language, which was ironically not introduced in the French language in the first place. So, again, that does raise a few questions and more so than I would anticipate.

* (11:20)

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I do thank you for the opportunity to—or thank everyone for the opportunity to speak to this particular legislation. I continue to be humbled to represent the riding of Southdale in the Legislative Assembly. I know that this is something that—it's an honour to be a member of the Legislative Assembly in this province. Very few people get to do this type of job, and it's—I do humbly thank those people in Southdale who have—who I represent and, of course, the good work that has been done by a lot of the community groups in my community and in, around, the Southdale area in southeast Winnipeg, which, although not quite in my riding, but Festival du Voyageur is very close to my riding; it's in the St. Boniface riding, which, very close to home for me.

So, again, I thank them for the incredible work that they do and continue to do for the Franco community and, of course, to all the cultural groups here that have made this province as diverse as it is. And I continue to celebrate the cultures that make Manitoba the proud and growing province that we enjoy today.

Thank you.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): It's—as I always say when I start speaking, it really is a privilege to rise in the House and put words on the record in regards to all bills, resolutions, whether you're talking about folks in your own constituency or things that happen in the province of Manitoba that deserve celebration. And I want to start right off again by welcoming the new member from St. Boniface. It is certainly a pleasure to have other newbies, as we call ourselves, on board, and now we can say that I'm no longer the rookie; he is because I've been here a couple of years longer. So it's always a pleasure.

Speaking in regards to language and the ability to speak Français or French, I have to admit that that is probably one of my weakest points as a individual in this—in society is I speak English, right? And I did take French back in elementary school, a little bit in junior high. I failed miserably at it. And it is something that I've always longed to do, and I think all of society would benefit from knowing not just one language or two languages but maybe even three or four.

I know, in my cultural background, I would certainly love to have the ability to join in a healthy conversation with my mother-in-law. She's in Brandon, but she is originally from St. Boniface, speaks French fluently, and I would love to be able to carry on the conversation. Unfortunately, as I said earlier, French is definitely not my strong suit. I know a few words, but I don't know enough to carry on a conversation.

However, I feel the same about my home language from Iceland. I would love to be able to speak Icelandic as well. You know, I have a lot of opportunities. In this very House I was able to welcome the ambassador from Iceland, and I even had the opportunity to meet with the prime minister of Iceland a few weeks ago. And, again, while we spoke in English, it would've been a pleasure to speak in the mother tongue of our language as well.

So when we look at the ability to influence on the French language, I agree it is something that is very valuable for all of us. It is an official language here in Canada, and I would certainly be one on the very top who would say, yes, I would love to learn a little bit more, you know, French, in my language abilities. My seatmate sitting next to me from Dawson Trail has certainly helped me out a lot as we speak, and he does some speaking in French, and he's able to help me translate a little bit.

But, again, I always look at the ability to speak in a language that you're not comfortable with, where it may be a privilege to say a few words, you also have a greyed line of where you might fail and insult those who speak that language. I know in a past position I was the vice-president of the Canadian 5 Pin Bowlers' Association, and I was emceeing a national championship in Quebec, and I was asked to say a few words to the 400 participants and coaches and families and whatnot, and I thought, you know, it'd best be speak in their language, which is a beautiful language.

However, I was conflicted with the fact, do I speak in French and get applauded for my attempt or do I stand there and end up brutalizing the beautiful language and, unfortunately, insulting people? But, you know, I took the big road, and I tried to learn a few words in French, and I said a paragraph in their language, and it kind of said to me, you know, every—nobody laughed, but they certainly appreciated the fact that I gave it a brutal attempt.

So, again, we have a lot of opportunities, and, when I look at the resolution, you know, there are some conflicting statements in the resolution that's before us on what our government has done or what we should be doing. And while I agree that, you know, multiple languages is a necessity in today's world, we just have to look at our own communities to find out how important it is to have that ability to communicate not only in French, but with a diversity that we have in our communities with people—the immigration we have happening in our communities. The diversity we have to be able to communicate and build a better society is certainly one that would benefit all of us.

I certainly just look, when we talk about education, and there is a piece in the resolution that talks about education. I am very fortunate in Brandon we have a number of French education institutions. One that I went to, and it was my high school, Neelin High in Brandon is a French program. We have École New Era. We have a couple of other schools in Brandon, as well. And, again, we have a system set up so that individuals can get into those schools if that is their choice to build on their second language, or maybe even French is their first language, so they want to, you know, ensure their children get into there.

So we certainly appreciate the valuable contributions that the francophone community has made to our province. You know, it is certainly something that we look towards every day because we know that good governments make difficult decisions that are necessary to ensure the protection of sustainability and quality of service for our citizens. Education is certainly one of those areas.

But, again, we just have to look, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that internally, even within government, in 2017 there were 805 positions which were bilingual in capacity in government. The year before that there was 744. So you can see that there is certainly an investment in that opportunity.

And, again, French is the second official language in our country and it is certainly one that our government is taking steps necessary to ensure that francophones and all Manitobans have access to sustainable and cost-effective 'public'-public services.

More in the resolution when you look at what the resolution talks about, it mentions some inaccuracies in some of their stats when they talk about educational changes, when they talk about health-care changes. I know in one the St. Boniface had collaborated with a primary-care program in 'transitioning'-pardon me-in transitioning the services offered in the QuickCare clinics in order to provide services in both official languages.

And I do know that all the staff are required to be fluently bilingual due to the francophone designation and can currently, and going forward, will be able to offer all services in both official languages.

So you can see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we look at the opportunities in Manitoba in order to advance what we do as a government, as a people of Manitoba. And part of that, again, is we've spoken and we've heard, you know, today's debate, previous debates, previous Speakers that have stood in this House. I don't think you'll see anywhere that our-anybody in this House does not support the importance of having French as a language in Manitoba.

We certainly understand the value of it-and then I said, again, I am currently looking into taking French myself so that I can learn to respect the language. And to me, respecting it means having the ability to speak it, to communicate it and understand.

We're fortunate in the House here to have earpieces that I can put in when a conversation is going on. I select button No. 2 all the time on my desk so that when someone does speak French, the translation comes in so that I can understand what is going on as well, and I think that's a very valuable tool that we can use. But, again, if I was able to not use that tool, but to be able to understand it by hearing myself, I think, would be that much better.

So, again, when we look at improving myself is basically what the government is saying that we are doing, because students have made it clear that affordability and access should be a priority for

them, and we are definitely committed to ensuring just that.

* (11:30)

I know, again, with the resolution talking about education, you know, that Manitoba students continue to benefit from the education amount and basic tax credits that are eligible on tuition and auxiliary fees.

So, again, having the ability to move forward and say, hey, this is an opportunity for all of us to build our education systems, to build our health-care systems, around the two official languages of this country, are dynamic and moving forward.

So, again, with that, I am saying in this House that I look forward to the opportunity to continue to work with my colleagues who do speak French so that maybe they can help me learn the language so that I can effectively use it to communicate, to listen, to talk, to understand.

But, again, our government is moving forward in the right direction, and I look forward to continued discussion and continued-to moving forward.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): It is an honour to rise today-[*interjection*] En français, seigneur. It is an honour to rise today in this House to discuss this resolution, and it seems odd; this resolution seems to be less about protecting French language services but more of a shotgun blast to try and slag a lot of the good work our-great work our government has done.

There's not really one specific thing. It's targeted-it's talked about health care; it's talked about education; it's talked about French language services. And, when you put the actual facts on the record, we're doing a much better job than the previous government.

I myself grew up-and my first real substantive business was when my father owned a grocery store, and I've talked about things like this in the past, the grocery business.

My dad's first store was right in the heart of St. Boniface at the corner of Taché and St. Mary's, a nice little store called Eugene's IGA. And it was just down the street from Eugénie, in the neighbourhood, so it was my first real being aware, living or working in St. Boniface and how prevalent and how all-encompassing the French culture is there.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Customers would come in, quite often, and hearing my father's name would expect that my dad would speak French. And, unfortunately, he couldn't. They could always try to communicate with him in Ukrainian, but that was not to be.

But, in that store, many of the customers—we learned very quickly that you always had to have a cashier who spoke fluent French while being there. It's part of the area. When you were displaying goods, the canned goods section, you really had to focus and make sure that half of the products were displayed with their French labels outward.

It's a unique community, and I was really delighted and had a lot of fun helping out in the St. Boniface by-election, door knocking and reconnecting with that community. And I wish congratulations to the new member from St. Boniface. He did a lot of work. And, when we saw he—his French language has really helped him a huge amount in that area, being able to talk at the door.

When I was walking with our candidate, Mamadou, I was—as I'd go there and knock and introduce myself and talk to the people, and along would come Mamadou, and he would greet them right away in French. And they would switch to that language just very naturally.

And I was very, very impressed with how many people in that neighbourhood are still part of that French community, as when I walked earlier on this year—I've accompanied my colleague from Dawson Trail in a few parades. And, as we're walking along and talking to the people in Lorette, things like that, he's always stopping, and, quite often, he's stopping and he's talking in French. You know, and I have to keep him going, because he seems to be hanging back and visiting too much, but I say, hey, come on, let's go, let's go, keep it going, and quit dropping candy on the ground.

It's an important part of our culture, and the French culture is an important part of Manitoba. I myself am involved with the Ukrainian cultural—you may be aware I sing in a choir; I used to do Ukrainian dance. But I've been fortunate to perform on stage at a great many places with groups such as l'Ensemble Folklorique de la Rivière-Rouge, as well as Ça Claque.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Or, this past winter, we had a—or there was a concert that featured the group la Chorale des Intrépides, a beautiful French choir, as well as—I was also fortunate earlier on this summer to attend liturgy at St. Boniface basilica. A little while ago, there was a trilingual liturgy held there between the Eastern European, right, so the Ukrainian church, the English church, and it was a beautiful liturgy that was held in three languages.

It's very, very important, and our government is very proud to support French language, and in all its forms, whether it be the culture, whether it be the language and whether it be the services.

Recently, I spoke to DFSM, from the school association there, and their idea is they would like to expand the services in Transcona. We've already got a strong French milieu program in Transcona. I have met with the school division on a few occasions, and that part of the attendance—we're getting more and more students wanting to enter the French milieu schools. They're looking at having to change a few things and expand it.

When I ran my store in Transcona, quite often I had more and more employees that worked for me that came through the French immersion program and eventually went on to the St. Boniface—collège Saint-Boniface education program.

Part of this resolution talks about how we're not supporting universities or education, and I disagree wholeheartedly. We absolutely are. We are allowing universities to set tuition at a level that they need to provide the proper education for the students in the future, and I'm very pleased that they're—that we're doing that.

It is a unique area we have here in Manitoba, not quite as unique—last year, I was able to travel to New Brunswick. And in New Brunswick, that is the only province—the only province in Canada—that actually has official bilingualism.

And I know on the, I believe, east and northern borders of New Brunswick, the majority of—perhaps a much stronger French community or much more immersed French community than we have here, and we're lucky to have that sort of thing here in Canada.

When it comes to, mentioned within the resolution, the lack of support for St. Boniface Hospital, well, I think that's not the truth. St. Boniface Hospital is a shining light when

it comes to cardiac care in our province. The expansions that we're doing at St. Boniface Hospital are going to make it even better for the community, even better for all of Manitobans.

I recently had dinner—was talking to the chair of St. Boniface Hospital Foundation, and he's very excited about all of the things that we are doing and what our government is doing to support St. Boniface Hospital and with the changes that they're making there.

So, again, within the resolution, it states that we're not supporting. It's the previous government and their mismanagement and their poor—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order. In accordance to the rule 33-5, the private member's resolution may be considered no more than three hours, and at the end of the three hours of the debate, the Speaker must put the question. The three hours allotted for the debate of the current resolution has just expired, and I will now be putting the question to the House.

The question before the House, then, is the resolution 15, sponsored by the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine).

Would the members like to read the resolution? No? [*interjection*] Read it?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

* (11:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. Whereas—I guess the—putting—protecting the—and promoting French language services, bill 15—resolution 15.

WHEREAS the province of—provincial government has made cuts across the province of French language services, including health care, that makes it harder for francophone families to access front-line services they deserve while maintaining the language rights and ensuring Manitoba preserve its vibrant, strong francophone communities; and

WHEREAS the provincial government shuttered the bilingual of St. Boniface QuickCare clinics which actively offers the 'extential' health-care service to French and St. Boniface families and seniors; and

WHEREAS the provincial government cuts nearly \$60,000 in funding of the Actionmarguerite of personal-care homes, cutting support of quality care of St. Boniface seniors; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is closing three emergency rooms across Winnipeg, significantly increasing the pressure of the St. Boniface Hospital ER and increasing times for St. Boniface families; and

WHEREAS access to the French education is source of pride in the—of the community and represents a history of fighting for the French language rights, and the provincial government's cuts indicates a deprioritization of French language education in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the provincial government's cut the assistant deputy minister's position for the—which is—bureau of education française, which 'undermets'—undermines the BEF's ability to provide strong French language education supports; and

WHEREAS the provincial government cuts forced post-secondary tuition to rise by 6.6 for universities of Manitoba, including the university of St. Boniface, and to cut the education tax rebate to help new graduates pay off student loans and find their career in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the provincial government cuts funding for more than \$50,000 for Centre Flavie-Laurent, which helped the low-income families in St. Boniface and east Winnipeg access housewares, furniture, clothing and other basic necessities of life; and

WHEREAS the provincial government regress bills would severely limit revenue for community newspapers, including those of serve as French speaking communities; and

WHEREAS the provincial government slashes funding for the World Trade Centre and the council de development—municipalities bilingually in Manitoba, the CDEM.

And therefore—the—it's—THEREFORE TO BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urges the provincial government to reserve the cuts of French language health-care, education, community services and to make real investments and support the strength of Manitoba francophone communities for now and for the future.

Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear Noes.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

The member for—[interjection]—Concordia, sorry; the honourable member for Concordia.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): Recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A recorded vote has been called. Call in the members.

The question before the House is Resolution No. 15.

Division

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

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Swan, Wiebe.

Nays

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

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 12, Nays 33.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The resolution is accordingly defeated.

* * *

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 4, 2018

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