

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 11, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 203—The Occupiers' Liability
Amendment Act**

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), that Bill 203, The Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Honourable Speaker, this bill contains amendments that will modernize The Occupiers' Liability Act to ensure that occupiers receive timely notice of personal injury claims related to snow or ice on private property. This will ensure that the issue can be remedied quickly to prevent further injury from somebody who is also entering that particular property.

**Bill 13—The Emergency Medical Response and
Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act**

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance—the honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), that Bill 13, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

The Speaker: Before we move on to this bill, I have to go back to the previous one.

**Bill 203—The Occupiers' Liability
Amendment Act**
(Continued)

The Speaker: And is it the honour—or the privilege—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion by the honourable member for Steinbach? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 13—The Emergency Medical Response and
Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act**
(Continued)

The Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance, that Bill 13, the emergency medical response and stretcher transportation act, be now read a first time.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to present—rather, to introduce Bill 13, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act.

This bill amends The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Act to enable separate licences to be issued to two or more parties to operate different parts of an emergency medical response system.

This will enable the implementation in the longer term of the service delivery model for air emergency ambulance—emergency medical response services, rather—contemplated by the 10-year agreement signed by the government with Keewatin Air (LP) in 2023, in which Keewatin provides the air platform and Shared Health provides the medical care on transports.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

The honourable Minister of Justice. Apparently, it's that kind of day.

Bill 14—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Altomare), that Bill 14, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to introduce The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024.

This bill corrects translation, typographical, numbering and other minor drafting errors to provide clarity and consistency in Manitoba's statute book.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 202—The Community Foundation Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): It's my pleasure to move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Ms. Stefanson), that Bill 202, The Community Foundation Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Jackson: I'm very pleased to introduce my first bill, Bill 202, which will proclaim April 26 of every year as Community Foundations Day in Manitoba.

Community foundations have a long history in Manitoba with the Winnipeg Foundation being the first of its kind in Canada, and they continue to make significant impacts on our communities, now numbering 57 across the province.

Manitoba is consistently named the most generous province in the country, and the volunteers and staff of these many community foundations play a significant role in that mind-milestone.

I'm joined today by representatives from the Winnipeg Foundation, Endow Manitoba, as well as several community foundations from my constituency.

I know that like me, they hope and expect this bill will receive unanimous support from all members of

this Legislative Assembly. I'd like to ask all my colleagues to join me in acknowledging them for the work that they do in our province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

* (13:40)

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

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): Good afternoon, Honourable Speaker.

I move, seconded by the MLA from Waverley, that Bill 207, The Islamic Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be read now for a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Kennedy: Honourable Speaker, it pleases me to rise today to introduce Bill 207, The Islamic Heritage Month Act. This legislation aims to honour the profound contributions of the Islamic community in Manitoba.

Muslim Manitobans have been active contributors in health care, education and the economy, and by designating October to celebrate Muslim heritage, we affirm our dedication to fostering unity and understanding among all Manitobans.

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

Shukran. *[Thank you.]*

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: The honourable First Minister—and I would advise everyone that the required 90 minutes notice was received.

Call for Ceasefire in Gaza

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Aaniin. *[Hello.]* Shalom. *[Peace.]* Ramadan kareem. *[Generous Ramadan.]*

I rise today to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. I say this as someone who abhors the carnage of October 7, 2023, and who believes that Hamas

should be destroyed. I say this as someone who has heard the outcry in the Palestinian community and beyond.

I say this as someone who deeply laments the divisions the war in Gaza has caused for people here in Manitoba, for the Muslim Manitobans who've been targeted by Islamophobia, for the Jewish Canadians afraid to go to class because of anti-Semitism.

I make this call today because the scale of destruction we have now witnessed and the emergence of famine in Gaza are incompatible with the values that unite us Manitobans—respect for human rights, a desire to live in peace and pluralism and a commitment to advance reconciliation.

I respect that, on their face, the comments I make today may cause concern or questions in some quarters. I call for the ceasefire as someone with a great desire to be a good friend and ally to Manitoba's Jewish community and as someone who firmly believes in Israel's right to exist.

I am deeply compelled to be a good friend and ally of Manitoba's Muslim community. I ask with the greatest of humility that my fellow Manitobans ponder the rationale I lay out with an open mind.

I call for a ceasefire after considering several questions that I would ask everyone to entertain.

The first question: Is this the only way to conduct a war against Hamas?

I believe Israel is justified in targeting Hamas given Hamas's intention to kill Jewish people based solely on their Jewish identity and the violence that Hamas has shown in carrying out that intention. But I also know that the war cabinet of Israel had a choice in how it decided to conduct this war.

The decision the Israeli government had was whether to target Hamas narrowly, with the maximum amount of protections for civilian life in Gaza, or to prosecute the war in a manner which showed little regard for civilians, their homes and infrastructure, or the food and water necessary to sustain life.

After some five months of war in Gaza, have we seen the government of Israel wage this war in a way that is narrow and targeted or in a way that shows little regard for civilians?

Some may argue it is unfair to hold Israel to such a standard, that this country be expected to wield their military might in a responsible fashion during an asynchronous conflict. But Israel is strong, and the

strong have a responsibility to exercise their power in a way that is just. I would expect this of any democracy or, indeed, any country in good standing with the international community as Israel is. Civilian lives must be protected.

The second question, is whether it is just to hold people collectively responsible for the actions of the few. Consider, for example, in our own province, Jewish students who face hostility here in Manitoba campuses because of the actions of the government of Israel. Holding Jewish people collectively responsible for the actions of the state of Israel is anti-Semitism. And it is wrong. This is a reminder for us to continue to support the Jewish community here in Manitoba through this difficult period, and to remind any advocates for Gaza to not veer into anti-Semitism.

But I have also pondered, if it is anti-Semitic to hold Jewish people collectively responsible for the actions of the government of Israel, then what is it if the Palestinian people appear to be held collectively responsible for the inhumane actions of Hamas? The international norms and conventions which ask world powers to distinguish between civilians and aggressors would seem to suggest Palestinian civilians must not be held responsible.

The third question I ask you to consider is, what is causing the famine in Gaza? Hunger is not something that free-thinking people should tolerate. The emergence of a famine, therefore, should be unfathomable. It has been said that contemporary famines, in a world with abundant wealth, are human caused.

Consider that the international community is trying to send food and water into Gaza, and America is building a temporary port to do so. Consider that Canada, as well as other nations, have resumed support for aid and are now working to air drop this assistance into the strip. Why are existing ports and border crossings not sufficient to see humanitarian help distributed? Why is it said that a quarter of the population in Gaza is now visited by famine? The famine in Gaza is caused by the war. Specifically, it is caused by the war—by the way the war is being waged, including the terrible actions of Hamas, and the impacts of this famine are being borne by civilians, including by women and children. Israel should work with their partners at the international level to get more aid into Gaza immediately. Hamas should immediately stop all actions which disrupt the delivery of this aid.

And I ask my fellow Manitobans to reflect that so many of our ancestors, no matter which walks of life we hail from, experienced famine in our pasts. During those times of starvation, would we not have wanted our fellow human beings to take action or at the very least to speak out in the name of preserving life? Does not the existence of a famine in our time compel us to act?

The fourth question is, what does it mean for us to be a good ally? A good ally to Israelis and Jewish people? A good ally to Palestinians and Muslims? To be a good ally to Palestinians means speaking up for human rights in this moment, beginning with the right to life. And let us not forget, in our advocacy for human rights, that Israel is an ally. Israel is an important ally in the Middle East, particularly as a democracy and particularly as a counterbalance against other world powers who oppose Canada's commitment to human rights. Israel is also an ally against the proxies of those world powers who oppose human rights, proxies who are at work in the region.

Israel is an ally; that is a fact. But doesn't a true relationship mean telling your friend about your concerns and reminding them of the values that resonate with Jewish people, with Muslims and, indeed, all Manitobans?

* (13:50)

I want Muslims in Manitoba to be able to live in peace. I want the same for Jewish people who live here in our province. I want people from both communities to be able to live together, just like people from every other background.

We are one province. We don't have to agree on everything in order for us to live together, to do good things together and to respect one another. The prospect of this pluralism is founded on our ongoing commitment to human rights.

The wounds caused by this conflict will take a long time to heal here in Manitoba, to say nothing of their legacies in Israel and Gaza.

Each day the war continues pushes that reconciliation further into the future.

The hostages should be freed immediately. The sexual violence perpetrated against Israeli citizens on October 7 is a violation of our collective humanity. Hamas should be eliminated.

I say these things and still, I call for a ceasefire. People in Gaza have a right to live. Children have a

right to food. Everyone has a right to water. It is time for a ceasefire.

I call on the Government of Canada to say the same.

Ramadan kareem. Shalom. Miigwech.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today, I rise in recognition the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and is annually observed by more than 1.6 billion Muslims around the world, of which, approximately just over 26,000 live right here in this great province of ours, right here in Manitoba.

Ramadan is a holy month in the Muslim faith. It is a commemoration of the first revelation that was given to the Prophet Muhammad for writing the first verses of the Quran. As such, it is regarded as one of the Five Pillars of Islam and is a month of prayer, reflection and fasting from dawn to sunset each day.

Before sunrise, Muslim families around the world will have a pre-fast meal called suhoor. Then, throughout the day, Muslims will remain from—refrain from having food or drink and will abstain from negative thoughts or actions that might affect their lives and faith. Instead, Muslims will devote themselves to spending time with their community members and engaging in prayer and the study of the Quran. Then, at sunset, fast is broken with a meal known as iftar. And the day is ended with a traditional khajoor, or date, which is sunnah, or a following of the Prophet Muhammad.

Depending on the calendar, Ramadan lasts for 29 or 30 days. The start of the Ramadan also moves forward by 10 days each calendar year, because the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar calendar, which follows the cycles of the moon.

This year, Ramadan begins on the evening of March 10 and goes until April 9. During this time, all Manitobans can be mindful and respectful of those observing Ramadan by refraining from offering tempting foods like cupcakes or chocolate, and by offering words of encouragement instead.

In closing, I'd like to wish a very happy Ramadan to all my fellow Manitobans, and I hope that you all have a blessed and fruitful year.

To all our Manitoba Muslims, I say, as-salamu alaykum [*peace be upon you*], Ramadan mubarak [*have a blessed Ramadan*].

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I ask for leave to respond to the minister's ministerial statement.

The Speaker: Does the member have leave? *[Agreed]*

MLA Lamoureux: Ramadan mubarak.

Yesterday at sundown, Ramadan began, and it is the most sacred month in the Muslim calendar

Every year, Muslims fast each day of Ramadan from dawn until dusk, for the duration of the month, following the lunar cycle of the Islamic calendar. What Muslims choose to follow can depend on their religious convictions, where they have lived in the world and what their families practice.

Ramadan is the month when the first verses of the holy book Quran were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad more than 1,400 years ago.

The fast entails abstinence from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual relations during daylight hours to achieve greater taqwa, or consciousness of God.

For each day of Ramadan, fasting consists of abstaining from eating or drinking, including water, while the sun is out. Once the sun has set, Muslims eat dinner, a meal that is called iftar. Iftar is generally a community-focused meal, where family members and friends come together for the blessed occasion. Afterwards, eating and drinking during the night is allowed until dawn of the next day.

During Ramadan, it is customary for Muslims to pray more nightly prayers and participate in other religious practices throughout the day, when possible, and people will often wake up or stay up until suhoor, a pre-dawn meal.

Honourable Speaker, when Ramadan ends, Muslims will come together to celebrate Eid. Traditions vary, but it is not uncommon for families to buy new clothes, get dressed up, gather together and give gifts to one another.

It's truly a festive holiday to look forward to. But until then I wish all Muslims Ramadan kareem. As the crescent moon appears, may Allah shower His countless blessings upon you and your loved ones throughout this sacred month of Ramadan.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): As Minister of Agriculture—

The Speaker: Excuse me. The required 90 minutes notice was received prior to this, so the minister may proceed with his statement.

Mr. Kostyshyn: As Minister of Agriculture I want all producers to have farms that are safe and successful. This week we are drawing attention to farm safety through the Canadian agriculture safety week.

I encourage all Manitobans today, and every day, to support farm safety.

The Canadian agriculture safety association promotes safety on Canadian farms, and I want to thank them for the great work they do. Our government, my department, are proud to support this week and their efforts to address issues of health and safety.

I'm so pleased to see in the gallery today our friends with the Canadian agriculture safety organization and as well the Keystone agriculture producers.

On January 24, I was so pleased to join with the federal government to announce the further commitment to farm safety. Over the next five years, our governments are providing \$1.5 million to the Keystone agriculture producers for FarmSafe Manitoba programs. This program promotes safety and healthy farm operations in our province. It makes a real difference.

My thanks to everyone working in this 'initiative.'

Let's work together to make our farms a safe place to live, work and play for all year round.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): This week the Canadian agriculture safety association celebrates Ag Safety Week, with the theme Safety is Our Heritage.

Agriculture producers, farmers, ranchers and their families are encouraged to plan for farm safety every day. Canadian agriculture safety week takes place from March 10th to 16th this year, and this year's farm families, farm workers and farming communities are encouraged to consider how they plan for farm safety every day.

Canadian agriculture safety week is an annual national initiative delivered by the Canadian agriculture safety association that raises awareness about the importance of safe agriculture.

Your Farm, Your Family, Your Success: Safety is Our Heritage is the final part of a three-year safety campaign. This year, organizers are focusing on

providing practical safety advice and encouraging conversations about farm safety while showcasing how safety directly contributes to the success and sustainability of farming operations.

Having worked in agriculture sector for my career, I'm well aware of needs to improve farm safety and to educate about farm safety. I personally have been involved with a national ag group—

* (14:00)

The Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Does the member have leave to finish his statement?
[Agreed]

The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, proceed with your statement, please.

MLA Bereza: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. My apologies.

I personally have been involved with a national ag group called Do More Ag, focused on mental health. I have worked for and have raised thousands of dollars for this initiative.

There are many stresses on our farmers these days, from market fluctuations to the price of fertilizer and other impacts—other inputs to impact of our carbon tax, red tape and over-regulation. We need to keep on top of physical safety on farms while working with farm equipment, but we also need to be cognizant of our mental health and stress in farming that can create mental health injuries and affect the well-being that can lead to other accidents or injuries.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

World Down Syndrome Day

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Honourable Speaker, this month we honour World Down Syndrome Day, happening on March 21. This year's theme is End The Stereotypes. Friends living with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities are targeted by harmful stereotypes—such as the belief that those with Down syndrome are always happy or the belief that they can't live independently.

Stereotypes like this undermine an individual's quality of life by assuming a reality that simply isn't true. This gets in the way of adequate support, meaningful relationships and true autonomy. As legislators,

we have a responsibility to ensure that our laws allow all Manitobans to live life to the fullest.

Important work is also done on the ground by organizations like L'Arche Winnipeg. Prior to being elected, I had the honour of working at L'Arche Winnipeg with some of the most talented and compassionate people that I have ever met. Together, they compose a team that is devoted to creating homes, providing meaningful employment and advocating for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities.

They run six homes across Transcona, Windsor Park and St. Boniface, and since 2012, their social enterprise—the iconic L'Arche Tova Café—has served great food with heart. With the recent addition of their seniors circle, they aren't slowing down anytime soon.

On Sunday, May 5, they will be hosting their biggest fundraiser of the year—the 20th annual Walk with L'Arche at the Oxford Heights Community Club. Registration is now open. So, colleagues, I invite you to join me and the L'Arche Winnipeg community as we walk, run or roll for this worthy cause.

I am grateful to have L'Arche Winnipeg's staff and community members in the gallery today, and I invite my colleagues to join me by congratulating them on 20 years of walking with L'Arche and by welcoming them to the Manitoba Legislature. In doing so, let us all commit to being relentless advocates to end stereotypes, to promote accessibility and to foster a world where everyone belongs.

Charleswood Historical Society

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Honourable Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to recognize the Charleswood Historical Society. This group of dedicated volunteers promotes and encourages interest in the study and celebration of the history of Charleswood through the preservation of artifacts, sharing information and hosting events of historical interest to the community.

The Charleswood Historical Society are the stewards of the Charleswood museum and Caron House. They are a very active group of volunteers who offer a heritage lecture series and organize a range of community events.

The Charleswood museum is a hidden gem with numerous items that showcase the history of the area. This includes records and information about The Passage, a significant historic site right here in Winnipeg, to agricultural equipment, fashion and war-time memorabilia.

The museum also showcases the original wicket from the Charleswood post office, which would have been a hub of activity in days gone by.

Caron House is one of the few remaining farm-houses within Winnipeg's city limits. Two plaques are displayed outside the home today to help tell the story of the house and the surrounding park. Interior viewings of Caron House and tours of the museum are offered during Doors Open Winnipeg. The museum is also open every Saturday afternoon.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Charleswood Historical Society, and I look forward to celebrating this milestone with them later this year.

I'd like to acknowledge all of the hard-working members of the Charleswood Historical Society, some of whom have joined us in the gallery today, including Joan Curle, Paul Brault, Lois Caron and Eileen McDonald, and thank them for their dedication to our community.

I would also like to recognize Mr. Len Van Roon, Jr. and Mr. Len Van Roon, Sr., who were unable to join us today.

Mr. Van Roon, Sr. is 103 years young, a World War II veteran, a lifelong resident of Charleswood and a founding member of the Charleswood Historical Society. And while they were unable to join us today, I'd like to recognize them for their efforts.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Young at Heart Seniors Club

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): Seniors contribute to the growth, cultural preservation, mentorship and livelihood of communities across Manitoba. We celebrate and value their significant contributions that older adults make.

I am excited today to rise to recognize the Young at Heart seniors club, whose home base is the Windsor Community Centre in St. Vital.

This amazing club has the mission of improving the quality of life for older adults by helping seniors remain young at heart. They do this through recreational, educational, social activities.

Young at Heart offers a variety of options to interested seniors in the St. Vital and surrounding areas. These activities for creative minds like stretching, drawing, scrapbooking. Or to stay active, there are a variety of exercise programs including a walking group.

We know that social isolation is a big challenge amongst seniors. Which is why the Young at Heart Club provides essential opportunities for connection and for socializing with others.

I visited the club a couple of weeks ago and was met with a lively atmosphere of seniors playing card games. I was very happy to have had the opportunity to spend time, share some laughs and listen to their viewpoints on their hopes for policies to improve their lives going forward.

Aging in a natural part of life—is natural part of life, and so we must ensure the necessary supports for seniors are in place. And that's why I'm so proud to uplift clubs like Young at Heart, who honour and make it possible for Manitobans' aging population to continue to lead social and independent lives.

We are joined today in the gallery by Sherry Liley, a Young at Heart Club member. Please join me in applauding Sherry, the Young at Heart Club and the entire Windsor Community Centre for highlighting what it means to age with dignity.

Thank you.

Ramadan

MLA Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): As-salamu alaykum, Ramadan mubarak, which translated: peace be upon you all and may you all have a blessed month of Ramadan.

You've all heard the basics of what Ramadan is so I will skip to the third paragraph of my member's statement.

Today's member's statement came to me from a simple conversation I had while I was door-knocking this past summer. And after topics back and forth, this constituent said to mine, almost in tears in his eyes, if there's one thing I ask of you, it's that you use your platform to educate people on the beauty of Islam and try to stop all this hate and fear people have for our faith.

What better day than today on the first day of Ramadan to do that.

Many people may say, Ramadan is simply a month of fasting, and you just don't eat from sunrise to sunset, or eat or drink anything. You can't have anything—no water. But it's much more than that. It's a month of spiritual reflection, a month for self improvement, forgiveness, goodness, for mercy.

It's a month for additional prayer, discipline of the mind, body and soul and celebration, of course, with

family. It is a month of kindness, love, charity and sacrifice.

I promise you, when you have sacrificed all day and not had one ounce of water touch your lips for 13 hours, and then you taste that first drop of water, you will have no greater appreciation for the water that we are blessed to have that comes from Shoal Lake.

* (14:10)

While people around the world don't have this blessing at the turn of the tap, we can take this time of self-sacrifice and discipline to remember that we can do more. We can give more. We can be better. And we can be kinder towards everyone. That is what our faith teaches us and this a reminder for myself more than anyone. We can all do more and work to a better place.

Now not everyone has to fast. For example if you're elderly, if you're travelling, if you're pregnant, if you're sick, you don't have to fast; but in place of fasting you have to feed the needy every single day.

For 16 years I have had the honour of feeding the poor, as I have not fasted due to medical conditions—ask for leave—

The Speaker: Order, please. The member's time is expired.

Does he have leave to finish? *[Agreed]*

MLA Khan: As I was saying, for the last 16 years I have not fasted, but I've had the honour of feeding the poor. Due to medical conditions I'm not able to fast, however this year, for the first time in 16 years, I'm trying to fast. I'm tired, I'm hungry and, oh my God, I'm thirsty; I just want some water, and standing up and speaking doesn't help. So you may hear a little bit less heckling from me for the next 29 days from this side of the House.

This afternoon I hope I was able to share a little bit about the beauty of my faith and what Ramadan really means. It means to love, to be kind, to care and to give back. You also may have noticed that I dropped off a box of dates in your caucus and our caucus as well, with an Islamic calendar, that marks when our Eid celebration—that's essentially Muslim Christmas—is coming up, in 28 days or 29 days. And please enjoy the dates. Those are a sunnah, which means that the prophet, peace be upon him, used to eat dates to open his fast.

So, on behalf of myself and the community and everyone, and as a resident of Fort Whyte, I hope you

did—honour and justice and explaining a little bit of what Islam and Ramadan is.

Thank you all very much.

The Speaker: Any further members' statements?

North Valour Residents' Association

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, I'd like to introduce the board for the North Valour Residents' Association, who join us today in the gallery. This group of individuals have dedicated immense hours to the north Valour community. They've responded to a need for connection as well as grassroots initiatives in the neighbourhood.

The association was established just before pandemic lockdowns in 2020. I've been privileged to work alongside this group as they've grown over the last many years.

The association's main focuses are their community gardens, spring clean-ups, community safety initiatives and connecting with neighbours to encourage community members to get involved.

The board of the NVRA has ensured that community members are initiating the changes they'd like to see in their community. Most recently, the board is working on a grassroots anti-oppressive approach to safety strategy modelled after the South Valour Residents' Association initiative.

This approach encourages folks to meet their neighbours and develop recognition in one another. It's primarily meant to encourage connection and discourage fear or isolation. This initiative highlights the duty we have to take care and look out for one another.

The association has seen some major growth recently. They were operating with only a few members last fall, but they've now grown to a total of 12 committed members who we are honouring today.

Creating connections in community remains difficult for so many of us, especially due to COVID and the many lockdowns we experienced. It made isolation and distance become the norm. The NVRA board highlights how important it is to dedicate time and energy back into your community. We need to rebuild the foundation of connection in our communities once more, and NVRA board is taking great strides in making that happen in St. James.

Please join me in thanking the North Valour Residents' Association board for their commitment to their neighbours and for representing true service in one's community.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to introduce some guests we have with us. In the public gallery, we have seated 20 youth age 18 to 30 from Eagle's Nest Indigenous Youth Group, under the direction of Shannon Shaw. The group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Johns, the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine).

Further, seated in the loge to my left, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members, where we have with us today Larry Maguire, former MLA for Arthur-Virden and current member of Parliament for Brandon-Souris.

On behalf of all honourable members we welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Taxes Government Intention

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Once again, I'd like to start off by wishing a very happy Ramadan to all my fellow Manitobans.

I'd also like to take a moment, Honourable Speaker, to—for all of us to join in the mourning of the loss of Dave Ritchie, a great coach and standout figure in the CFL history. Our hearts go out to coach Ritchie's family, friends, fans and all of those which he has inspired.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans keep more savings each and every month, thanks to the PC government's tax cuts made by this very own PC team.

Honourable Speaker, taking credit for the work of others is nothing new to you know who, and now, because the NDP have no plan, NDP advertising PC savings.

Will the Premier give credit—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, I want to say, as-salamu alaykum to the umma here in Manitoba; to wish everybody once again a Ramadan mubarak, Ramadan kareem. To our colleague from Fort Whyte and to everyone observing this month, we hope that you have a good fast and that peace be upon you.

We also say to the Blue Bombers organization, to Manitobans who are huge fans of the blue and gold, that we join you in mourning of coach Ritchie. I know

that there's tremendous achievements over the course of his career on the gridiron and coaching, and certainly is an example for young Manitobans and people from all walks of life when it comes to perseverance and inspiration.

Thank you so much.

The Speaker: The honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, every re-elected member of the NDP voted against the rise in the basic personal amount last year in Budget 2023.

The NDP voted against increases to thresholds at which different tax rates kick in, which took effect January this year.

In opposition they put their ideology over Manitobans, and I'm afraid that in government they're doing—it's going to do it again. Will the Premier commit to further changes to the basic personal amount or tax thresholds in Budget 2024, or are Manitobans getting ready for major tax hikes?

Mr. Kinew: You know, the member opposite is talking about folks in opposition, but I'd like to ask him, who was in government on January 1st of this year? It was our team. It's our team that is finding the way to pay for these affordability measures.

They made announcements; they never had a plan to pay for anything in the election campaign.

But when we're talking about the election campaign, they didn't actually run on tax cuts. They chose to run on division. They chose to run on attacking the families of murder victims. They ran against the land-fill search. They ran against trans-children. They chose to do all of these different divisive techniques.

We ran on affordability, at fixing health care. That's what we're delivering for Manitobans.

The Speaker: The honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final question.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, I believe the Grand Chief Merrick of AMC is still waiting for that apology coming from the Premier.

Honourable Speaker, the NDP's temporary gas tax blip barely lasted two weeks. By their own math, it

amounted to maybe \$26 in savings compared to \$1,400 in annual savings, thanks to our former PC government.

The Premier intends to jack up the gas tax and others.

Will he be clear about those plans to make life more expensive before the release of Budget 2024?

* (14:20)

Mr. Kinew: I gather from the convoluted preamble there that our colleague on the opposition benches has clued in to the fact that our team is bringing forward real affordability measures, real savings for the people of Manitoba.

Every single day that they were in office they charged Manitobans 14 cents a litre when they gassed up. Our first action was to cut the provincial gas tax. And I know that Mr. Poilievre, at the federal level, noticed and he supports our agenda of saving Manitobans money.

The question that the PCs need to answer is: Why did they tax Manitobans every single time they've gassed up their vehicles?

Ten Ten Sinclair Housing–Health-Care Aide Strike Quality of Care Concerns for Residents

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): The largest health-care strike in Manitoba since the NDP were last in government continues today under the current NDP government. Meanwhile, some of the most vulnerable folks in our city are left wondering if they'll be getting the care that they need.

One tenant told 'glubal'—Global News, quote, I'm scared I'm going to be put into bed and left there for how many hours or how many days not having any help or any communication. Unquote.

Why has this minister failed to ensure these Manitobans are getting the care that they need?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Caring for vulnerable Manitobans and fixing health care are sacred trusts that everyone on this side of the aisle, everyone on our team, takes very, very seriously.

The news that a labour disruption could potentially threaten the care for some of these Manitobans is something that we have greeted with a high degree of seriousness, and I support my colleague, the member for Union Station's (MLA Asagwara) efforts in this regard.

I will note, however, for the member opposite, that fixing a starved health-care system, starved social

services, that were cut under two terms of the PC administration, that these repairs are not going to happen overnight.

What I can underline for the people of Manitoba is that we are going to be able to ensure the continuity of services, even in the face of the challenge of fixing health-care cuts, so that we can take care of you and those that you care for.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Roblin, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, the largest health-care strike in Manitoba in over a decade means that staffing support at these facilities is still very limited. And according to tenants who spoke to the media, this is a source of great distress. One tenant told the media that since Wednesday she's received assistance for one shower.

Honourable Speaker, this is completely unacceptable.

Will the Premier or the minister step in and ensure adequate replacement workers are brought in while the strike is ongoing or does their ideology prevent that?

Mr. Kinew: This issue is one that causes a great deal of concern for all Manitobans.

Our Minister of Health has been leading the response from our government, which has seen WRHA workers onsite 24-7. Every single person who has reached out to our administration has been contacted, and that contact has been maintained.

Now, the member opposite raises a prospect of replacement workers. I will say that the bill that we are about to bring to the House would have ensured continuity of service. So, I can only assume that this means that the members opposite will be supporting that legislation when it comes for a vote before the House.

But when it comes to health care, this is job one, and we will continue to deliver for you, the people of Manitoba.

The Speaker: The honourable member from Roblin, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: This is the largest health-care strike in Manitoba since the NDP were last in office, and the minister's response has been completely inadequate.

It is unacceptable to leave Manitobans wondering if they'll even be able to get out of bed, never mind

shower, change their Foley bag. It's inhumane. These Manitobans deserve better. It's been six days.

Will the Premier or the minister commit today to finally ensuring those residents at Ten Ten Sinclair facilities get the care they need?

Mr. Kinew: We will ensure these residents get the care they need, no question. Our minister has been leading the response and has been in constant contact. We know that WRHA staff are on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I will remind the member opposite, however, that the association for allied health-care professionals in Manitoba faced a severe labour disruption throughout the first part of last year, well into the summer. All we heard from the PC ministers at the time was, we are not the employer, we are not the employer. Care was compromised; the situation was shameful.

Today is a new day. Manitobans have a government that takes action, that does not deflect responsibility and steps up to fix health care for you.

Safety of Children in CFS Care Call for Public Inquiry

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, this Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) has made it quite clear that she's too busy to discuss concerns regarding the safety of children in care. We as legislators have a duty to make sure vulnerable children are safe, and this minister needs to make the time.

In a December 9 text message, Myah-Lee Gratton said she left a voicemail for her CFS worker in which she pleaded to be moved out of the home where she lived.

When was the minister made aware of this phone call?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Acting Minister of Families): I thank the member for that question. Our government is focused on providing the best homes for children and youth who come into care of the CFS agency. If that member is—wants to bring that casework to the attention of the department, I invite that member to come over to the department and bring that casework over.

We are actually working with agencies, working with foster-care parents. We are actually working for the best interests of the children.

As someone who was in care myself, and actually was a teacher and worked directly with foster-care parents and with agencies, I know that they are doing

the best that they can. So I want to uplift all of those folks that are working on the front lines, that are taking the best care of the kids that they can.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, a 17-year-old Manitoban didn't feel safe and pleaded to be moved out of a home with an individual that Crown prosecutors opposed granting bail to. What might be the most heartbreaking aspect of this situation is she begged for help over a voicemail. But under this minister's watch, no one answered the phone. The system has failed a young Manitoban.

This Premier (Mr. Kinew) says he's open to hearing the questions around an inquiry. But apparently he's forgotten he is the Premier; he has the willpower to make that commitment today.

So I ask the Premier and this minister: Will they do the right thing and call a public inquiry so that this never happens again?

Ms. Smith: I want to assure the member that our government is taking an approach that is in the best interests of children in this province. This government—this former government did not do that. This former government shirked responsibility.

We have a new government that is taking a different approach. We are ensuring that we're working with First Nations governments to take back responsibility and give jurisdiction to those governments.

Children belong with their families. I brought a bill forward that thankfully was passed in this House that actually put supports in the homes of parents, where it belongs, so that kids aren't belonging and going into CFS care, something that the former government never did.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Midland, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: It is a simple yes-or-no question, Honourable Speaker. There needs to be public faith in our social services, and that must start with a public examination of what has failed.

Why does the Premier and his Cabinet refuse to take the necessary action to protect children in care? The Minister of Families won't say an answer. The Minister of Housing, Homelessness and Addictions will not give us an answer.

So will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) stand up today and commit to a public inquiry so this never happens again?

* (14:30)

Ms. Smith: We know that when kids stay in the care of their families that they get the best care possible, and that's what our government is working towards.

We are working with First Nation communities to give jurisdiction back to those communities. When we look at Peguis First Nation and giving jurisdiction back to them, they only had one kid that was put into care. And that's the kind of system that we want, and that's the kind of system that our government is working towards: giving care back to communities—something that that government never did.

We are taking a different approach, and that is supporting families and keeping their kids in their homes where they belong.

Restaurant and Food Service Sector Meeting with Finance Minister

MLA Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, it is sad that this new NDP government theme is already: I am too busy to listen to you, to meet with you, to talk to you and to do anything that will actually help you.

Last week we heard the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) say she was too busy, and now we have the Minister of Finance saying the same thing to the fourth largest sector in this province, one that brings in \$2.8 billion of sales to this province and creates over 40,000 jobs.

Can the minister please tell us why he will not meet with these vital sector partners in this province when he's been in office for five months, and does he even know what sector partner I'm talking about?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I'm very delighted to stand up and have a chance to respond to the question from the critic.

We've been doing important work across the province over the last couple months, meeting with Manitobans in every corner of the province. We've been to the southern part of the province. We've travelled to northern Manitoba. We've done telephone town halls. And the message we receive at these town halls is just how important it is that our government focuses on fixing the mess that the former government made in our health-care system.

We're going to continue to do that good work. We look forward to bringing forward good news in our budget on April 2.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Whyte, on a supplementary question.

MLA Khan: So the simple answer is no, he has no idea who I'm talking about. Honourable Speaker, \$2.8 billion is how much money the Manitoba Restaurant & Foodservices Association brings in to this province, creating 40,000 jobs, and this minister has no idea who I'm talking about.

For the first time in that association's history, they have not met with the Minister of Finance before they bring the budget forward on April 2. This clearly shows that this minister and this government do not care about restaurant owners. They do not care about that sector, so much so that they didn't attend the annual gala, Honourable Speaker.

How can this minister possibly think it's okay to not meet with representatives of the fourth largest sector in this province and employ over 40,000 people?

MLA Sala: Manitobans sent us here with an important job to do. That's to fix health care and make our province into a more affordable place to live.

For years they had a government that did nothing but cut. They cut health care. They cut our schools. They cut our municipalities. They cut child care. They cut services for women. Our government's going to do things differently.

We're doing the important work that Manitobans sent us here to do. More good news when we release our budget April 2 about how we're going to fix this province.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Whyte, on a final supplementary question.

MLA Khan: So, we all heard that, right? On the record, he said no, they are not important. Manitoba Restaurant Association is not important. He's too busy to meet with them. It is clear that this minister and Premier do not think that restaurant operators in that sector are important at all.

His track record of being Minister of Finance is a dismal one. He has saved families \$26 with this gas tax, and now by this own minister's own ads, he took out, that I'm going to table here for him to read today again, by the previous PC government, tax savings will have saved Manitoban families and average of \$1,400.

My question for the minister is simple: Will he admit today that he was wrong to vote against the PC tax cuts, and that he proudly—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, here's something the critic should remember: We have the lowest gas prices in all of Canada. We had the lowest inflation in Canada for two months in a row. The previous government applied the fuel tax on Manitobans every single day they were in government for the first year, for the second year, for the third year, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh.

What did we do? We brought relief to Manitobans. More good stuff to come in our budget on April 2nd.

Building Sustainable Communities Program Inquiry into Future of Program

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, through multiple lines of funding, our previous PC government contributed over \$70 million specifically for community centre improvements.

These were in communities such as Thompson, Flin Flon, Dauphin, Berens River First Nation and many within the city of Winnipeg, because we understood that healthy community centre funding builds healthy communities.

Community groups throughout Manitoba have unfortunately heard only radio silence from this government. While many hundreds of programs were funded in the past, this government shows no indication of continuing with this program.

I ask the minister today: Will he commit to continuing the BSC program, or is this another NDP cut?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): Well, the member's had now four days from when he asked this question last time to go out, reach out to municipalities and ask them what they ask for year after year after year.

They ask for their funding to be unfrozen, to have predictability in their funding and that government ignored it each and every day.

Now when it comes to the BSC program, this government did nothing but pass things off the side of their desk without talking to the municipalities and without looking at the real needs of municipalities each and every day.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Lakeside, on a supplementary question.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, the Building Sustainable Communities program was started in 2019 to enhance the sustainability of communities.

Since then, 1,745 unique projects have received \$82 million in funding; funding that has supported projects like the Thrive Community Support Circle Inc. and West Central Women's Resource Centre Inc., both in the constituency of Union Station.

This minister doesn't want us to know, or perhaps he doesn't know himself, if BSC will continue to be funded by this government.

What are we to expect from this silence? Will the BSC program be amongst the casualties of the NDP cuts come April 2nd?

Mr. Bushie: They can expect predictability. They can expect strategic investments.

This government, when they created the BSC program, they go out there and they do nothing but disrespect municipalities each and every year.

When municipalities were applying for a BSC program, they sit there and asked day after day, let's have predictability. Let's unfreeze our funding. And instead, they create programs that they had no budget for, they had no intention of knowing how they were going to pay for it, and here they are today standing up, saying where's the respect from municipalities?

Where was the respect for municipalities year after year under that government?

The Speaker: The honourable member for Lakeside, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, the BSC program received hundreds of applications every year of its existence—655 alone in '23-24.

Undoubtedly, there are still hundreds of groups anxious to get their chance to improve their communities. This program is vital to the ongoing sustainability and growth of Manitoba's social fabric.

Is the minister okay with being the one to cut BSC and, along with it, the ties that bind our communities?

Mr. Bushie: Our commitment is to provide funding to Manitobans across all of Manitoba.

So let's look at what that PC government did. Leading up to the last election, 78 per cent of projects under BSC were in PC ridings; \$18 million were in their backyard. Where is that for all the Manitobans, and where was the respect for all of Manitoba?

We will strategically invest and invest in municipalities across all of Manitoba because, as a government, we're here to govern for all of Manitobans, not just our friends.

Conservation Enforcement Bulletins Discontinuation Inquiry

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): The regular enforcement bulletins that were, and I say that in past tense, put out by the ministry, showed the hard work our conservation officers were doing every day to protect our resources.

Many hunters, RM councillors, leaders and municipal governments, citizens alike have shared positive comments on the transparency.

Can the minister of economic development and natural resources advise if the bulletins are being continued to support the hard work by our conservation officers in upholding the laws?

* (14:40)

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): I'm really happy to have the opportunity to talk about the great work that our conservation officers are doing right across Manitoba to protect communities and protect our natural resources.

That's why our government is taking an effort to revitalize the conservation officer program, with renewed focus on building and strengthening communities and relationships with Indigenous communities, First Nation and rural and northern communities. That's the part that we're doing, here, to ensure that conservation officers are protecting communities and our natural resources right across Manitoba.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Swan River, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wowchuk: The regular enforcement bulletins put out by the department were a huge deterrent for the unsafe practice of night lighting that put livestock, property and human lives at risk. Manitobans looked forward to seeing that our officers were out in the landscape upholding the values of law-abiding citizens.

Can the minister of economic development, natural resources tell me if the enforcement 'bulletin'—or, bulletins have been discontinued?

Mr. Moses: We understand the well-rounded and diverse work that natural—that conservation officers do across our province, and we want to highlight all of that.

Our team has been hard at work over the last several weeks to redevelop a new bulletin to put out to the public of Manitoba. And so we're 'ploud' to say that that bulletin will be out shortly for Manitobans to read and understand, because we want to highlight the comprehensive work that conservation officers do to protect communities and our natural resources right across Manitoba.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Swan River, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Wowchuk: So I'll ask one more time. Is the minister discontinuing the bulletins, or just not enforcing the laws?

So I'll ask the minister: Why is he refusing to acknowledge the hard work of officers who risk their lives daily in protecting our resources and keeping Manitoba safe?

Mr. Moses: We do value our conservation officers, and that's why we want to have a new bulletin that reflects their current and their full scope of work that they do across Manitoba. So members opposite, and members—and Manitobans right across the province will be able to see that new bulletin.

But speaking of conservation officers, what happened to them under their watch? They had a 13.4 per cent vacancy rate. Our department is nearing at erasing that vacancy rate; we're nearing full employment. We're very, very proud—very proud of our conservation officers, and we'll continue to support them and all natural resources right across Manitoba.

Foster Homes Safety Checks

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Last week I brought forward an emergency debate motion on the issue of children in care. While the government denied the motion, we have heard numerous agencies sound the alarm about how existing systems are failing children in care.

The Auditor General has highlighted serious issues with how foster home licences continue to be renewed, despite gaps showing non-compliance in areas like security checks and physical home inspections.

Considering the recent tragedies in Carman, will the minister commit today to ensure safety checks for foster homes be done for all places of care in Manitoba?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Acting Minister of Families): I want to thank the member for that question,

and I want to ensure the member that safety is the utmost importance for our government. And I know that that member is very passionate about, you know, kids in care, and that's something that our government is passionate and very, you know, aware of.

We are, you know, doing and committed to ensuring that the kids that are in care are getting the best care that they are. That's why we are transferring care over to Indigenous governments. That's why we have been working with Indigenous governments to make sure that kids are going back to their communities where they belong, with their families. That should've been done a long time ago.

When I was a kid in care, my mom actually had to go and put me in care to get care to get—

The Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a supplementary question.

Foster Parent Maintenance Allowance Request for Increase in Budget 2024

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Prior to bringing forward an emergency debate motion last week, I met with hundreds of foster parents who expressed to me that basic allowances have been frozen for over a decade. Foster parents want assurances from this government that they are, in fact, taking their concerns seriously.

Will the minister commit today to working with CFS authorities to ensure increases to basic maintenance will be reflected in this year's budget?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Acting Minister of Families): I thank the member for that question.

While we know most foster parents receive supports above and beyond basic maintenance rates, we also know that there's a rising cost of living and that it could be challenging to make ends meet. We know that.

And we are working, you know, with foster parents, and we are also working with Indigenous governments to get children back home to their parents and to their communities, where they actually belong and where we know that they'll do best.

Kids belong with their parents; something that we've heard time and time again. We've heard that from schools, we've heard that from foster parents themselves, who have been working with, actually, parents and know that because they're working with parents that they want to do the right thing and—

The Speaker: Minister's time has expired.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary question.

Funding Equity for CFS Agencies Block vs. Needs-Based Funding

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I want to reference in Hansard something that the member from St. Johns, the now-minister, said on October 9, 2020, when she criticized the introduction of block funding from needs-based funding, which, in her words, has instituted the deficit of operations on CFS agencies. She further said, when block funding came into existence, the dollars never account for children that potentially will come into care.

Now that she is the minister, and I trust she is advocating for funds in the budget, can she share with us if she thinks that the current approach of block funding provides funding equity to all CFS agencies in the province?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Acting Minister of Families): I know the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) cares deeply about this issue, and cares deeply about getting kids back to their families, which is why they are working with Indigenous communities, something that our government cares deeply about as well.

That's why we have shifted gears to make sure and prioritize that we are working with First Nation communities, something that the prior government didn't do.

We are ensuring that the complex needs of children and youth are taken seriously, and that they are getting the support that they need as well, something that the previous government didn't do.

We are also passing legislation to keep the \$300 million of special children's allowance stolen from First Nations children back to them, something that previous government didn't do as well.

Working Together and Aging with Dignity Signing of Federal-Provincial Agreement

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): Honourable Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Last month, the minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) secured a deal with the federal government. The Working Together and Aging with Dignity agreements will see \$633 million in federal funding to help fix health care in Manitoba.

Can the minister elaborate on the steps this government took to secure the deal, how they got the federal government to the table and why this is a good deal for Manitobans?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, very, very early on, days after being sworn in, I had a call with the federal Health Minister, who shared with me that he understood if our government wouldn't be able to sign these agreements for Manitobans.

And I reassured him that it was a new day in Manitoba, and that our government, unlike the previous, failed PC government, was putting Manitobans first. And we made sure that we were one of the earliest, one of the first jurisdictions across Canada, to sign both agreements for Manitobans.

Why, Honourable Speaker? Because on this side of the House, we put patients first, we put people first, we put health-care workers first, and we're going to keep doing that every single day here in Manitoba.

Government Geothermal and Heat Pump Pledge Request for Conversion Plan

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, geothermal and air-to-air heat pumps are going to play a vital role in heating Manitoba homes for years to come when they're powered with clean Manitoba Hydro energy.

But the transition is very expensive. Families throughout Manitoba want to know more about the government's pledge to fully fund 5,000 homes for this conversion.

When will the Minister of Environment and Climate Change release these details?

* (14:50)

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I just want to take a moment to express my gratitude for the opportunity to do this work. And I want to express my gratitude to the people of Manitoba for electing a government and a Premier (Mr. Kinew) that takes environmental issues so seriously.

I am very proud of the mandate given to me by the Premier and I am very proud of the work of Efficiency Manitoba, and I cannot wait to share the details with Manitobans about how we are going to save them money and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Perchotte: At committee, the minister confirmed her pledge to also convert 2,500 homes from natural-pardon, from heating oil to the air source heat pumps. Even though air source heat pumps are half as efficient a geothermal, they are a positive alternative to heating oil.

How will the minister ensure these homes are adequately heated, considering Manitoba Hydro advises a backup system below -10°C?

MLA Schmidt: I thank the member opposite again for this opportunity to talk about our affordable home energy program.

We are so proud of the deal that we were able to reach with the federal government, something that the previous government was never able to do. They were more interested in fighting with their colleagues rather than working in the best interest of Manitobans.

And just to correct the record, our commitment is not to use only air source heat pumps. Those are an important part of the plan, but we are also committed to ground source heat pumps, air source heat pumps and all of the different types of technology that are going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions here in Manitoba and save Manitobans money.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Perchotte: With the cost of air source heat pumps being up to \$20,000 for conversion, and ground source being \$50,000, how does somebody apply to be part of the 5,000 people or 7,500 people to get this free gift, and what are the rest of Manitobans going to do when they cannot afford this option?

MLA Schmidt: Again, I thank the member opposite for their question.

Honourable Speaker, 5,000 is going to be our starting point. That is the first phase. We are planning on getting so many Manitobans off of greenhouse gas emissions, saving them money. We are so proud of the work of Efficiency Manitoba who are already doing this great work. We are going to expand their mandate and get this great technology to more Manitobans.

Federal Bill C-372—Fossil Fuel Advertising Government Position

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): NDP shadow ministers in Alberta and Saskatchewan are doing far more than this Minister of Environment and Climate Change. They at least had the moral fortitude to stand

up and denounce the ridiculous Bill C-372 that their federal NDP cousins brought forward.

So I ask this minister a simple question: Does she support her federal colleague or the industry that supports many, many Manitoba individuals and communities?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Again, to reiterate some of the comments offered by my colleagues today, it is a new day here in Manitoba.

Manitobans have elected a government that takes the environment seriously, that takes the protection of our water seriously, the protection of our air seriously, and I thank Manitobans for the great honour of doing this work.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Nesbitt: In 2010, the then-NDP government ignored communities in need. But my constituents in Virden started construction of Tundra Oil and Gas Place thanks to sponsors, including the energy sector.

This is the sort of community engagement that the federal NDP want to make illegal, and this minister stands by her federal colleague. To double down, this Premier just hired a federal MP, saving Mr. Blaikie from a sure defeat in the upcoming election.

Will this minister—why will this minister not denounce bad legislation like her colleagues in Alberta and Saskatchewan?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to say that Daniel Blaikie served the people of Elmwood-Transcona remarkably well during his time at the federal Parliament. And as he approaches some of the final sittings in his time there, I want to say that it's a big tent here in Manitoba with your Manitoba NDP government. There's plenty of room for everybody.

But the thing that I want to say to the members opposite is, leave the political staffers out of it. We can have the back and forth, the cut and thrust of the debate here, but let's leave the staff to the work that they do on their own levels.

And while we're talking about the cut and thrust here, when will they apologize for the shameful land-fill ads that they ran in the 2023 election?

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? No petitions.

GRIEVANCES

The Speaker: The honourable member for Steinbach, on a grievance.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I stand on a grievance. And I know that grievances are rare and unusual, and this one might be even more rare and unusual, and I hope that you'll indulge me as I explain the nature of this—*[interjection]* I hope you'll indulge me as I explain the nature of this grievance, which I know will be unusual and probably not brought forward in the House before, over the last 120 years.

Members will know that after an election, each of us have a responsibility to file an election return, whether you are successful in your election or you're not successful in your election. One of the oddities, or perhaps the accommodations that are made is that members who are running for re-election are able to keep their cellular phones, their cellular devices, and then that becomes part of the election return; it becomes part of the election expense.

Ministers have to turn their phone in, even though they were—maintained their role as ministers during the course of an election. So I encountered a strange event after the election, when I was going about the work of gathering the documents and invoices for filing my election return. When I was seeking the phone bill from my MLA phone, I was advised that the phone bill was over \$1,600, Mr.—or, Honourable Speaker. This, of course, was strange, because I don't ever recall my cellular phone being over \$70 when I didn't leave the province of Manitoba, and I certainly hadn't left the province of Manitoba during the course of an election.

The challenge, of course, is that I had to file that bill with Elections Manitoba and declare that as an election expense for my campaign, but I knew full well that I hadn't incurred \$1,700 in costs. It took some digging to find out that the details of that bill—on the details of that bill, it listed a number of laptops that were referred to as campaign laptops; more than a dozen, I believe. This was, of course, strange to me, because my campaign didn't employ that many laptops. I don't—in fact, I don't think we had a laptop at all.

So I did a bit more research and inquiring, it wasn't easy to find out. After several days, maybe a couple of weeks, I discovered that the laptops that were assigned to my MLA bill were for the NDP transition team. This was strange for a few different reasons. One is that the laptops were, I guess, purchased

or booked during the election campaign, before the actual election. I'm not an expert on the transition of government—I certainly know that there are transition teams, and I'm not having an objection to that—but I gather that somebody booked these laptops prior to the actual election date for a transition team, maybe not even sure that there was going to be a transition.

But that really isn't the point of my grievance. I'm mystified, a little bit, by that. But the bigger concern for me was I was holding, now, a bill on my cell phone for over \$1,500 for laptops that I was told were assigned to the NDP transition team.

* (15:00)

So that put me into a bit of a quandary, because I couldn't quite file this bill with Elections Manitoba because that would be in a violation of The Elections Act because I hadn't actually incurred those costs on behalf of the NDP transition team. And I couldn't not file a bill because, of course, I had incurred some costs through the use of that cellphone during an election.

I did notify the clerk of the Assembly. I said, this is particularly strange that an NDP transition team would be putting onto my bill all of these different costs of over \$1,500, and now I'm in the dilemma of not being able to file my election return in a timely way because I can't file the bill that I've been given, because it ascribes a bunch of things that I didn't actually use; they were used by the NDP transition team, I assume.

It took quite a long time. I did get a response, finally, from the clerk. I believe that she was mystified too by it, and indicated that she would look into it. Many weeks went by. There was no resolution to the issue.

I finally was able to get from the fine folks at Members' Allowances a statement that indicated that I had incurred no more than 50-some dollars on that particular bill. And I filed that with Elections Manitoba, even though that would be unusual because it wasn't the actual bill for the cellphone, but I couldn't file the \$1,500 bill that was really assigned to the NDP transition team.

Now, this is now six months or seven months later, and I finally found out just last week that the charge had been removed from the bill. Of course, I've already filed my election return without the invoice but with the declaration from Members' Allowances that I was only responsible for 50-some dollars of that.

And I still have never gotten any documentation from the government, from the clerk's office, whatever department was responsible for this mix-up, but I'm assuming it was a mix-up; I don't believe that they purposely trying to assign these laptops to my bill. Clearly, somebody either wrote down the wrong number or something; I don't think anybody thought this was particularly funny. But I never have received any documentation from the government that this was a mistake, or have I gotten any official notification that the mistake had been corrected. I was just sort of told this by happenstance.

So, the reason why I'm actually putting this on the record, Honourable Speaker—and you may be wondering why I'm putting it on the record—is there might come a day when none of us are in the Assembly anymore, or I'm not in the Assembly anymore, and somebody might decide to FIPPA these different expenses and see that there was a \$1,500 charge on the bill with all these different laptops, and my election return doesn't show a \$1,500 bill.

So, I'm putting it on the record that—of course, now I believe it's been resolved though I've not been given a copy of it or any sort of official documentation of it—that that \$1,500 charge that was assigned to my bill was for NDP transition team laptops that, I guess, were booked prior to the actual election day, so that if this ever becomes an issue where I'm not able to respond to it in a way that I'd like to respond to it, there is a—now a record, because I wasn't provided any other record, that the bill that I was given certainly wasn't for laptops that I was using for the campaign but that I gather folks that were hired by the NDP for a transition, seemingly before the election, were ascribed to my bill for some mystical reason, to which I've never been given an answer to.

I did, again, mention this to the clerk many months ago. I was never provided any follow-up in terms of a resolution. So I haven't brought this forward hastily or certainly not out of anger. But I have learned that, in this business, it's better to have a documentation and record of things than try to answer something months or maybe years after without any evidence or proof of it.

So, I've put on the record what exactly has happened in this particular circumstance. The current NDP government hired, I guess, a transition team prior to the actual election date, booked a bunch of computers for over \$1,500 and decided to put it on the MLA for Steinbach's cellphone bill. It's now, I'm told, been resolved, even though I don't have any official

documentation of it. But I want this particular statement to serve as documentation of what happened.

Thank you, very much, Mr. Honourable—or, Honourable Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Acting Government House Leader): Could you please canvass the House for leave for the Acting Government House Leader to call for debate, without notice, a motion on the war in Gaza.

The Speaker: It has been announced by the—is there leave for the Acting Government House Leader to call for debate without notice a motion on the war in Gaza? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Wiebe: Would you then please call for debate on the previously agreed government motion, followed by second reading of Bill 10, then Bill 9.

The Speaker: It has been announced by the Acting Government House Leader that we will be debating the government motion on the war in Gaza, followed by second reading of Bill 10 followed by second reading of Bill 9.

GOVERNMENT MOTION

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the minister of municipal affairs, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba affirm its commitment to immediately call for a ceasefire in the Israel and Gaza war to address the famine crisis; en français, propose que l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba affirme son engagement envers l'appel au cessez-le-feu immédiat dans la guerre opposant Israël et Gaza pour contrer la crise de famine.

The Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, seconded by the honourable minister for municipal affairs—the honourable Minister for Municipal and Northern Relations, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba affirm its commitment to immediately call for a ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza war to address the famine crisis.

MLA Marcelino: It's been heartbreaking to watch the violence and suffering of people in Gaza and in Israel, especially for those who's loved ones have been directly impacted.

Today, we're calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza so that humanitarian aid can reach civilians. The

severity of the situation in Gaza and the emergence of a famine, which a quarter of the population of Gaza are facing, many of them children, are cause for concern for all of us.

We ask that Israel consider working with their partners at the international level to get more aid into Gaza immediately. Hamas, a terrorist organization, should immediately end disruptions to this delivery of this aid.

This famine is caused by the war, and it is not something that we around the globe should tolerate. Letting civilians, including children, go hungry is incompatible with our values as Manitobans.

The divisions that we've seen in Manitoba and across Canada—Muslim Canadians facing Islamophobia, Jewish Canadians facing anti-Semitism, are not what we want for our province and our communities. We are one province here in Manitoba, and together, we want to call on the Government of Canada to advocate for an immediate ceasefire.

According to local media and authorities, the conflict in Gaza has seen the killing of over 30,000 Palestinians, many of whom are women and children. There was a four-day ceasefire during November during the hostage exchange.

We want to affirm that we believe that both the Palestinian state and Israel have the right to exist. But, with each civilian life lost, there risks entrenching the hardline views and pushes reconciliation between the parties further away.

Our Premier (Mr. Kinew) supported Canada's vote in favour of the United Nations resolution for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Currently, millions of Palestinians are displaced in Rafah, a city in the southern Gaza Strip. These Palestinians are crammed into the tent city or in houses where rocket attacks and drone strikes occur.

Rafah was the last refuge for Palestinians trekking south to avoid Israel's air and ground campaigns, following orders from the Israel Defence Forces and officials for Palestinians to leave Gaza City and then Khan Yunis.

* (15:10)

But with bombs getting closer and closer to Rafah, there are fears that there are nowhere else for Palestinian civilians to go. Again, according to officials, more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed and 72,652 have been injured in attacks on Gaza since October 7th.

Parties here of both stripes across Manitoba are calling for unity and a peaceful resolution to this conflict. Our government looks to respond to the conflict with compassion for those deeply impacted. Manitoba is willing to help people seeking refuge from war in Gaza by providing them sanctuary, community support and ensure that they can one day return to the region.

Canada has urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to reconsider his efforts in Rafah. In a joint statement with the prime ministers of Australia and New Zealand, Canada has said: We are gravely concerned by indications that Israel is planning a ground offensive into Rafah. A military operation into Rafah would be catastrophic because about 1.5 million Palestinians are taking refuge in this area, including many of our citizens and their families.

With the humanitarian situation in Gaza already dire, the impacts on Palestinian civilians from an expanded military operation would be devastating.

We urge the Israeli government not to go down this path. There is simply nowhere else for these civilians to go. We are asking for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Hostages must be released on both sides. The need for humanitarian assistance in Gaza has never been greater. Rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian relief must be provided to civilians.

Our government shares similar views with the federal government on the dire need for assistance in Gaza. And this is our commitment to Manitobans. Beyond calling for an immediate ceasefire, our government is also working towards reducing the hate and bigotry in our province. We do this by investing in our education system because our government truly believes that we are one people and hate has no place in our province.

To reduce division in our province, our government has committed to the creation of anti-Islamophobia tool kits that come from Manitoba's Islamic community, as well as reducing anti-Semitism by including Holocaust education in the provincial curriculum.

The reality here is that intolerance is not hesitantly or inherently within us; it is taught. And when we lack empathy for others, we are pushing for further division and hatred in our province.

One way to tackle division and hatred is through education, and by educating Manitobans early, we will be reducing hate in Manitoba's future.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'd like to thank the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) for bringing forward this motion, which is, of course, as we know, a very important topic, not only for Manitobans, Canadians and people absolutely worldwide. And we, too, are calling for a commitment to peace security and are encouraging negotiations of a ceasefire.

And this does not have to be a political issue, Honourable Speaker. This should be a non-partisan call for peace.

So, Honourable Speaker, let's talk about Manitoba's role on the world stage.

Manitoba, as we've seen over the last few years, is the home of hope. In recent years, we've demonstrated this through our support of those fleeing the unjust war in Ukraine. On a per capital basis, more Ukrainians have sought refuge in Manitoba than any other province in Canada; 12 per cent of Canadian arrivals of Ukrainians have come to Manitoba. Over 17,350 Ukrainians have presented at the reception centre.

So what does Manitoba's support look like? It looked like a warm welcome at the airport. It looked like a dedicated website with information and resources. And it looked like over 150,000 nights of safe shelter and accommodation have been provided. Approximately 13,200 provincial health cards have been issued. That's why, Honourable Speaker, in a few short minutes, our PC team will be bringing forward an amendment to the motion.

But I don't want to stop there. There are more things that were done: 12,000-plus reimbursement claims for the cost of the federal immigration medical examination required on entry have been processed; \$800,000 in direct humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and nearly 300 soft-body armour vests to assist with the war effort; \$900,000 to increase the intensive newcomer support grant, which helps schools provide supports for newcomers entering Manitoba's education system; and much more.

Let's juxtapose that suite of support against the lack of concrete action from members opposite when it comes to the latest global crisis.

Manitoba's Premier (Mr. Kinew) sent a letter to the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, in December, expressing deep concern about the dire humanitarian situation unfolding in Gaza. He said Canada should

take in refugees and mentioned Manitoba is willing to take in those seeking refuge from the ongoing conflict in Gaza, and to provide them with the sanctuary and support they require.

But, Honourable Speaker, there's no plan. There hasn't been a plan. This is nothing new.

And when you look at this government motion today, we know it lacks mention of the provision of aid, medicine, food and water. And when you look at the government motion, it lacks mention of hostages. The hostages must be released. Aid must be provided.

This amendment that we're going to be bringing forward to the government motion must pass.

This latest round of violence between Israel and Palestine became—began after the Palestinian militant group, Hamas, launched the deadliest attack on Israel ever on October 7. The resulting conflict has resulted in death and destruction. This is the sad culmination of decades of fighting rooted in a complicated history.

Honourable Speaker, Manitoba will not solve this. This is one of the longest running conflicts in the world. But Manitoba can be specific about what it is that we are calling for. Manitoba can be sensitive to all involved.

I worry that the government motion today would ring as biased to some. I worry that the government motion doesn't consider the complicated reality of this situation.

I have to say, Honourable Speaker, that again, I thank the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) for bringing forward this motion, but it's unfortunate that more wasn't thought about or done or prepared by this current NDP government, as I feel that their words are hollow.

That being said, Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Spruce Woods, that the motion be amended by striking out everything following "commitment to" and replacing that text with "peace and security, and to encouraging negotiations of a ceasefire, including the release of hostages and free provision of aid to end the famine crisis in Israel and Gaza."

* (15:20)

Motion presented.

The Speaker: The amendment is in order. The floor is now open for debate on the amendment.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): This is certainly an important topic for debate. And in the history of this Legislature, there has been many debates that have strong importance that are beyond the borders of Manitoba, and I would submit to you, Honourable Speaker, that today is one of those debates.

It's one of those debates because when we talk about peace in the Middle East and the long and storied search for peace in the Middle East, and we speak about the harms that are happening in Gaza, when we speak about the right for Israel to exist; and all of those were acknowledged, of course, by the Premier in his ministerial statement about an hour and a half ago.

We speak about things that Manitoba has, of course, a vested interest in but not necessarily an ability to change. They are beyond, of course, the powers of this Assembly, beyond the powers of this Legislature and in many ways, of course, beyond the power of our national federal government in Ottawa as well.

But there have been many debates in this Legislature in the past where we have spoken about things that were beyond the four squares of the power of this Assembly to act, because we have a responsibility, as elected leaders, to voice concerns, to speak of things, to talk about the issues that people want to hear about, even if they are beyond the exact constitutional powers that rest and reside in this Legislative Assembly. And certainly this is one of those debates.

It is one of the most emotional debates that I have certainly seen, and I don't mean in the context of this House this afternoon, but in the community at large and Manitoba as a whole. And early on, I know, after the tragic events of October 7, Manitobans from the various communities that have been impacted, and all Manitobans really, did start to speak about the need for us to remain united as Manitobans, even in division on issues.

And I want to acknowledge my friend—and I say this with heart—my friend from Fort Whyte, who I've learned a great deal about in terms of his own faith. And I consider him to be, and I've said this to him actually on the weekend, an individual who has great respect for all religions. He truly does. And in the discussions that we've had, I've sensed in him a desire to ensure that Manitobans remain united; that we don't become divided because of the issue.

Now of course there are issues that are always going to, in some ways, cause strong emotional

divides in opinion in Manitoba and beyond Manitoba. But just because we have differences of opinion doesn't mean that we have to be divided as people, and that is something I think in many ways that is being lost in the discourse today; not just on this issue but on many issues that we debate in Manitoba and in Canada.

We seem to have lost the ability to disagree with each other in a respectful and a civil way, and in a way that doesn't automatically dissolve and deteriorate into something much more personal and with longer term ramifications. And I appreciate, in particular—I appreciate all of my colleagues on this side of the House, and many of my colleagues on the other side of the House as well, but in particular, my friend from Fort Whyte, who continues to educate me on a number of different things and the mutual respect that we have for the various faith positions that we both hold and that Manitobans hold more generally.

It does seem like it is a different and perhaps dangerous time in the world. Not that there hasn't been dangerous times, of course, in the world before, but for this generation, it does feel a little different.

It's a discussion that I've had with my son in particular over the last number of months, as he's become very interested in world affairs and what's happening in the world. And we compare and contrast it to what it was like when I was growing up, when I was his age.

At that time, there was much discussion, of course, around the Cold War. I'm actually just reading a book right now, Honourable Speaker, called *Three Days in Moscow*, and it's a story—it's a true account of when then-president Reagan, who was nearing the end of his term as president of the United States, very near the end of his second term as president of the United States, went to Moscow to visit Mikhail Gorbachev, which was, you know, very unusual, of course, for a United States president to do that. And the mission, the trip, became even more unusual as he walked among the Russian people in Moscow at the—much to the chagrin of Secret Service, he went among the people in Moscow.

And you got a sense—and I'm not quite finished the book yet, but I'm through enough of it to know that there is a sense of respect between those two world leaders at the time, Mr. Gorbachev, who was, you know, advancing perestroika as a means to open up Russia—the Soviet Union at the time—and President Reagan, who had developed this sort of mutual friendship at the time.

And in my time, there was a sense that the world was changing. Of course, we'd seen by then the coming-down of the Berlin Wall, which separated East and West Germany, and there was a sense of optimism that maybe we were in a postwar period, a period of peace and, hopefully, together with that, a peace—or, a period of prosperity.

And yet, it does seem today that the times are different. Of course, we're speaking specifically about the conflict in Gaza, and I'll turn my attention to that, but my friend from Lac du Bonnet of course mentioned what's happening in Ukraine, which, you know, presupposed, came before the conflict in Gaza.

And many, of course, were surprised—although, perhaps, we shouldn't have been. There were certainly enough experts who were warning about the aggression of Putin and the likelihood or possibility of him going and bringing troops into Ukraine.

At that time, of course, now slightly more than two years ago, when Ukraine was invaded, there was a sense that the Ukrainian people might quickly succumb to a much more powerful military force as held by Russia.

Two years later, of course, we marvel at the resilience and the courage of the Ukrainian people, who today continue to struggle for their freedom and for their peace. And again, the interim Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko) acknowledged and noted the many different things that our government, the former Progressive Conservative government—and I hope carried on by the current NDP government—has done in terms of trying to help those who are fleeing the war in Ukraine.

And it goes to the point that I started on, Honourable Speaker, that at times these conflicts seem so big that it is beyond the power or the impact of Manitobans to have much effect. We might feel that way when it comes to the conflict now in Gaza, as we did in the conflict in Ukraine. Because I think at the beginning of that war, we as a government and Manitobans more generally wondered what it is that they could tangibly do.

There were, of course, rallies and there were expressions of support for Ukraine. I know I attended many of them; I'm sure all members of the House did, whether they were elected at that time or not.

But there was a sense that we were somewhat helpless to help those—and of course, because of the strong heritage of Ukrainians in the province of Manitoba, there was a true desire to do something.

* (15:30)

And so, the tangible effect of that was that the then-government established a number of pathways for folks to come from Ukraine into Manitoba, to get health cards, to have a welcome centre. I know that the former premier, the member for Tuxedo (Ms. Stefanson), was instrumental in leading those efforts and trying to get support.

But what's often lost in that, of course, is while the government set up the structure, it was really the people of Manitoba who rallied around that particular effort. And it was the people of Manitoba, in some measurable ways, who provided aid and assistance to the people of Ukraine who were coming to Manitoba.

But I suspect that there is an immeasurable effect. There's an immeasurable quantum of support that's been provided by Manitobans to Ukrainians who've come to our province, who maybe didn't come through the welcome centre, who maybe landed in another city like Toronto or Edmonton and then found their way to Manitoba because they had heard that there was so much support coming from Manitoba.

So, just like we might look at the conflict that's happening in Gaza and wonder what tangible effect Manitoba can have in that particular conflict, so too did many Manitobans wonder at the time of the invasion, the unjust and unjustifiable invasion, by Vladimir Putin into Ukraine.

And so, that brings us to today's debate, Honourable Speaker, a debate, as I mentioned, that is infused with emotion, that has divided citizens in our province, that has divided citizens across Canada and, indeed, divided citizens around the world.

And when we look at the motion that was brought forward, I think that there were some important things that were missing. And that's not to criticize members of the government. I've been involved in writing government motions in the past, and sometimes it's a bit of a delicate process in terms of how to determine what to include or what to exclude. We sometimes don't want to overcomplicate things. You don't want to add too much; you don't want to have too little.

But in this particular case, when it comes to the motion that was brought forward from my friends on the government side, I believe that they erred on the side of not including enough; they made a mistake by not having enough within it.

One of the critical parts, I think, that was missing from the government motion, that was included by my

friend from Lac du Bonnet, was the important aspect of hostages that were taken, of course, on October 7. We know, of course, and we mourn the loss of life of those who were killed; I believe it's been stated that it's the largest loss of life of Jewish citizens since the Holocaust, in one day.

And, but, of course, we also know that there were many who are—continue to be held hostage, even though some have been released. And I'm sure that all of us have been moved, because I think all of us would be moved, by the expressions by families when we see rallies that have happened outside the Legislature or at the Asper campus, where individuals are holding up pictures of those who are being held hostage with their name attached to the picture. And, in fact, we participated in a couple of those rallies and were provided with the placards of the pictures of individuals who were taken hostage.

And it doesn't take much. All of us, of course, have a heart for these issues. It doesn't take much to try to put yourself into the place of a family who has lost an individual who's been taken hostage, and the countless nights worrying about those individuals, wondering, of course, what circumstances they're in, wondering if they're alive, wondering how they are doing. It is not difficult to imagine the heartache and hardship that those families are going through.

So, while all of us hope, of course, that there is a negotiation of a ceasefire that will end the suffering in Gaza, a negotiation that, of course, also ensures the security and peace of the nation of Israel, we also, of course, have to be mindful of the importance of signalling—even though it's symbolic, largely, in the Legislature of Manitoba, because we don't have power to govern it, but symbolism sometimes matters—that it's important to make the expression of support for hostages coming home to their families.

So that was left out of the government motion, not because I don't think that government members believe that it's important for hostages to be returned. I absolutely believe that they do. I suppose it was just, again, a discussion about what a motion should have, and should there be more or should there be less in it.

So the amended motion, which speaks of the importance of hostages being returned, I think, is no small matter and no small thing and shouldn't be discounted by the government, and I would hope would be seen as a friendly amendment.

Of course, it also speaks—the amended portion of the motion—speaks of the need for peace and security.

And I appreciated the Premier (Mr. Kinew), in his ministerial statement prior to question period, speaking of the right for Israel to exist. Now that might seem almost trite, and that most people would say, well, of course Israel has a right to resist—or, sorry, to exist—and to resist terrorism. But obviously that isn't common sense or acknowledged by everyone in the world.

So the Premier, I think, was right to acknowledge and to specifically say that Israel has a right to exist—and by extension, I'm sure, if he believes that, that he also believes that Israel has the right to defend itself, otherwise Israel likely wouldn't exist. So those were good comments, I think, by the Premier of our province.

I also appreciated his comments about the need for unity in the province of Manitoba, to not divide citizens on something that is an emotional discussion. And he did mention, in his ministerial statement, the hardship that the people of Palestine are enduring. The famine, the difficulty getting medical supplies; those are very, very important things for him to bring forward.

Now, they aren't explicitly outlined in the government motion, and the amended motion speaks more of the importance of ensuring that humanitarian aid gets to Gaza and gets to the people of Palestine. That's a very, very important addition in terms of the amendment.

I listened with interest—President Joe Biden speak in the recent State of the Union address, where he spoke and announced that the United States would be looking to build a port, I guess, a temporary port—I'm not an engineer, but I'm—think they're going to be doing this relatively quickly, and I think that they're already sending folks to do this in Gaza. A temporary port that will allow humanitarian aid to find its way more easily into Gaza.

I think, maybe, many members saw the pictures of the airdrop of humanitarian aid from the United States—and there may have been others who were involved in that as well. I'm not looking to exclude NATO countries or other partners who might've been involved in humanitarian aid drop—but these very large sort of crates that were dropped out of army planes and found their way onto the beach, into the water. And then of course, you know, folks running to the aid.

That is—was mentioned by President Biden is not sufficient. And it is not going to provide the volume of aid that is needed into Palestine and into the

Gaza area. So my understanding is already there are Americans who are on their way to help to build this port so that aid can more quickly flow into that region.

These are very, very important things. The thought-out and, I think, measured amendment to this motion, which speaks to peace, which I think all of us are hopeful for; which speaks to security, which I think that all of us are hopeful for; and which, of course, speaks to the need for humanitarian aid are very, very important. But also of course, then, the need to ensure that hostages are brought home.

So I've seen a number of different government motions in my time in this House, some of which, you know, might've been less weighty than this particular issue, less divisive and maybe less timely.

* (15:40)

But what I see in the best of this House is times when we come together and we recognize not one political party or one member of the Assembly does things perfectly, because of course, we are all human and none of us do things perfectly.

And so, in putting forward what I think is a friendly amendment, I'm hopeful that the government and those who help to author the government motion will look at it in that way, as an amendment that strengthens their particular motion and that recognizes some very, very important truths and fundamental truths that the Premier himself actually mentioned in his ministerial statement.

So it's not as though these things are misaligned, I don't believe, from the NDP caucus or the NDP government. In fact, I think they're complimentary to what the Premier indicated in his ministerial statement.

So my hope, of course, is that it'll be viewed in that way and it'll be viewed as something that is positive and is accepted and I look forward to hearing from members on the other side of the House to provide their feedback on that.

And when we do that, when we come together as an Assembly and put aside—because often people just see the partisan bickering, those who have been watching question period. And often people just see question period, whether that's watching the House of Commons in Ottawa or watching the Manitoba Legislature. When you only see question period, you wonder if there's ever sort of commonality or people coming together on any issues, whether they're divisive issues or not.

But those who watch beyond question period will know, there are often times when there's significant agreement. My guess is that 80 per cent of the bills in any legislative session pass by consensus, and that's been true regardless of who the government has been at any given time.

So, there is collaboration between political parties, even on very, very sensitive issues. So I think on this particular issue, there certainly is room for that, given that this amended motion speaks to the very things that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) himself spoke to during the ministerial statement.

But to conclude my comments, Honourable Speaker, I think that the point that the Premier made in his ministerial statement about the need for Manitobans to not be divided is particularly important, and it's one that I think bears repeating.

Because while we don't have legislative or constitutional authority, of course, over the things that happen in other parts of the world and in sovereign nations, and while we all, you know, agree and I think the Premier said it in his comments that he believes that Hamas needs to be eliminated and eradicated—and I think that those were the words that he used in his ministerial statement—and that there needs to be peace and that there needs to be humanitarian aid, while all of those things are—I think are easier for most Manitobans to agree upon, it's one thing to say that we're going to disagree without division, and it's another thing to actually do it.

And that's where we as MLAs, as elected leaders in the province of Manitoba, I think actually can effect change and actually can do something. We can do so with our actions but we can do so with our words. And both are equally important, I would submit to you, Honourable Speaker.

The ability to take action and to quell division is important and the motion, I hope, was intended in some ways for that. I think the amended motion does more of that by including other issues that many people are, of course, concerned about as we seek peace in the Middle East. So, that's the action part of the things that we can do in Manitoba, even in a limited way because we only have, you know, certain degrees of authority here.

But words matter as well. How we conduct ourselves on this particular issue is very, very important. A measured way in which we speak of things is very important. It's important even for those, of course, you know—and I do hear it. I mean I do hear it

more from those who, you know, might have a predisposition towards Israel, to also recognize that there is suffering that is happening in Palestine and in Gaza, and the people of Palestine who are suffering.

I think that that is important to recognize that. I certainly also hear from those who have family in Palestine, who also recognize that the attacks on October 7 and the lives that were lost and the hostages that were taken, that that also is an atrocity. And it is important in any debate, particularly an emotional debate, that we stop first before we give our position on our side of that emotional debate, to look at the other side, to try to get a sense of what the other side is feeling and what another person might be feeling because only then do we have real empathy. And only then, I think, can we provide words that aren't hostile or divisive or intended to cause further debate but perhaps can look for a resolution which, ultimately, in this situation, and I know that the journey, the almost endless search for peace in the Middle East feels that way. It feels endless and maybe more so today than it has in the past decades.

But we don't come to a place of understanding or a place of potential peace, either in our own communities and our own families or in the world more globally unless we try to look at all positions and have empathy.

That doesn't mean that we have to give up our position and that, I think, is what is sometimes lost these days. One can passionately maintain their position on whatever issue they're debating and still have empathy and look at another person's position.

So I think that the amended motion that's been brought forward by my friend from Lac du Bonnet does that. I think it strikes the right balance. It shows that all of us want peace; all of us want security in the Middle East; all of us believe that we want to see that negotiation of a ceasefire. We want the suffering—the true suffering—of those in Palestine and Gaza to end. We do not want people to be suffering, of course, from lack of medical attention or lack of food, and we want to ensure that the people of Israel can also live in peace and security.

And the amended motion, I think, encapsulates that more fully and more broadly than the government motion as presented.

So, as I conclude my comments, because I know my time is running short, I hope that the government will look at—I believe this is the first motion that's been brought forward by the government since they've

come into power—they can correct me if they're wrong; if I'm wrong on that—but I believe it's the first motion that's been brought forward by the NDP government.

I think it would be fitting if, as their first motion on a very serious and significant issue, they were able to accept the amendment in the spirit that it's been brought forward, as one that looks to ensure that the divisions in Manitoba are not as significant as they might otherwise be on such an emotional issue, that allows us to find a place where neighbours can live with neighbours and those people who have different views can have those views expressed respectfully.

And I'll conclude where I began, Honourable Speaker, and that is that there are demonstrations of that. People can come from different religious backgrounds; people can come from different faiths; people can come from different parts of the world, and they can respect each other and they can grow in their respect for one another. And they can learn from one another and they can come to an understanding that maybe they didn't have before.

And where I started was with my comments from my friend from Fort Whyte, who I've expressed that I've learnt from and that I've learned to really value his openness to have dialogue from people of different faiths, from people of different perspectives, and not always to end up agreeing with that particular perspective, but to understand that it is important that we have respectful dialogue in these particular situations because when there is no dialogue then there is no hope for peace.

* (15:50)

So, I have appreciated my friend from Fort Whyte and the different perspectives that he has brought to this particular issue, as I do all of my colleagues, on this side of the House and on the other side of the House, because it is only in respect and it is only in dignified discussion, even in division, that we have an ability to stay together as a people in our province, and hopefully set an example for the next generation, that being divided or being dismissive of another person's opinion doesn't actually move a situation forward or to a resolution.

So I hope that the government has had the opportunity over the last, I suppose, half an hour now to review the amendment, and I hope that they will stand up and be able to agree that it's an important amendment, and all of us can send a strong signal that Manitoba remains united together and that we're

going forward as a province that might have different opinions as people, but still all as one Manitobans.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Any other speakers to the amendment?

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I'm not too sure if there was someone from the opposite side that had wanted to speak first; however, you did recognize myself, so I'd like to speak to this resolution.

And I would start with saying, in the years that I have been in this Chamber, we have seen dark moments in the history of humankind. I currently have the record for the most continuous years as a member of the Legislature, of this current Legislature. The member for Elmwood (MLA Maloway), who is my seatmate, has the most years. However, he did interrupt his time when he took an opportunity to run for Parliament and interrupted his years here. And I know the member for Elmwood also saw many moments in the history at that time that were sad and very troubling, and 9/11 and other events which I will be referencing.

But each and every time, we, as a province and as a Legislature, certainly when I was here, we got together, we came together, we worked together, took a stand together. And I will point out a colleague of members opposite—I'm allowed to use his name now, Dave Chomiak, and Dave Chomiak was truly an internationalist; he had an international view on things.

He had an amazing love for Ukraine. He and Len Derkach got together and we declared various milestones for the Ukraine community. This is before even the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. And we always got together; in fact, I believe the one resolution to declare Ukrainian Heritage Day, I believe that was a unanimous motion that was put forward by—moved by minister, at that time, Dave Chomiak, and I think it was seconded by Len Derkach, member of the opposition.

It's what we do. It is who we are. We're only 1.4 million people now in this province, and I—you could make the argument perhaps this should be left to Ottawa, or maybe Ontario or other places.

But first of all, words do matter, and I think we've all learnt that. And to the new members of the Legislature on both sides, I'm sure you've learnt that very quickly, that it's a little different when you walk down the street as just a normal citizen. What you have to say is not as interesting as when you become elected. And certainly, as a member of the Legislature, or as even a Member of Parliament, you have to choose your words wisely and you have to choose

them carefully. And from time to time members have stumbled, I being one of them. And I would say to all members of this House, from time to time you, too, will stumble.

On these issues, we want to choose our words carefully, as we have done through our history of this Chamber. We want to make sure that, although our voice is small, that (a) we speak it with clarity, and we speak in a voice that is reasonable and that is fair and that is balanced.

To say that the world is listening, there will be voice—there will be those that will be listening. This does have an impact. And what if every legislative chamber around North America would have one of these debates, would come together and have this conversation. Eventually, it becomes a tsunami; eventually, it becomes a groundswell, and people do listen to this. And it has to start somewhere, and maybe it should start in the Legislative Chambers. Perhaps these discussions should also be at city councils and at school boards. Let's have this conversation.

Because what's happening right now, we, as 57 legislators in this beautiful and dynamic and gorgeous building, that I, for one, have been privileged and honoured to be able to be in for—

An Honourable Member: A quarter century.

Mr. Schuler: For a few years, for some years.

And it's important to have these debates; it's important to have these conversations, to take on these issues. And we are facing some very, very dangerous times in our life.

MLA Robert Loiselle, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We have a despot, an individual who wants to pull his country back into a historical, czar-like country. He wants to go back, maybe, to what used to be the Soviet Union and decided he was going to invade Ukraine. And with—you know, he is also an individual that has threatened 'nucular' war on 'numlous'—numerous occasions; three that I can remember.

We got together as a Chamber. We got together as legislators, Progressive Conservative, NDP and Liberal, and we renounced that. We denounced what was going on in Ukraine.

We also have now a terrorist organization that, on a holiday weekend where people were involved in festivities, having a great time, probably let their guard down, weren't as vigilant as they should be and were attacked in the most cowardly, in the most

unethical way. They got caught when they were not paying attention, because they were celebrating. And this has happened throughout history.

And terrorist organizations prey on those moments, feast on those moments. And they went in and, I believe it still stands, the largest loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust. And it doesn't make it right, but had it been attack on a military installation, it would have been still—there would have been a narrative to that. These were civilians.

And whenever we talk about going to war or you've watched movies and they've talked about it, they always talk about, you know, has this been vetted in such a way that civilian casualties are mitigated, because we all agree that civilian life and civilian lives are not the attack of what's supposed to happen in a war.

In this instant, when Hamas attacked Israel, they purposely did not attack military institutions. They actually attacked civilians. It was an organized, complete and total attack on civilians: men, women and children. In fact, there are still hostages that are missing. They're presumed alive, some of them. They took hostages. They—the atrocities were abound, and if you want to know what the atrocities were, you can always pick up a newspaper or google it.

As someone who takes family incredibly important—I love my family; I love what my family does, and—I can read the headlines of most of these. I find I can't read the articles, and I can't read the details. It's too harmful. I'm not too sure it does my soul any good. I'm not too sure it helps me any way. I just know that these atrocities were 'heinous'—heinous, at best.

So for us as a Legislature to take on this issue as we did the war in Ukraine—and I can remember the debates we had on 9/11, the attack on the World Trade Center and the kinds of loss and death there. Again, a terrorist organization attacking a civilian institution. Although, yes, the Pentagon was also attacked but in the case of the World Trade Center, it was an attack by terrorists on civilians. It's exactly the same thing that happened in Israel.

* (16:00)

So for myself, who is a self-proclaimed—I've said this in this Chamber, this is not something that should be new to anybody—I am a—and I've said this over and over again—I am a Prime Minister Stephen Harper Conservative. I believe in the right of Israel to defend itself. I believe in the right of the Jewish people to exist. I believe that the Jewish people have a historical

claim to their lands which we refer to as Israel, and I believe they have all the rights of every other country to defend themselves, and that's what they have done.

The attacks on their country, the attacks that took place were no different than the cowardly attacks that took place in 9/11 or, for that matter, Pearl Harbor. Numbers a little bit differently, the details of it a little bit differently, but when Hamas attacked Israel, it was no different than what happened in Pearl Harbor. And yes, with—after Pearl Harbor, the United States entered the war and defended itself.

The Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, 9/11, the United States went to war and defended itself. Took longer than they had wanted, but eventually, the perpetrators behind it were brought to a justice that was rightfully meted out. And that was viewed as a right of the United States to defend itself, as other countries over the years through the history of our civilization.

We now see that what's happening in the Middle East is there are casualties on both sides, and there is a desire to start bringing relief to individuals who, for no other reason than the geography they live in, that are caught up in this war. And they—it makes no difference if it's historically through time—World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Korean War and the wars continue on—civilians always get caught up. And as much as you try not to involve civilians in this, the—Israel's retaliation, it does get—civilians do get caught up in this. And I think we all see that.

And understanding that, certainly, from the speech given last week by President Biden where he made it clear they're going to bring aid into the Middle East, that is important. Aid has to be brought in, it has to be distributed. And we as a country have been incredibly good at this over the years. As peacemakers, Canada has a heritage and a tradition.

That's why it's important we have this debate today here in Manitoba, because that's something we've done as Canadians. And perhaps there is a role for us in this in that we get towards peace and allow for those civilians on both sides who are now caught in the crossfire of a war between Israel and Hamas and that we bring relief to those individuals.

I would suggest that we be careful with this resolution, and it was—would've been, perhaps, advisable—I say this to the minister who brought it forward—would've been nice if, on the weekend, we could've been notified on it. I think we would've appreciated a

heads-up rather than just 10 or 11 o'clock this morning getting an email and being told about this.

I guess I would also ask the minister and the government, you know, was there a consultation with the Jewish community? Was there a consultation with the Muslim community? Because they're all concerned, they all see what's going on and they all have opinions.

And my colleague from Steinbach talked about that we can disagree; we just don't have to argue and fight about it. We're going to disagree on certain levels, and there's going to be disagreement in degrees. But we all agree that we want peace. And I believe that the resolution that was put forward by the interim Leader of the Opposition addresses that, that what we want to do is look for peace.

We must, must call on the return of all of those who've been taken hostage, those that have been taken captive, those that are being held, how hopeless it must feel for those individuals, how desolate they must feel where they are right now.

In the end we're all human beings: somebody's child, somebody's spouse. We are somebody's parent; some cases, somebody's grandparent. We are fundamentally human beings. And to not have a heart and not to put into this that those individuals who are being held against their will, they are civilians who just happened to be at the wrong place, at the wrong time and are now being held—and I don't know if hostage is the right term; I know that's a term that's being used—but they are being held captive. They are, if you will, prisoners of some terrorist organization.

They must be recognized just on a human basis alone. As humans in this Chamber, how could we not include those individuals?

I'm very visual, and visualizing what they must be going through right now devastates me, bothers me. And you know what? It's so easy to just walk past it all and say, you know, what we just need is peace. Well, we agree with that. But to get to that peace, there also has to be a human element of it.

We also talk about including aid, very important. I doubt there are very many individuals in this Chamber who have suffered real starvation, week—day after day, week after week, month after month. And what it does to you physiologically.

I grew up in an immigrant community who came here after World War II, and I was raised at the dinner table, if we didn't want to eat our supper, we were told in German: esst, zuvor die Russen kommen—eat

before the Russians come, because that's where they were—they were told: eat, and they—and children were fed because they knew the front was falling and starvation and hunger was going to come. But we just thought that was the silliest thing ever as children, not having any concept or any understanding what our parents and our families went through when they suffered real starvation.

To not have included aid, I think, is an unfortunate oversight. And I'm sure it was an oversight. We should include that aid be included in that.

I often say about my constituency of Springfield-Ritchot, that I travel around my constituency in spring—should it come some day—and the fields are planted and you see the fields grow and you can—from day to day, you can actually see the crops grow.

And then you see the crops starting to develop, whether it's wheat or flax or soybeans, but the wheat and then the breezes go through and you can actually see the wind. You know, have you ever seen the wind? Yes, when it goes through a field of wheat, you can actually see the wind, and you can see it blowing through.

And in my heart, I know—and I've said this over and over again in my constituency—that there will be some child somewhere in the world that more than anything else when that child wakes up, would like to have food in his or her stomach; they want something to eat. And because of the blessing of Springfield and Ritchot and Winkler and Morden and Steinbach and out west, all of our colleagues on the southwest corner and throughout this great prairies that we have here in North America, because of that, there is food for children and people in the world to eat, and that is important.

But I know that because of this war there are children right now who are not getting food. And I—it just drives me around the bend to think that somewhere a child looks at a parent and says, I'm hungry; I'm starving. And the parent can't provide sustenance.

* (16:10)

It's easy for us to talk about it. We have so much food in our homes that we can't consume everything we have in our homes. It would take us weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks. And these people need sustenance.

To add that into this resolution is so terribly important. We must, as Manitobans, where we have such an abundance—80 per cent of what we produce we

have to export. It is inconceivable that 1.4 million people would eat everything that we produce. Of course not. We send that somewhere else. That's how rich we are. That's how blessed we are as a province. That's the wonderment and the beauty.

And if you've ever walked through a field when—after it rains—and the gumbo and the soil—it's so beautiful and it sticks to your shoes; it's almost like concrete, and you throw some seeds into the ground, you can almost watch it grow. We have to have an understanding—those of us who have such an abundance—we have to have an understanding for those who don't.

And right now, there are people in the world who don't have that abundance. And having raised three children myself, and I know how hungry children are in the morning. And I know how happy it makes you, as a parent, when, you know, the kids come down, and they're still a little blurry eyed and already you've got food on the counter for them. And they sit down and you say grace and then you—they dig in.

My son hates when I tell these stories. There were times when he would eat, I thought he would use all four limbs to shovel the food in, he was so hungry, but that's when a teenage boy, you know, and all his sports—that makes you happy. That fulfills you as a parent. That is just the most beautiful sight, and how could we not think about those right now who don't have that? It's important.

This resolution is important. I think it's important that we set aside this day. I think it's good for us to do it. Honourable Speaker, 1.4 million people have a voice here today, and they want to hear our voice, and I'd say to the government benches, to the NDP, the public also would like to hear your voice. It's an important conversation. Let's have the conversation. Let's have the debate. It's important that we include different aspects of this legislation.

And I'd like to point out that over the years, like we did with Ukraine, we've—when the war broke out and we had those incredibly bitterly cold rallies on the front steps, I don't think the individuals who built this Legislature, and they did a great job and I'm not here to criticize architects, but, my goodness, they could have never envisioned how cold those steps can be in winter. In fact, there was a time we had—there was a rally for the Sikh community; there was a very serious issue taking place in the Punjab, and because it was more of a religious ceremony, we, on the steps, had to take our shoes off. And if it isn't cold enough to stand on those steps in that wind, we had to take our shoes

off and we stood in our stocking feet. And it was bitterly cold.

We did that for Ukraine; that was important.

We also, for Israel, we've done a lot of things. In fact, just within the last year, we did The Jewish Heritage Month Act. I understand now we're going to be doing—there's a private member's bill coming forward regarding Ramadan and the Muslim community. That's what we do. That's who we are. We are Manitobans.

They always say, if you're going to go anywhere as an immigrant, the best place to land is Manitoba. We help you find where the grocery stores are; we help you open up a bank account; how to access medical things; which bus to take. You know, who hasn't, you know, walked past somebody and you could tell they're fairly new to the country, and I've done this from time to time and said, you know, I'll give you a piece of advice, but there's these things called socks. And they look at you a little confused and you say, you know, it'd probably be a lot warmer if you wore socks in those shoes, and have actually gone and bought somebody socks and said, okay, you have to put these on your feet.

That's who we are as a province. That's what we do as a people. We reach out. We have a heart. We take interest in what's going on. And that's why this debate is important and I'd encourage members opposite—it doesn't have to be a long speech, but it is important to put words on the record and show support for these individuals.

The Middle East is a troubling area. And I've never been, I would love to go; I would love to go to the Middle East. Every time I think it's probably a good time to go, there is another war breaking out and I don't go.

I have been to Ukraine. I was in Kiev twice as an election observer and I'd like to point out that this Legislative Chamber was in full support. And I don't know if the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), I can't remember if he was along on one of those delegations. I don't remember, but I know that the—Kevin Lamoureux, he ended up going as a Member of Parliament. Met him there, as did others.

And Manitoba's always there. We're always ready to help. We're always standing in the crease. No matter what it is, we are there, and we're there to support, we're there to speak.

My suggestion is, to this Chamber, that in this resolution, it's important that we get it right, that we deal with the issues. The hostage situation, which I've covered off; that aid be given, that I've also covered off. It's important that this be unanimous, and we've done this over and over again. And we've done this on a bipartisan basis.

And throughout the years, we've done so many of these and I'd have to go and do some research to list them all. And there were amazing New Democrats who brought these forward and would reach across the aisle and we had just amazing members on our side, and we would get together and we would pass a resolution like this.

And I would suggest that we also send this to Parliament, we send it to the Prime Minister's office. We should do this unanimous, move this resolution and then we should probably ask the Speaker if, on behalf of the Legislature, he would send this to Ottawa. That's what we usually do with these resolutions.

Because we have a voice. And you know what, we are the pivot in the country. People say to us, so, are you from eastern Canada? Oh yes, yes I know, from the east. And then the next person comes in: so, are you from western Canada? Oh yes, from the west. It depends on where the Bombers are at that time, right? It just depends which—so like we sort of—we are sort of that pivot in the country.

And perhaps we should encourage our colleagues in other provinces to also have this conversation. Let's do this as Manitobans and let's do this as Canadians. It's what we're known for. We are known for peace-makers; we are known for individuals who give way beyond what anybody else does.

Our donations to the world food grains bank—and I know there's an organization out of Dugald, we have a dinner every year and they talk about the kinds of things that they do, the help that we give. We have a lot to offer this country. We have an awful lot to offer this world.

And so, to stand today and to talk about this individual—this particular resolution is important. I would encourage colleagues to get up, put their comments on the record and let's do it as human beings. Let's make this as human as possible.

No politics. No agendas. Put all that aside. Think about the human beings in the Middle East who are caught up in this. Think about those who are being held as prisoners of war by a terrorist organization.

Think about those families, those individuals who need aid. Think about the things that are addressed.

Let's do this as human beings. I do believe, in some small way, the world is watching. You know, if others catch in on this one, it becomes a groundswell and perhaps we can get something done. We need peace in the Middle East, and we need peace in Ukraine.

* (16:20)

And it's not going to happen by just sitting and saying nothing. It happens when legislatures, elected officials and others get up and have their voice heard. I encourage all 57 of us, pass the resolution, let's send it on and leave it up to others, but at least we've done our piece.

Thank you very much.

MLA Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): As-salamu alaykum. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Sorry for my hesitant in—hesitation in standing up; I assumed somebody from the NDP would want to stand up and discuss this important motion that they brought forward, although I know it is an amendment. And we brought forward the amendment—that someone would stand up and speak to the importance of this.

If they claim that this is so important and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) made such a passionate plea for it, why will no one—someone—why will no one speak to the amendment that we're bringing forward? And I will say, inevitably, they are probably going to vote our amendments down. So if they're going to vote it down, why are they not getting on the record now and saying why they don't agree with our amendments?

I'll get back to that in a second; I'm going to rewind. I got a little right into it. I do want to say that I am fasting today, as I had mentioned this earlier, but if people are just tuning in now, I am fasting today, so I will be—haven't had anything to eat or drink from 6:21 a.m. today. So speaking for half an hour is very hard on an individual. My mouth is going to get very dry and I'm going to pause at times, so I apologize for that. I will try to make sure I can keep going, and that you can hear my voice properly; but I do apologize.

Also, when I'm going through, you know, a fasting state, you're really hungry. I'm hungry. It's—what is it now—4:20 and I haven't eaten, and I'm hungry. I'm thirsty. And all of that pales in comparison, and I am embarrassed and ashamed to even mention that, because children are dying and starving all across this

world. Children are dying in the conflict that's happening in the Middle East. And I'm up here saying, oh, I'm so hungry, I'm so thirsty, I haven't eaten or drank since 6 o'clock this morning. Who cares?

This is of utmost importance. To discuss this motion that the NDP have brought forward, we've amended, and yet they won't stand up and speak to it. Why not? I will also say—I have 27 minutes—and I am going to be overtly passionate about this. I am the only Muslim in this Chamber, the only elected—in the history of this province, and this motion directly speaks to millions, billions of Muslims around the world, and not one phone call. Not a text message. Not a walk across the hallway saying hey, we're bringing this forward, do you want to talk about this. Nothing. *[interjection]*

And now they want to heckle me. That was—what minister is that? What is that? What minister is that? The Minister of Environment wants to heckle me. As I say it—*[interjection]* Yes, I'm sure. Yes, I'm sure no one talked to me. I am sure no one called me, because I have cell phones, I have emails, I have legs, I have eyes. No one talked to me.

So the question then becomes, if this is so important, let's sit down and talk about it. Let's sit down and talk about a motion. Let's talk about peace. Let's talk about how we can build bridges and not make wedges. As I'm standing here talking about this, the members want to heckle, and I'm saying, hey, this is important, we need to talk about this. People are dying across the world. We're in Manitoba. What can we do in Manitoba? What can we do with a motion like this?

Really got to think about it. UN's calling on actions to be taken; the US. Canadian government's done stuff. Other nations around the world. And this NDP government thinks that a call from this Premier is going to stop the conflict in the Middle East?

It's shameful; it's disgusting that on the first day of Ramadan, that they want to bring this motion forward to create more division when the solution should've been, hey, MLAs, elected officials, let's bring forward a motion together. Great. Let's talk about it. How can we do that together?

If that's the ultimate goal, what was the goal of this? Really, what was the goal? The goal is for a motion to move forward to the federal government calling on a ceasefire. Great.

Our amendment does that, yet they won't speak to it. If the goal is really for the people of Palestine and the conflict that's happening in the Middle East, why will they not speak to our amendment? If the goal is

about bringing people together in Manitoba, why will they not speak about it? If the moment—if this is about building bridges, why will they not walk across the hallway to the PC caucus and talk to someone in there, instead of 90 minutes before this is due, or two hours, to send an email saying, this is what we're doing.

Instead of this morning. This morning. Now the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) wants to heckle and say, we told you this morning. Sure, you told us this morning. Sure, we'll say 9 a.m., 8 a.m. Let's say 6 a.m., you told us this morning. You didn't wake up and do this. This was being done for weeks or days in advance.

If the motion is to bring it forward, and to bring Manitoba together, why not have that conversation instead of just saying, hey, here it is.

Apologize, mouth is getting a little dry.

Minister of Justice wants to laugh at that. Member from 'cordia' thinks it's funny that I have a dry mouth and I'm up here passionately speaking, and—while I'm fasting. It's okay. We understand where this government comes from. It's okay. Manitobans know.

So, when you talk about bringing this motion forward, and in the interest of trying to end the conflict in the Middle East and have a ceasefire, they bring their idea forward, we bring our idea forward. Okay, let's look at the ideas. Because if the ultimate goal is the same, and we agree on that, let's talk about the ideas.

Your motion calls for a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza war to address famine crisis. Okay. Ours says, towards a ceasefire to end the famine crisis in Israel and Gaza, if you skip to the last line. So, what's the problem?

And this is really important. I really hope Manitobans and maybe, you know, maybe that side will wise up, and they can just tune in to this next minute here. Their motion says that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba affirm our commitment. Pause there. Ours says the exact same thing. Then it goes, immediately call for a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza war to address the famine crisis. Ceasefire, Israel Gaza war, famine crisis. Our motion: ceasefire, Israel Gaza war, famine crisis. Essentially almost the exact same thing.

But what's better than almost? We got it about the same. In all aspects of life, whether it's a commercial commodity, talking about a bill resolution in your own—whatever it may be. Arguments, devil's in the 'detrail.' And we'll get to the wording afterwards as my

colleague, member from Steinbach mentioned, that the devil is in the detail.

When we look at that, if it's about the same, well, what's different? Our motion goes further. It talks about the release of hostages. Hostages are on both sides, they need to be released. It talks about adding aid. Where's the aid in theirs? It's not there. Free provision of aid to end the famine crisis. Ours goes farther, so what's better?

I mean, really, guys, and girls and everyone on that side. Just look at the motion. Remove your partisan blinders for the love of god and humanity, if that is what we're talking about.

And now you want to heckle and you want to just smirk and say that's funny. We are talking about people dying, and I'm saying that the motions are almost identical. One goes farther. If it goes farther, why not support that one?

Why not even have the courage to stand up and talk about it? You don't even have the courage to stand up and talk about why you don't like our amendment. You'll just sit there blindly following your leader, who wants to bring this forward. Why? Ask yourself why. It is about further dividing. You might want to talk a mean talk over there, you talk a great game, and then you want to talk about this issue happening. You want to talk about people dying.

* (15:30)

You want to talk about bringing people together? You bring people together—[interjection] Where's he from?

An Honourable Member: Riel.

MLA Khan: Member from Riel wants to sit there and chirp at me. He's had plenty of—[interjection] And he's doing it again. The member from Louis Riel again, can stand up when he has his moment and talk on the record. And yet the member from Riel wants to go over and over again about something we're not talking about in the motion here. The member's not clear; we are talking about the conflict in Israel and Gaza. We are talking about the motions that you on the NDP side do not have the courage to stand up and say why this is not—why our amendment is not in favour of you. [interjection] And again, member from Riel wants to go over and over again. I'll digress; I'll continue on.

If the motion, Honourable Speaker, is really about bringing people together, the motions we already talked about essentially called for a ceasefire in Gaza and anti-famine crisis. Our motion goes farther. It

calls for a return of hostages. It calls for provision of aid. They don't want to support that. Why? Why would you not want to support a motion that goes farther upon something you want to do?

We saw the same thing—sorry, apologize—we saw the same thing in the fall session with the gas bill. And I'll digress for a minute, if the Honourable Speaker allows me to, for just one minute; I'll come back to this. It is—this is where the member of Steinbach talks about the wording. Wording matters. In that bill we saw that wording was rushed and it did not cover dyed gas; it did not cover farmers; it was not for all Manitobans. We made amendments. They changed it. The bill was better for Manitobans. It wasn't perfect.

We're saying the same thing here. We want a ceasefire in the Middle East. We want this to go forward. We're saying make amendments to it. We're not saying anything else. We're saying make amendments to it. *[interjection]* Minister of Health wants to join in on this heckling now? Minister of Health wants to go back and forth on this? If they have so much to say, they can stand up and put it on the record. They can talk about their concerns with the amendments. *[interjection]* Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) wants to keep heckling, and yet this is the government that's acting.

The government is shouting down a Muslim member on this side of the House mainly because I'm trying to push forward a better motion. The Justice Minister—this is Manitoba—Justice Minister. We're talking about people dying, and he wants to shout me down because I'm saying we are offering a better motion. Apologize, Mr. Speaker, mouth is just really dry.

An Honourable Member: Give him some water.

MLA Khan: No, I'm fasting.

An Honourable Member: Not even funny. Not even a little bit funny.

MLA Khan: It's okay. Guys, it's okay. It's okay. It's okay. Guys, it's okay. Okay.

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member for Fort Whyte has the floor, and let's try and keep some of the heckling down. It's an emotional thing that we're talking about. Let's try and pay attention to what each other's trying to say.

MLA Khan: I do realize the member opposite was making a comment in jest, and it's water, it's fine, I'm fasting. I'm 43 years old; I've fasted a lot in my life. I get a lot of comments made on it: oh, just drink some

water or eat some food, and people brush it off as nothing and then the reality is it is quite offensive.

But we're not here to talk about that; we're here to talk about this.

So, when we're talking about emotion, again, I'm going to boil it all down.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health, on a point of order.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Just recognizing that the member opposite just quickly in his remarks stated that he was—he apologized that his mouth was dry, our colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, instinctually just said, can someone offer him some water? It certainly was not, in any way, shape or form, trying to disrespect or be critical or have any judgment of any nature whatsoever on the fact that that member is fasting right now for Ramadan. Just want to acknowledge that.

In this House, sometimes there are moments where folks just, in a moment, reflexively want to offer something positive to their colleague. By no means was—and we recognized it immediately. As soon as he said it, it was like—it was in error; it was not intentional.

So I want to put that on the record. I don't need to apologize on behalf of the minister; I'm sure that he's already stated he's apologetic for that. It was not intentional by any way, shape or form. Wholly respect the member opposite in what he's, you know, navigating right now for Ramadan and fasting, and we respect that entirely.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Steinbach, on the same point of order.

Mr. Goertzen: I believe that my friend from Fort Whyte is willing to accept that at face value. I do hope, though, Honourable Speaker, you will caution all members.

We should listen to all members, but in particular, Muslim members speaking to this particular issue. I am shocked at the amount of heckling that's happening from the other side who don't want to hear from the member of Fort Whyte. I think it's disrespectful, and I ask you to please call members to order and

allow the member to speak. Otherwise, it may be interpreted as something the members opposite don't want it interpreted as.

The Speaker: I've listened to the comments on the point of order, and I do believe it's not a point of order; it's a dispute on the facts. And I would caution all members about telling the Speaker what he should or should not be doing.

* * *

MLA Khan: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I want to thank my colleague, the member from Steinbach, for standing up and putting a few comments on the record.

And I will thank the Minister of Health for their comments, and they are correct. When I took the comment from the member for Dauphin (Mr. Kostyshyn), I did take them as a light joke or maybe he had just forgot. That's okay. I was not offended by that at all. I do think that was an actually, relatively humorous comment, have some water.

Because sometimes people forget. Same as the first day of Ramadan. I haven't fasted for 16 years. I'd just met this—the member from Dauphin a couple of months ago. He doesn't know me very well, and so within five hours I expect him to remember every time that I can't drink water; it's unrealistic.

So, I open-armed, accept that apology. I don't think it was done with ill will. That's not what I meant. Sorry, I kind of sidebarred when I heard those comments, so—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

MLA Khan: And I do want to thank the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) for pointing that out. It's a very important point, and I do want to acknowledge that that was not—I do not take that personally, so we're all good there. You know, so that's important, and that's an important interaction, and I think it doesn't really happen here in the House. Even as adults, we can confirm that was something different.

And there are a lot of different things happening in the world. There's a lot of changing things happening in the world. We live in a very different world than what we grew up in, even pre-pandemic, but let's go back 10, 15, 20 years. It's a changing world at a pace that I don't think we've ever seen throughout mankind, and we have to do our best to try. And at times we will say things that will offend each other, but we are all adults, so hopefully, we have a conversation about it.

The heckling in the House is part of it; I understand that. The heckling on the House of—on an issue of this importance, I am quite distraught that the members opposite want to yell out issues that happened in the past, whether it be parental rights or the campaign or for finances. Sure, we can discuss all those things, but we do it at another time. We don't do it when there's millions of people dying or hundreds of thousands at risk and 1.4 million people displaced. Forty-five thousand people have been killed. We do it at times more appropriate for that instead of heckling over and over again—the members opposite have that much of an issue.

As a man who emigrated here with his family—well, I was born here; my family emigrated in '78. I was born in '80. We've gone back a lot and have a lot of—obviously, being a Muslim is an important part of my faith, identifying how I am and how I govern myself and then whatnot and always learning, trying to get better. I'm very connected to the community here and throughout Canada and North America and all over the world and the Middle East.

This conflict in the Middle East, we all agree, has to have a ceasefire. We all agree the famine needs to stop. We need to help. We agree on that. We're saying, add in the hostages, add in the aid and now we're all good; let's move that forward. And we don't want to do that for some reason.

* (16:40)

You know, when you look at the horrific videos—starvation, children of Gaza, especially being—if you are a family, I mean, maybe not even, if I can't say that, but I can say myself—I can speak for myself as a family—immigrant family—who has a lot of close ties, who has the same faith as these people, who puts his head to the floor five times a day, wakes up before the sun gets up and does—last thing he does is prays at night—and you see these people being murdered, it wrenches at your heart. It really does.

The motion to call for a ceasefire is a good thing. We support this motion. We say it needs to be better. The devil is in the details. And you know, again, you have the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) again wanting to heckle me while I'm talking. If he has to say something, he can say—up and say it. This is absolutely ridiculous after the opening remarks I said from the Minister of Health, and now the Minister of Justice want to continue to heckle me. It is absolutely disgusting.

I'm appalled by the member from Concordia right now. I am talking about a conflict where women and children and men are dying and he's yelling out question, question. He doesn't want to talk about this. They want to force their party's narrow political agenda down Manitobans' throats. Period. On the first day of Ramadan, where Ramadan brings communities together.

I was there last night at the Waverley mosque. There's well over a couple thousand Muslims there, praying, talking, getting ready, excited for the fast coming up, all working together on, you know, how Manitoba is talking about this conflict, and we're talking about other things, really bringing the community together.

And now this member from Concordia is yelling question because he doesn't want to discuss the merits of a resolution or a motion that they bring forward in amendments. He doesn't want to talk about the fact that we're calling for the release of hostages and humanitarian aid as well.

He doesn't want to talk about why it's important to have these conversations and not just push something forward through because you think that's the way to do it. Last time I checked, this is a democracy. We can talk about things. We can have a conversation, and we can agree to disagree or not and move forward. But if the ultimate goal is to help the people that are in the conflicts of Gaza, then that's—let's talk about.

But if that's not the ultimate goal, which is very clear the member of Concordia does not want that. He does not want the end to happen in Israel and Gaza. The members on that side have nothing to say; they have no—they have not—they don't even know what to talk about right now; they just want to force these series of questions, and why? Why do they want to force it through? It shows their true colours.

They want to drive a wedge. Where? Where is that wedge being driven? That wedge is now being driven within Manitoba, right? Because you have a poorly worded motion that the NDP government has brought through, and you have a thought-out motion like the amendment we want to bring forward, and they don't want to do it.

So, why don't they want to do it? Because they want to create a wedge. Who do they want to create a wedge with? As much as this party stands here and says that we want to work together and we are the party of the people and we want to represent everyone, it's not. Not one mention of anti-Semitism in here, not

one mention of Islamophobia, not one mention on how this is going to help the community work together.

Oh, but they did make a—but they did talk about that once upon a time, and they brought a tool kit forward to combat Islamophobia. But they didn't add it in the curriculum. Why not put it in the curriculum? Because they want to create a wedge. That's what they're trying to do. They are wedging the community. They are wedging Manitobans, and they think that a topic like this can wedge people in this House.

Well, I'll tell you, on this side of the House, we are united and we are strong and we stand for everyone on this side together, not like that side. I may be the only Muslim on this side, or in this House, but I know they all have my back.

On that side of the House, you have members sitting there saying, hey, you know what? Maybe what they're saying isn't that crazy. Maybe if they actually wanted to add humanitarian crisis to this amendment and they want to add return the hostages, those are good things—those are good things.

So let's amend it, let's add them in there and let's make this better. And I know there's some members on that side, I've got—over the couple years, I've got to meet a few of them. And they're now thinking this over, saying, hold on, wait. They're not saying don't do the ceasefire, they're saying do the ceasefire. They're not saying don't add aid; they're saying add aid and help them. And release the hostages.

Hold on, this is a good thing. Members on that side are thinking about that right now. And that's how we know that side is divided, and that's how we know this side is united. And that's how we know we will stand up for Manitobans, and we will protect and we will work forward to making sure this gets done in the best way possible.

When the members opposite yell out, question, question, questions, obviously they want to force this through. They want to just get this done. They don't want to work here, maybe the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is too busy as well. Like the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) and the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) was earlier today. This is important. It's not just question, question; the member wants to yell out as he scrolls on his phone. This is important.

On—first day of Ramadan, when the community comes together, this NDP wants to bring forward a motion to divide Manitobans, to possibly create more ill will in this province. To create more division within the Jewish and Muslim community. Why would they

do that? Why would they not meet—did they meet with anyone in the Jewish community? Did they meet with people in the Islamic community? Did they meet with the only other Muslim MLA in this building? Nope. And the answer is no.

A simple conversation could be, hey, let's talk about this; Obby, what do you think—or, member from Fort Whyte, sorry—member from Fort Whyte, I caught myself. Let's talk about this. And we can have a discussion, we can bring it forward to the floor with— all pass, and we can all stand up and clap together, and we can move on. Isn't that what we want? I would assume yes, that's what we wanted. I don't know why—I don't understand why that didn't happen, and maybe I'm too new here still. I haven't been here for two years yet. Maybe I'm too new.

But if there's something that wants to go forward, and you want to do it together, you bring it forward together. I did that last year, actually, as a minister, one of my first things—a combat act to protect youth in sports. I brought it forward to them, I let them know what I was doing. I brought it forward to the Liberals, we had a conversation. We brought it forward, it was passed. We all want to protect youth. We knew that was the goal, youth in amateur sports, combat sports; we brought it forward.

The relevance of it, as—again, as they want to heckle me; I believe it's the Minister of Education now who wants to jump on in heckling me, that's setting a great example for Manitobans. If you want to move it forward and you have the same goal, like, ours was to protect amateur athletes from combat. We got it done.

The goal is for a ceasefire in the Middle East, like we all say it is, like we want, we move it forward together. And yet they didn't want to do that. It's clear that they want to force this through. It's clear that they're playing political games. It's clear that they're using the communities as pawns in their game of politics and favouring votes with communities.

But at the end of the day, everyone can see what's happening. At the end of the day, they can see that this motion—sorry—at the end of the day, you can see that this motion is nothing but trying to get some airtime. It's not really about helping the conflict that's happening there. If you want to talk about the conflict there that's happening, and how you can really help, well let's talk about how they can really help.

The NDP—if they really wanted to help the people there, why haven't they sent any money? Why haven't they sent any money? The previous government sent

over \$800,000 to the Ukraine. Why hasn't this government sent any money? And that was the first round to Ukraine. Why haven't they done that? If you guys want to help them, send them money. Haven't done it.

But what they'll do is they'll send a letter to Justin Trudeau, the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) best friend, and say, hey, we want to get this done, nudge, nudge, can you do something? And then nothing happens, because the federal government has lost their way under this leadership of the Liberal-NDP coalition. No one takes them seriously. Just like given another six months, no one will take these guys seriously. Or actually, once this gets out no one will take them seriously.

That they know that all they want to do is force through these political games. They want to use the community as pawns. Send money to the conflict; send money to the people of Palestine. On this side of the House we did that; we sent it to the people struggling in Ukraine. And we sent them over \$800,000. Send them money, send them aid.

Oh, you actually left aid out of your motion. You didn't even want to send them aid. Sorry. The NDP government could do something to help them and yet they choose not to.

* (16:50)

The conflict in the Middle East isn't going to be solved by us debating it here. It's really not. So what can we do? We can try to bring Manitoba better together. We can try to get through motions and bills that have also the goal of helping Manitobans. We, on this side of the House, are for that.

To be clear, we will vote along negotiated ceasefire. We will vote for the release of hostages. We will vote for ending the famine crisis. We will vote for all those things.

They're not going to accept our amendment. I already said that. They've already made it blatantly clear they're not going to accept a better amendment or a better motion than theirs. They've made it blatantly clear with a lot of heckling and disrespect they've shown to not only me. I don't care about me. I'm—I can handle it. I've had far more happen than what they can throw at me.

But we're talking about the conflict in the Middle East, where people are dying. Where people right now are fasting. They haven't eaten anything or drank anything. And that might not be different from their regular day-to-day, sadly, over the last five months there. They don't know where their next meal is going

to come, they don't know what's going to happen to them, and we are sitting here in Manitoba arguing over whether they should release the hostages and whether we should provide aid for them.

No one's arguing for the member opposite that I asked the member opposite to support the amendment. Support the amendment that provides that, that releases the hostages, that can have a negotiated long-term ceasefire. They're already negotiating these things now, but let's put—let's add some more to it. Let's go forward as a province united for a ceasefire.

I don't know why we can't do that. It really blows my mind when we're standing here saying let's move forward. Let's—yes, we want, you want a ceasefire, we want a ceasefire, you want to help do Israel, Gaza, yes. We're not going to solve the problem, but we want to help the—let's move this forward. Let's send a letter to Ottawa.

Wab can probably—sorry, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) can probably deliver it to him when he meets him next week, probably. Or Chrystia Freeland, which he seems meet regularly. He can hand deliver it to them, saying this is all 57 members of the House going forward with this. We all support this, we all want to see this done. We need to see a ceasefire there. We need to see peace, we need to see an ongoing resolution.

We will vote for a ceasefire. This side of the House stands for that. We will vote for the release of hostages. We will vote for ending the famine crisis. It's up to the NDP if they are going to support that. It's up to them if they're going to do the right thing or not. I've made it very clear where we stand. Other members have stood up on that. We need to do the right thing as elected officials in this province.

I would ask that the members just take a second and pause and think about it. There's twelve seconds left before my time is over. I appreciate the opportunity to stand up. I apologize if I offended or said anything inappropriate to anyone as time—and I'm looking forward to having some water in an hour and a half.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): While I appreciate the desire to amend my colleagues' and our government's motion, and the right to do so, I would urge this Chamber to support this motion as written, end the debate on this amendment and act in solidarity with us in our unequivocal call for a ceasefire, and to address the famine crisis that's ongoing.

Our Premier spoke very clearly, passionately and thoughtfully this morning—this afternoon in his ministerial statement, calling for an enduring ceasefire, the protection of innocent civilians and the return of all hostages.

This is not a partisan issue. The member from Steinbach, himself, rightly acknowledges that this is the intent and the will of our government. Let's not let the issues give way to drafting or semantics, and I again call for the House's unanimous support of the government motion.

We can all agree that the taking of hostages is reprehensible and deplorable and that we can all use our respective platforms and our privilege as elected officials to decry that.

I think we can also agree that the deaths of over 70,000 Palestinians and the horrific famine being created is also reprehensible and deplorable, and that is what our motion speaks to.

Let's acknowledge and remember that during the ceasefire in November, the most recent ceasefire during this conflict, there was a significant hostage exchange. Over 200 hostages were exchanged during that ceasefire, Mr. Speaker—Honourable Speaker—and thank goodness for that. We are so grateful that that occurred. And, again, we call for an equivocal ceasefire that would certainly lead to the release and exchange of hostages, which we all already agree needs to happen and must happen.

Our motion calls for an unequivocal ceasefire, and I would argue to the Chamber that the amendment proposed weakens our resolution, our motion, by using the weakening words of, quote, encouraging negotiations of a ceasefire. Honourable Speaker, our motion reads that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba affirm its commitment to immediately call for a ceasefire in the Israel and Gaza war to address the famine.

Parties of both stripes here in this Chamber call for unity across Manitoba and a peaceful resolution to this horrific conflict. Our government looks to respond to the conflict with compassion for those deeply impacted, and I again ask for 'unanis' support of our government motion and to end the debate on this amendment.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I just want to commend my colleague, member Fort Whyte—for Fort Whyte (MLA Khan), who had to step out.

I'd like to commend him for his devotion to his faith that he demonstrated here today and also for his passion for this important issue and his ability to speak to it at such length, despite not being able to have anything to drink. I admire that, so thank you to him.

And I'd like to speak to how this issue is impacting people here in Manitoba. You know, I live in a constituency that has a significant Jewish population. It also has a significant population of Muslims. In fact, several prominent Muslims live in the constituency of Roblin. And I think the issue with the members opposite's resolution as written is that it doesn't meet the needs of both of these communities.

And if members opposite were serious about putting forward a motion that could be supported by all members of this House then they would have consulted with us prior to putting it forward.

With our side of the House there was no consultation. The minister just said—the Minister of the Environment just said in her comments that she agrees with everything we put forward in our amendment, yet they're going to vote against it. If they wanted us to act, as they say, in solidarity with them, then they would've given us input into the motion. They did not.

So what we see here is a conflict across the world that's been incredibly divisive here at home, and has had deep impacts on those with loved ones in the Middle East. There's been a documented uptick in anti-Semitism in our communities. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) alluded earlier today to the fact that Jewish people are facing harassment and intimidation because of the actions of the state of Israel, and that may be true. But it's also just plain old anti-Semitism. Anti-Semites feel emboldened in the current political environment, and that is shameful.

There's also been a documented uptick in Islamophobia, and my colleague, the member for Fort Whyte again earlier today spoke about the misconceptions and the myths about his faith and that Islam is a religion of love. And I think we all have something to learn from that.

I also want to state unequivocally that Israel has the right to defend itself. It shouldn't be a controversial statement. Every sovereign nation has this right.

And I also want to put on the record a few things that I think are very important about the October 7th attacks and the use of sexual violence. Hamas committed rape, sexualized torture and other cruel and inhumane treatment of women.

Okay, thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

* (17:00)

The Speaker: The question before the House is the proposed amendment moved by the honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko) to the motion brought forward by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino).

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, please.

The Speaker: A recorded vote has been called. Call in the members, please.

* (17:10)

The question before the House is the proposed amendment, moved by the honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition, to the motion brought forward by the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Division

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

Ayes

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Goertzen, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lamoureux, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Pivniuk, Schuler, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Nays

Altomare, Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wasyliw, Wiebe.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Tim Abbott): Ayes 20, Nays 30.

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

The Speaker: And the hour being now past 5 o'clock, the House is adjourned, and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 11, 2024

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<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>