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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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Speaker*

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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

Thursday, April 11, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

The Speaker: The honourable member for Riding Mountain.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Thank you, Honourable Speaker—[interjection]

The Speaker: Honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Jackson).

Mr. Grant Jackson (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): Pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Spruce Woods. It feels very odd to refer to myself in the third person. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Address the Overcrowding in Schools.

The Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(8), it has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Spruce Woods. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Address Overcrowding in Schools.

* * *

Mr. Jackson: Would you please call Bill 211, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Manitoba Parks Licence Plates) for second reading.

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will proceed to Bill 211, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Manitoba Parks Licence Plates) for second reading.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 211—The Drivers and Vehicles
Amendment Act
(Manitoba Parks Licence Plates)**

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I move, seconded by the MLA for Swan River, that Bill 211, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Manitoba Parks Licence Plates), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Nesbitt: I rise today with great enthusiasm to present to the House Bill 211, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act, with the sole purpose of establishing a Manitoba parks licence plate.

As the former minister for natural resources and northern development, I bring this legislation forward with a deep and personal commitment to the preservation and enhancement of our beloved provincial parks.

Our provincial parks are not mere tracts of land. They are the embodiment of Manitoba's natural beauty and cultural heritage. They serve as sanctuaries for wildlife, playgrounds for outdoor enthusiasts and retreats for families seeking respite from the stresses of the modern life. Indeed, our parks are treasured public assets that enrich the lives of Manitobans in countless ways.

Bill 211 represents another significant milestone in ongoing efforts of governments to preserve and enhance our provincial parks. By establishing specialty Manitoba parks licence plates, we will provide Manitobans with a tangible way to demonstrate their support for these cherished spaces while contributing to their revitalization.

These licence plates will not just be symbols of pride. They will be vehicles for direct investment in the preservation and enhancement of our natural treasures. Specialty licence plates have a proven track record of success in promoting various causes and community organizations. By extending this concept to provincial parks, we harness the power of civic pride to drive positive change.

Manitobans care deeply about their parks, and Bill 211 provides them with a meaningful way to show their support. But this legislation is about more than just licence plates. It's about recognizing the undeniable importance of Manitoba's parks to our collective well-being.

Across our province, our Parks office offer endless opportunities for outdoor recreation, from camping and fishing to wildlife observation and nature exploration. During the pandemic, Honourable Speaker, Manitobans turned to our parks like never before in search of solace, rejuvenation and connection with nature and their loved ones.

Ensuring the accessibility and sustainable of our parks requires thoughtful investment and stewardship. That's why our former government took decisive action, such as establishing the Provincial Parks Endowment Fund with an initial investment of \$20 million in 2021.

These funds, managed by The Winnipeg Foundation, generate \$1 million annually, supporting crucial park infrastructure projects and programming. These funds go towards trail development, children's playgrounds; infrastructure that can help and complement Manitoba parks.

Honourable Speaker, our former government's extensive consultation and evaluation of our parks over the last four years underscore our—underscores our commitment to responsible stewardship. We listened to over 10,000 Manitobans through Travel Manitoba's provincial parks tourism evaluation study in 2021 and 2022. That study was the basis for the comprehensive parks infrastructure renewal strategy, which as the former minister, I was extremely proud to release in 2023.

This strategy outlined \$120 million in park infrastructure investments and \$103 million for roadway renewal over the next decade. These investments demonstrated our party's forward-thinking approach to park enhancement: from rebuilding the sea wall and replacing the Nutimik museum in the Whiteshell, to expanding yurts in Duck Mountain and Asessippi, to electrifying campgrounds and upgrading trails, wash-rooms and waste water lagoons, to modernizing and rejuvenating our park system for Manitobans and all park users.

These strategic investments will ensure that our parks remain accessible, enjoyable and ecologically sustainable for generations to come.

More importantly, Honourable Speaker, they will create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and enhance the quality of life for Manitobans across the province.

The establishment of specialty Manitoba Parks licence plates aligns with our commitment to public engagement and partnership. By allowing Manitobans to contribute directly to park revitalization through the purchase of these plates, we empower them to be stakeholders in the preservation of our natural heritage. Every dollar raised through the sale of these plates will be reinvested back into our parks, ensuring their beauty and ecological integrity are preserved for future generations.

* (10:10)

Honourable Speaker, I just want to talk a little bit about the experience in British Columbia. They established the plate program in 2017, and in 2017—and since that time, they have sold over 400,000 specialty parks plates in British Columbia. In '22-23 alone, they sold over 78,000 plates. But more importantly, they've invested over \$8 million back in park infrastructure in British Columbia, so the potential of these plates is certainly enormous.

So, Honourable Speaker, I urge all members to remember that our parks are more than recreational spaces. They are integral to our identity as Manitobans. By passing Bill 211 through second reading this morning, we will affirm our collective commitment to safeguarding these precious assets for current and future generations. Together, let us invest in the beauty and ecological integrity of our parks, ensuring that they remain a source of joy and inspiration for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and to my honourable colleagues for your attention and support today.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): I thank the member for bringing forward this bill, and, you know, though I'm skeptical, I am very thankful that it seems like they're getting on board with defending our parks on the surface with this bill.

Of course, there are more questions coming up, but the question that I would like to pose to the member kind of predates this bill introduction and the introduction of the MMIWG2S licence plate. The member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) had actually asked the question of why, you know, the licence plate was brought forward as legislation as opposed to just done.

And so my question is: Why are they doing this now in opposition as opposed to in government?

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Thanks for that question.

My understanding, in opposition here, we have to propose a private member's bill for this particular plate. We certainly contemplated it when we were in government, and, you know, it was part of our agenda likely to get a plate in at some point, but the next best thing is to get that plate in today if we can because it's certainly going to—the funds are going to certainly be used to enhance parks all across Manitoba.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I would like to ask the member and thank him very much for bringing this bill forth because I know he has a passion for the outdoors, likewise.

Can he please explain why provincial parks are so important to him?

Mr. Nesbitt: Thanks to my good friend, the MLA for Swan River for that question.

I think all of us in this Chamber today can relate to going to provincial parks today as adults and perhaps as children with your parents and things like that. It was a place—a reasonable place that you could go as a family on a weekend to visit or you could go

camping. And I think that love of parks has extended in—throughout my whole life here.

And travelling to provincial parks across Manitoba, it's always great to see each provincial park is a little different, and it's good to see what each park offers.

MLA Dela Cruz: Our NDP team is working every day to be a government that works for Manitobans to fix the damage that the PCs did. While they try to throw the problems that they created at our feet, we're adding new staff for Parks and park services so that Manitobans can finally enjoy—continue to enjoy our beautiful provincial parks in a way that they know their government supports.

And so while I'm being heckled by the other side for talking about supporting the environment, I will ask, you know, while—well, first of all, while we build, the members opposite continue to try to escape the fact that they've torn down so much infrastructure in this province. And so will the member opposite take full responsibility for worsening provincial park services?

Mr. Nesbitt: I think the member opposite is wrong. Our former government certainly tried to build up provincial parks, and that's what we're talking about here this morning.

In 2023, we invested over \$7 million in capital improvements in provincial parks and in 2023-24, we've—we had earmarked 12.7 for parks infrastructure. That was all part of our plan, our 10-year plan to spend \$121 million in provincial parks, on infrastructure, along with \$102 million in roadways leading to and into parks.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I would like to thank the member from Riding Mountain for this piece of legislation. It has to be done by legislation because we are opposition, and I'd like to apologize to him for the negativity and the anger coming from the government benches.

So I would like to ask him, when he was consulting, what were—what was some of the feedback that he got from groups and what did they say about this particular licence plate coming forward to help out our great parks here in Manitoba?

Mr. Nesbitt: Thank you to my colleague from Springfield-Ritchot for that important question.

We certainly have consulted with parks users across Manitoba, citizens in all our constituencies; we've talked to about this plate. It wasn't a secret. We

certainly wanted to consult with as many users as possible and, more importantly, we consulted with the organization that would be receiving the funding, The Winnipeg Foundation, they will receive \$30 out of each speciality plate that will go into the endowment fund that will be there for now and the future.

MLA Dela Cruz: It's interesting to see the provincial Conservatives here in Manitoba, you know, claiming to stand up for the climate and claiming to stand up for nature, when their federal counterparts won't even acknowledge climate change.

It's interesting to see members opposite change their tune on how to support Manitoba Parks after years of cutting funding and selling it off to private companies. It's an approach that is eerily familiar to how they treated health care.

So can the member put on—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Dela Cruz: —the record why a PC government cut parks funding in half but now wants to champion a licence plate?

Mr. Nesbitt: Again, I respect the question from the member opposite but I beg to differ with what the member is saying today.

In 2020 alone—in 2020, our government invested \$16.6 million in provincial park upgrades. So that's twice as much as we did in '22-23, and even more of an—than an average of our 10-year plan.

So I don't understand the negativity. Our government has always respected the environment. I was pleased, as the minister, to introduce the 93rd provincial park last year, Pemmican Island. And we certainly respect our infrastructure here in Manitoba and we're always looking to improve it.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, and again I feel I have to apologize to the honourable member from Riding Mountain for the anger and the vitriol questions that are coming from the NDP benches. They don't particularly have a very strong record on the environment.

So I'd like to ask him, when he did all of his consultations, was there anybody who said they felt that we didn't need this plate? And if there was somebody who actually said they didn't feel we needed it, what was the argument for it or was it basically all positive and supportive?

Mr. Nesbitt: No, there was nobody that came outright and said we didn't need these plate.

I mean, obviously it's the public's choice whether they purchase this plate, just like the 13 other speciality plates we have here in Manitoba, where their funding goes to registered charities.

So Manitobans love their parks, as we've said numerous times. As the minister on the other side always says, she loves the parks. So all this is doing is supporting the parks we all love. So I encourage the opposition to get on board with this bill and let's get it through and let's get the money into the endowment fund for parks.

MLA Dela Cruz: I'll ask a question that's very simple. And so Indigenous communities are at the core of our environment when it comes to having been our, you know, the caretakers of the environment and Mother Nature for a time immemorial.

And so I would like to ask, did the member consult with Indigenous communities when putting forward this bill?

* (10:20)

Mr. Nesbitt: In my previous role as the minister, I was working with Indigenous communities every week. Great conversations with them, that's how Pemmican Island Provincial Park came about.

I met with the First Nations concerned up there, respected their views. They were fully support of Pemmican Island being a park and were very excited on the day that we made Manitoba—Pemmican Island Manitoba's 93rd provincial park.

So First Nations again are—they love the environment, the same as we do on this side of the House, and I'm sure they do on that side of the House. So again, I encourage the passage of this bill so we can move forward with protecting our parks now and into the future.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Despite the rhetoric we're hearing from the other side today, we know which government in recent years has cut provincial parks funding.

And so could the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) please highlight some of the facts on that and why this—getting more funding into our parks is more important than ever, given the funding outlined in Budget 2024?

Mr. Nesbitt: You know, I would like all-party co-operation on this bill this morning, because again, it's to expand the funding into parks. I think I've stood up in this House a few times in the past few weeks and,

you know, explained that Budget '24 has certainly cut the capital funding in half for this year.

We have no knowledge of what the future plans will be, but as part of the 10-year plan, it's been certainly cut in half. So there was 12 projects slated for this year, so I'm certain a few of them are likely not going to make it this year. But we can only hope, on this side of the House, that this government respects parks as much as we do and will restore that funding next year and continue on with the 10-year plan to revitalize our parks all across Manitoba.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Well, good morning, Honourable Speaker. It's a pleasure to be here this morning to have an opportunity to speak towards this bill.

As a Red River Métis and someone who actually has a cottage in a park, and I've actually been able to, first-hand, notice the cuts that have happened in parks over the last seven years during the austerity of the last government.

Never less, it's an honour to be able to get up this morning to talk about parks, talk about the importance of parks, talk about the importance of the land and specifically treaties.

As an Indigenous person, I'm proud to be part of a government that respects treaties, that works with Indigenous peoples. We have no less than 10 MLAs that are Indigenous: five First Nations, five Red River Métis. And I think it's important that any time we speak about a bill such as this one, we recognize, Mr. Speaker, that first of all, we are a listening government. And that we collaborate—

The Speaker: Order, please. Honourable Speaker, not Mr.

MLA Loiselle: My apologies. It's early, Honourable Speaker. Thank you for, you know, reminding me.

And it's also a good opportunity to switch to the English language as I sometimes, you know, speak in French in the House.

Alors, merci Monsieur l'honorable Président pour le rappel.

Translation

Thank you for the reminder, Honourable Speaker.

English

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, so we are a listening government and we are collaborating with Indigenous communities and nations. In fact, in January, Mr. Honourable Speaker, I was very honoured that we signed a historic deal with the Indigenous-led Seal River Watershed Alliance and the federal government to study officially making the huge expanse of land west of Churchill an Indigenous-protected and conserved area.

In fact, last Wednesday, Honourable Speaker, I had a chance to go to the viewing with one of my co-workers in regards to a beautiful viewing of we are all from the land, which spoke about the importance of our ties as people to the water and to the land.

And in fact, the Seal River watershed, which is west of the Hudson Bay, mostly in northern Manitoba, is one of the largest ecologically pristine watersheds in the world and one of its richest—one of the richest carbon sinks in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Honourable Speaker, it's time that Indigenous nations and communities who have long been protected—protecting Manitoba lands and waters define how those lands and waters are cared for. We want to ensure that every young person across Manitoba, whether in northern, rural or urban communities, can learn on the land from their elders and, you know, from their families.

When I think of provincial parks, Mr. Honourable Speaker, I'd like to share with you that my family, since 1937, actually has had a cabin in northern Manitoba at Beresford Lake. What's interesting is that my grandfather worked there in 1937, and that tract of land around Beresford Lake became a provincial park. We had squatter's rights. Our cabin had been there since 1961. And when it became a provincial park, there was large investments. The roads came in; the amenities came in.

But, unfortunately, you know, some of the investments that we saw earlier in the '80s, truthfully, Mr. Honourable Speaker, really disappeared over the last seven years. We used to have a campground which was actually attended by staff from provincial parks. That's been cut. Since the pandemic, we've seen other amenities at the park go downhill, and I think it's

time that we do reinvest in provincial parks with long-term predictable investments.

I'm skeptical of how putting money into a fund to invest long-term into our provincial parks is going to actually help us as a government and as a province get to our commitment of putting 30 per cent of the land aside by 2030.

Over the years, I've had the chance to paddle, in fact, many rivers across Manitoba, from the Whiteshell River to the Maskwa River, the Black River, the Manigotagan River, the Wanipigow River. I've paddled the Gammon River all the way up to Aikens. I've seen caribou first-hand. But I've also seen the devastation that forest fires can bring to our provincial parks.

I'm worried that if we don't invest, not just in our provincial parks, but in the mitigation of forest fires, it scares me to think what's going to happen to the land, Mr. Honourable Speaker. I know that over the years, actually, our water bomber fleet has been privatized by this previous government. And that's extremely worrisome.

Two summers ago, Mr. Honourable Speaker, Manitoba was on fire, and we spent the whole summer worrying about our parks, northern communities. Investing into, you know, a plate that's going to put money in a fund is not going to help us protect northern communities and our parks from forest fires.

Last summer, Mr. Honourable Speaker, Canada was on fire, and everyone across Canada noticed first-hand the effects of forest fires when it comes to air quality across Canada. As a government, it's important that we invest in long-term mitigation of forest fires. In fact, this summer is already being billed as another summer where we can expect forest fires of—in fact forest fires have already started.

And my question for the honourable member of the other side is how is this bill going to help us fight forest fires? How is this bill going to help us protect northern communities? How is this bill going to help us protect infrastructure?

I'd like to add, Mr. Honourable Speaker, that as a member of the Canadian Ski Patrol, I've had the opportunity many, many occasions to go to Birds Hill Provincial Park, Whiteshell Provincial Park for ski races, biathlon races, and it's broken my heart to see the infrastructure there, our biathlon range, et cetera, keep on dwindling down and down and down and

downhill because of the austerity of the previous government and the lack of investment of the previous government in our provincial parks.

Last, but not least, Mr. Honourable Speaker, I'd like to talk about our government's approach into investing in provincial parks and investing into the lands and waters and lowering our emissions by investing in our provincial parks, planting trees and increasing wildfire protections, which I spoke about.

So at the end of the day, Mr. Honourable Speaker, this bill, to me, looks like an enormous mea culpa on behalf of the members of the, you know, opposite side after seven years of austerity, lack of investment in provincial parks, seeing provincial park infrastructure go downhill. It's their way to try to come back to the table and spin this into some kind of a good news story, one that I think needs serious consideration.

* (10:30)

And furthermore, Mr. Honourable Speaker, our government will be adding new staff for Parks and other services through Environment and Climate Change to better support access to natural spaces and protect our environment. We're revitalizing and staffing up the Conservation Officer Service to build relations and foster an effective, responsive and professional service that works with Manitoba communities to ensure public and natural resources are protected.

The previous government signed contracts that increased the cost of e-permits for hunters, anglers and park passes for Manitobans. We've received these contracts, we've reviewed these contracts and covering the cost increases so the Manitobans don't take—don't have to take the weight of the former government's mistakes.

In our budget, we're investing in multifaceted strategies to protect our lands and waters.

Thank you, Mr. Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Before recognizing another speaker, I'd just like to address the Mr. Honourable Speaker. And I realize there may be a problem between translating from French to English, because the French version does say Monsieur l'honorable Président. *[Mr. Honourable Speaker.]*

In English, however, I'd ask the member to please make sure he refers to the Speaker as Honourable Speaker, not Mr. Honourable.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I—it gives me great pleasure today, and I want to thank my friend and colleague from Riding Mountain for this very, very, very important bill. It's a chance and an opportunity for us to come together.

I mean, there is a lot of things that have happened in the past by governments. You know, I can go ahead and I can look at 2015, when the NDP went and they stole from the Parks budget, and they hiked cottage fees from 250 to 750 per cent to try to alleviate their million-dollar deficit that we inherited in 2016.

So—but let's put that aside. Let's come together as a group, as a team, to make what's better for Manitobans. Myself, as an educator for 35 years, 25 of those years was spent in environmental management. I spent 267 days in the bush with students, and their appreciation and love for the outdoors and respect is something that we have to take a look at now. And we've got to say to ourselves, you know, we are doing it for the future.

This endowment fund will definitely put money in there. And in times—tough times of government, because we all encounter them, we got an endowment fund that we can pool money for to help improve our parks and the great outdoors. These are important things for Manitobans.

So I just want to also refer, in 2017, new provincial parks. In the—in addition, I can remember when Chief Genaille was in here and met with the minister and myself and Chief Zastre from Wuskwi Sipihk, and they were very proud to know—or happy and proud to know that we were designating Pemmican Island. And in 2017, the new provincial parks were designated for Goose Island and Grand Island in the north basin of Lake Winnipegosis. These islands had great significance for traditional lands utilized by generations of Anishinaabe people from Pine Creek First Nation.

So we've worked very closely with First Nation communities in protecting some of these spaces that were important for them, for wildlife habitat, breeding grounds for a variety of bird species as well as moose, fox, white-tailed deer, all types of fur-bearers, where they were able to practise their traditional means.

So I, kind of, just wanted to put that, but Bill 211, it allows Manitobans show their love for provincial parks while helping revitalize the natural spaces they treasure most. It's a chance for all of us to show support by passing this bill today, you know, through the Provincial Parks Endowment Fund.

The important legislation acknowledges the undeniable importance of provincial parks to Manitoba, and Honourable Speaker, I—*[interjection]* Okay, thank you. Sorry there, my paper keeps getting over top of the mic here and I apologize for that.

But it's important for us to be able to take a look and we—you know, when I look back at the Duck Mountain, for instance, we got a gem. The Whiteshell, there's a gem there. Whether it's Hecla Island or any of the 93 provincial parks, everybody has an invested interest in them, and they are important.

We go into the Duck Mountain. This is a time—during the pandemic, people, where did they go? They went to our provincial parks. They wanted to see what we had, and our provincial parks has really picked up.

I can think here, right now, the only problem we have in our provincial parks is it's—there's not enough seasonals for families to be able to go up there to enjoy these provincial parks, to be able to go there with their family. For the students to go—or for the children to go on a hike with mom and dad and really get that outdoor experience. To be able to go and catch their first fish on an East Blue Lake or Laurie Lake or Childs Lake or any of the beautiful lakes up there in the Duck Mountain, Wellman Lake and it just—it's so bountiful.

And when you go up there and you see the number of people there—and I recall last year going, and the beach was full. There was 100, 150, people on the shores of East Blue Lake, you know, just all enjoying that experience.

And this is what this about. Are we going to deny Manitobans through tough times, to cut our budgets and then not be able to have them experience? Or do we want to enhance their experience? To be able to enhance our park, to give them that little bit of extra so that, you know, there's the facilities. That's a huge thing. The facilities in our parks are so, so important. You know, Turtle Mountain, that's another great place, right next door to the Peace Garden.

We got to keep our parks accessible and maintained. And how do we do that? During tough times, it's kind of difficult, because when we were in government, I know what it was like trying to keep, you know, trying to get people—or graders and maintainers on the road because people didn't want to take their campers. They said, you know, we—this is our life. This camper is our life and we want to share it with our family. We want to pull it up there. And we got to maintain those roads.

But also, when they get there, they—we want to have the facilities maintained for them. We want to have those washrooms accessible, those shower rooms accessible.

And we can get into one project, and all of a sudden we got \$1.5-million project. Well, how far is it going to go when we need 10 or 12 projects to do this in a given particular year?

Manitobans expect smart investments, and they want to contribute to those investments. It's very important. They want to see—Manitobans don't mind paying when they see things are invested back. They don't want to see a slush fund where a government goes ahead and takes a whole bunch of money out of Parks and goes and sticks it into general revenue. They don't mind paying a little more fee for that particular park pass or that \$2 overnight stay or an increase of \$2 overnight stay or perhaps \$50 for a seasonal. They don't mind that. But they want to see that money invested back into that park to enhance their experience. And that's the important thing.

So this is all about partnerships, Honourable Speaker, about partnerships. And here's a chance for the members across the floor to partner with us to do what is best for Manitoba. It is a chance for us to invest in our future, a chance for us to invest in the future stewards of our environment. These are the ones that are going to be taking over from us.

You know, it's not a—I—we always sit here and we take shots across the floor at each other and I know that sometimes it's a real mess for you to try to settle out and keep us calmed down, but here's a chance where we got to work together. We got to say, you know what? We want to make our parks better for all Manitobans.

* (10:40)

And if the members across the floor want to take credit for the next four—three and a half years, great. I mean, it's going to be great. And I will say, hey, the NDP got this done. You know, let's—we need their support in order to get this bill through and enhance—and you know what? We'll take pride in driving around and having that dynamic licence plate on our—on the back of our car, because we'll say, we're proud of Manitoba; we're proud of our provincial parks; we're proud to invest in them; and we're proud to give the opportunity for the future stewards of our environment.

It allows Manitobans to leave legacies. We can go ahead, and here's an opportunity to do something

within the park and leave a legacy in the future. And a lot of us, as MLAs, we can say in 15 years, you know what? We were part of that legacy. We got that done, and here's our grandchildren enjoying it. They are seeing some of the great things that Manitoba has to offer.

The fund generates—this fund could generate a lot. The more licences we sell at \$30 toward the endowment fund could build and build, and all of a sudden we got a significant amount of cash that we can invest into our parks to make things great.

The—it's dedicated to important upgrades including trails. Trail development is a huge thing in the Duck Mountain. We got all these Ski-Doo-ers, quaders flocking there in the winter that's in—it's in—kind of enticing the lodge owners to open their stores in the winter so someone can stop in there for a hot chocolate or, man, at Wellman Lake at PJ burger. Man, that thing is about yea thick, and it's a great thing.

So those are the kind of stuff we want people to experience. We want to invite—whether it's the Whiteshell, Hecla, Turtle Mountain, Duck Mountain—

An Honourable Member: Spruce Woods.

Mr. Wowchuk: —we want—Spruce Woods. We want to bring people in.

Honourable Speaker, we just need support of the members across to make this happen, so let's do it together.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): It's my honour to rise today and talk about Bill 211, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Manitoba Parks Licence Plates).

We all know that parks are important, and we all know that what our licence plates reflect or say is also important.

I lived in BC before moving to Manitoba, and I loved the BC licence plate. And the moment I made a decision to move to Manitoba, the first thing I looked at was the licence plate. And I was so much connected to BC's licence plate, because I thought it's beautiful. It is beautiful, and it says Beautiful British Columbia.

I came to Manitoba, switched my plate, and the first thing I got to know was that the fee was way less for the licence plate than BC. Made me happy. I got connected to the licence plate and what it says. We all know what it says: Friendly Manitoba. So I started seeing beauty in the word friendly. It's good.

And, as we go, we get to learn so many things. For example, when we create opportunities and platforms by bringing various legislation, as the one today is on the table, and we are debating it, we get to read. We get to listen. We get to educate each other about new things.

And I'm sure not all Manitobans would know that we have so many speciality licence plates here. Many people know that we have Jets plates, Blue Bombers plates. I lived in Brandon, and there is Wheat Kings plates, right? And the proceeds go to Brandon Humane Society—great.

There are so many others. University of Winnipeg, another plate. CurlManitoba, basketball, and there is another: Madox's Warriors. We support and create awareness about cancer in children—significant. Snoman speciality plate. Canadian Armed Forces.

So here's an opportunity that we create to educate each other. And I want to take a moment to appreciate my colleague, Minister for Housing, Addictions, Homelessness, and Mental Health for bringing the new licence plate for MMIWG2S.

Just after a few days the bill was passed, I had a coffee meeting with one of my close friends, and while we were talking in the parking lot, I saw this plate on his vehicle—made me happy.

Now, talking about the significance. Significance is education and another thing we're talking about here is funding parks. I don't know how much we would be or could generate out of this plate to fund parks, but I agree that any speciality plate is very important to educate the people about a particular theme, about a particular subject.

When we talk about parks, we have been talking about parks this morning, and we see what happened for the last seven years. Honestly, there were cuts. There was less investment in our parks than we could have done.

And there were concerns. Manitobans raised concerns for the decisions the PC government took to hand over hunting and fishing licences, system and parks passes to private organizations. and I need—I want to mention it here that the private organizations, say, companies from down south, not even Canadian companies, that was not a great choice.

And people gave their feedback. People spoke up about that. And I want to ask members opposite that when their team took such decisions, how much consultation was done with Manitobans? That's

my honest question: Was there any consultation at all? Was those—were those decisions approved by Manitobans or it was supply-driven decision?

And when we again think about generating money through licence plates, sometimes it feels like, on the one side we're cutting, on the other side we're proposing to raise funds through licence plates. It's like stealing a million and donating a loonie. That doesn't sound great.

And the honourable member that spoke just before me said that Manitobans don't mind paying more. Well, that would be generalizing. There are Manitobans that I represent, they can't pay more, they can't pay more, because I represent the constituents of Burrows. They are struggling to survive. There are single parents, there are low-income families. They cannot—we cannot say that they are the Manitobans who don't mind paying more for going to parks.

And I also think when we think about equity, everyone, rich or poor, has equal rights to our natural resources. And when we talk about natural resources, it reminds me about protecting land, about protecting water, about protecting our, you know, plant species, animal species, and our parks play a great role in preserving our lands.

And whenever we talk about preserving our lands, we talk about our Indigenous communities; we talk about Indigenous elders. During my stay in Manitoba, whenever I got a chance to maybe attend an event where an elder was speaking, I would find a moment to spend with them to know more about how to preserve natural resources.

And I feel blessed when I'm standing having coffee with a grandma and listening. What's their lens of looking at our natural resources? And I see that those seniors, they're like our parents. They're so much worried about what's happening to our natural resources. And we should be learning a lot. There's a wealth of knowledge there.

* (10:50)

And it makes me happy when I go to Seven Oaks Aki Centre. They have that piece of land and a training facility there. They talk about nature. They talk about various kinds of grasses and plants and animal species. You go there, walk—you go there and talk to the faculty and staff there, participate in smudging. It's so much blessing to be there and learn how important our natural resources are. And I appreciate their knowledge about diverse plant and animal species. They know a lot.

And another thing that I came across is the concept that we don't own the land; the land owns us. For the first time when I heard this, it made me so happy. That's the reality. We live on the, you know, blessings of the land, the fruits of the land, whatever the land provides to us—everything, I would say. So we need to see through that lens and we need to appreciate.

And I want to appreciate our current minister of environment and climate. She is taking steps to invest more in our parks, adding new staff and staffing up conservation officers. And she is also reviewing the PC contract and making efforts to maybe ease, to maybe make some choices that the Manitobans who are going to use the parks don't have to pay more than what there they can afford.

So thank you for the opportunity, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there no more—

The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

An Honourable Member: The great park hater himself.

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Okay, well, I mean, it's really a—to hear that I might be a park hater, it's kind of disheartening because I've made a lot of years working in parks and actually a former employee of Asessippi Provincial Park. You know, I—growing up in the western part of the province, I had the privilege to be able to load up with my mom in the morning as she drove up to the education office in Russell. And I'd take the car, and I'd drive up to Asessippi.

So spent my summers, May—well, May through to August every year, working in Asessippi park. And I—to hear that we don't value parks I think is just wrong. And especially to say that of me. Obviously, people don't know who I am and they're just ascribing rhetoric to try to make a point. It's just not—it's not productive.

And one of the best things, you know, one of the things that we would get to do there at Asessippi, we'd gather at the shop at the top of the hill. So I would encourage all of the members over there to take the time to visit the park, not just the ski hill, and see what they have going on there. I think there's some really cool things.

And we'd get together and get our orders for the day. And one of the—well, we can go through some of

the things we used to do is if you ever hear those—see those stumps along the road, that was the worst job ever, was to try to paint those. But paint 1,500 little stumps alongside the road, I didn't have a lot of fun doing that, but, I mean, it was great to be out in the sunshine and enjoying nature. And then have to go there, whipper snip and then have those rocks fly, hit you in the face, wasn't a lot of fun either.

So that was one of my memories of Asessippi, but one of my best memories of Asessippi is working with an old guy named Jim. Jim spent a career working in parks. He was from Inglis. And so he would work there year-round, and he would always tell stories about what it was like to see the park and he was really, without a licence plate, being able to invest in our parks and make them a place worth visiting.

And I would get in the garbage truck with Jim, and being a young guy, he'd always send me to pick up the dirty carp remains at the fish cleaning stations. And so one of my favourite memories of my life is riding that garbage truck with Jim and him giving me life advice and talking about what it meant to work there. And what it was, what it used to be, what it could be, he always had those kinds of stories for us. So that was really great experience.

And it really pains me to hear that I hate—that we hate parks. I mean, that's just not right. And when I got to have children of my own and was able to save up a few dollars to buy a camper, it was important to me to visit all the different parks in our province—provincial parks, you know, reservation systems. And this is under both governments.

And pre-licence plate. So one of the—I remember that clearly, we went, picked up my camper. I had no idea what I was doing, but sat with my dad and we agreed we'd go to Adam Lake and get side-by-side camping spots and the boys were, I may guess, 11 months and two years old. And just to bring them out there and to run around, rip around safely and to see some of those paths and walk over to the campsite next door where my parents were. Adam Lake was a really good spot to visit the park.

So I'm just wondering, my question is why is it necessary to have a license plate to be able to do these things? And at the same time, just really appreciative of all the work that the people in the Parks Manitoba—or Manitoba Parks system do to make sure that these experiences are there for everyone in the next generation.

And after spending some time at Adam Lake, you know, we would go to Spruce Woods. Spruce Woods was a nice little spot with the sand, the nice beach, there, and good family loops where people can park the campers in a U and just have stuff out and enjoy parks.

And one of the nice things about Spruce Woods at that time is that Glenboro's emergency room was open. And it's always a nice thing for provincial parks to be close to small communities, but also communities that have hospitals, and I think that's what our government is about, is making sure that communities have the ability to care for the people that not only live in those communities, but visit their surroundings.

So Spruce Woods is another great gem of western Manitoba, so yes, Spruce Wood Provincial Park's a beauty. So I have no problem saying that. I would hope the MLAs across the way agree with that.

And at the other end of the spectrum, to hear that I hate parks is just ridiculous. I spent seven summers, seven years working in Riding Mountain National Park as a park interpreter. So if everyone—anyone wants to know what kind of wildflowers are—exist in Riding Mountain National Park, I can tell you.

I can tell you where some of the bear dens are, that would take people walking through the park to let them know. I'd love to share the idea that at one—Manitoba has one of the densest black bear populations in the world. And that Riding Mountain is a UNESCO heritage site because of its different prairie fescue and just home of—to some diverse ecological community. And that's why it's so important to preserve.

But that's a federal park, but I know that they work very closely with the communities north of the park in the MLA of Swan River's constituency.

And wouldn't it be great to make sure that those producers who live north of the park continue to work with the MHHC to preserve wildlife, to preserve wetlands. *[interjection]* Well, I said wouldn't it be nice, right? And then, at the same time, do we really—does a licence plate accomplish this? That's a question that we're going to be deliberating in this House for the next little bit.

But again, very happy to stand in the Chamber, here, and just talk about my own personal experience with parks. I think it's great that—share with the members opposite and the members in government here about what type of jewels we have in western

Manitoba and in the parkland. And the importance of keep these organizations or these parks strong.

* (11:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have three minutes remaining.

The hour being 11 a.m., the time for private members' resolutions.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 7—Calling on the Provincial Government to Prioritize and Protect Children in Care and Commit to a Public Inquiry

The Speaker: The resolution before us this morning is the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Midland, titled Calling on the Provincial Government to Prioritize and Protect Children in Care and Commit to a Public Inquiry.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I move, seconded by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mrs. Hiebert),

WHEREAS on Sunday, February 11, 2024, Manitobans witnessed an unimaginable tragedy when five individuals were murdered; and

WHEREAS the victims ranged in ages from two-months to 30 years; and

WHEREAS Manitoba has the second highest rate of intimate partner violence among Canadian provinces at a rate of 633 per 100,000 people, according to police-reported data from Statistics Canada; and

WHEREAS reports indicate that on December 9, 2023, Myah-Lee left a voicemail for her Child and Family Services worker in which he pleaded "to be moved out of" her home in Carman; and

WHEREAS Myah-Lee detailed numerous incidents of home-based violence that she was subjected to resulting in her sharing with a family member that "I feel like I'm trapped in hell"; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's Advocate for Children and Youth noted, "this case highlights the failures of the government to respond to our recommendations"; and

WHEREAS the mother of 17-year old victim Myah-Lee Gratton advised the media that she had warned CFS against her daughter's placement in the home due to safety concerns; and

WHEREAS on March 6, 2024, the Minister of Families, the MLA for St Johns, indicated on the public record that she was too busy to discuss issues surrounding children in care, including safety issues; and

WHEREAS the last inquiry held in Manitoba was for the death of five-year old Phoenix Sinclair who was murdered in 2008; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has the legislative ability to develop better policies to protect youth in care.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to commit to a public inquiry without delay in order to develop better policies to protect youth in care from potential abuse and provide the necessary resources to the Minister of Families so that no other cry for help goes unanswered or ignored.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stone: I am saddened to put this resolution forward, asking the government to do the right thing and call a public inquiry into the terrible tragedy that happened to one of my constituents on February 11. I believe this resolution speaks for itself, but I do want to briefly talk about the reasons why I have brought this resolution forward.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) and the NDP government have had sufficient opportunity to prioritize children in care and deal with the crisis within CFS. Unfortunately, vulnerable children and youth simply have not been a priority for this government. In fact, not making the time for this critical situation of children in care appears to be the pattern of this government and this Minister of Families.

Beginning with the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth act review, the minister has opted to rush this important legislative review. I presented an option to have this critical and important review conducted by an independent panel of experts. This would have been a non-partisan panel, giving experts a real voice around the table to review legislation and present recommendations to the committee regarding children and youth in care.

Not a moment of consideration was given for this proposal by the minister during committee. When I asked if timing was an issue, the minister responded maybe. So I presented another option to solve that timing issue, and that was to collaborate on time with

agreement and consensus from members of the House of the Assembly. This was certainly supported by members on this side of the House to ensure the review would be done comprehensively.

Yet this minister was too busy to conduct a comprehensive review of this important legislation dealing with children and youth in care, and is instead rushing the consultation process, with only one day dedicated for public presentations.

A few weeks later, my colleague, the MLA for Tyndall Park, brought forward a really important matter of urgent public importance regarding children in care. We on this side of the House know that this is a non-partisan, non-political issue, and so I seconded this motion.

Discussing the crisis of children in care in these Chambers is something that the minister should have taken seriously. This is her job. Far too often we are hearing the challenges vulnerable youth and children are facing.

Lack of resources are amplifying these challenges. It was disappointing to see the departments of Winnipeg CFS and rural and northern CFS be cut in this year's budget while we are still years away from the complete transfer to Indigenous agencies under bill C-62.

Children and youth need our support now. Yet, when this matter was brought forward, the minister shamelessly said that she was too busy. This was an insult to all the foster parents that attended in the gallery that day, to hear from this minister that she would be taking this issue seriously. And instead, she disrespected them by saying that she did not have the time and had better things to do.

Vulnerable children and youth are being ignored under this NDP minister. They are not getting the support or the resources that they so desperately need. The call for additional resources has been made by the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth. During the MACY committee, the Advocate acknowledged that this is a matter of urgent public importance.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs have also called for additional resources, and I quote: the limited allocation to support the well-being of children and families within the child-welfare system is concerning. The lack of clarity for funding, for protection, prevention and reunification further perpetuates the status quo.

And then the chief of the Winnipeg Police also made a call regarding the resource challenges of children and youth in care. He said, we often see with children involved in the child-welfare system are the impacts of unstable upbringings, untreated trauma, frequent placement changes and a general lack of adequate supports.

Lack of supports and lack of resources have been a common theme with this NDP government the past few months. This is why it is very concerning that this minister is not only too busy to deal with children and youth in care, but is cutting the necessary funding and resources from the CFS agencies that children and youth in care are currently relying on.

This leads me to the context of this resolution. A terrible, tragic situation occurred on February 11 in my constituency. The calls Myah-Lee Gratton made to her CFS worker went unanswered. She said she felt unsafe in the home and she said she was in danger. Her calls went unanswered. Then two months later, after she had left those voicemails, she tragically and senselessly died.

Why did no one answer the phone? Why were her calls ignored? Why did the minister fail her, when she needed her the most?

I have asked in this House many times for the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the minister to commit to calling a public enquiry into the tragic situation that occurred in my constituency, in Carman, in February. There are still many, many questions and many, many unanswered questions. Myah-Lee Gratton's calls did go unanswered, but let's not leave the questions of those who are still grieving go unanswered.

This call for an inquiry is not only to get those answers, but to be able to ensure that this never happens again in our province.

I would expect that all members from all sides of the House would have agreed to this path forward. However, instead, this call for transparency has been met with hostility and antagonism by this Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine).

We should all want these answers. Manitobans deserve to have these answers. My constituents deserve to have these answers and the family deserves to have these answers. And it's time for the minister to get on board.

Members of this House, I urge you to support this resolution, to be transparent with what happened to

Myah-Lee Gratton. Let us learn from our past mistakes, so we can make the changes that we need, for now and into the future for all children and youth currently in care and for all children and youth in care in the future.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Questions

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

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): This resolution speaks to a tragedy that impacts many Manitobans, but Indigenous families most especially. During these difficult times, our government is working with Manitobans from all backgrounds to decolonize the CFS system and ensure that the safety of children in care is first and foremost.

* (11:10)

Can the member opposite tell us how many chiefs and First Nations advocates she met with when she drafted this resolution, and which chiefs and First Nations advocates did she meet with?

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I thank the member opposite for their question.

The family of Myah-Lee Gratton said that they were encouraged that the Premier was open to a public inquiry, and I am sure that they are very discouraged right now that a public inquiry hasn't happened.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Why do you think it is—this inquiry is important?

Mrs. Stone: I thank my colleague for that question.

You know, as I made my—in my opening remarks, there are many unanswered questions and questions that Manitobans still have with what happened in the lead-up to Myah-Lee's death. We need to fully understand what happened in the system where the breakdown of communication occurred so that it doesn't happen again, and a public inquiry is the most transparent and accountable way to find out those answers so that we can see what recommendations come forward so we can protect future children and youth in care.

MLA Cross: The member opposite didn't answer my first question, so I'm going to pose that question again, and if no answer comes, then I will assume her answer is you did not consult with anyone.

Which First Nations chiefs or advocates did you meet with before drafting this resolution, and who were they?

Mrs. Stone: I have consulted with Manitobans, and there has not been a single Manitoban that has said they do not want a public inquiry when—as to what happened.

I will remind the members opposite that this tragic situation occurred in my constituency. I have spoken to my constituents in Carman and the first thing they ask is, what is going on with this internal investigation? Why—haven't received the answers that we need?

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): As a member of this Legislature that has young children myself—a six-year-old and a three-year-old—the tragedy that we saw in the community of Carman is something that hits close to home. Along with that, the community of Carman is close to me. I do a great deal of business in that community and have close friends in the community.

So speaking to them, I see the effects that this has had throughout that community. So I'm glad that the member from—for Midland is passionate about the government doing more for this situation that we are faced.

So my question for the member is, what are the limitations—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: By conducting an internal review, the process does lack external and arm's-length oversight that would ensure objectivity with the findings. Public inquiry is, as I've mentioned, the most transparent and accountable way to get some of the answers that people in—Manitobans are still looking for.

A public inquiry will provide recommendations that government can then follow, and it will be able to be transparent and ensure that children who are currently in care and children and youth who are future in care can feel protected by the system that they are in.

Thank you.

MLA Cross: Well, the member opposite didn't answer my question, which means she did not bother to consult with any chiefs or First Nations advocates before drafting this resolution, which leads me to believe further questions I have will also go unanswered.

Making life better for all Manitobans requires that we listen to those most vulnerable. We've heard from Indigenous leaders and law enforcement community alike that they endorse our plans to make this province safer for our youth.

Can the member opposite please share with us the relationship she has with the First Nations families and community leaders specifically in a way that pertains to the matter of her resolution?

Mrs. Stone: Similar to my colleague from La Vérendrye, I have many—my constituents are in Carman. I have many friends, neighbours and even family in Carman.

When the tragedy first happened, I immediately reached out to community leaders. I'm in conversation with them regularly. My constituency office is in Carman. I'm there on a weekly basis.

So, you know, I am in constant communication and contact, and as I've mentioned, they are asking. They are asking for answers with what happened in their community.

They are asking for answers with what happened with this tragedy. They have children, they have family members that attended school with Myah-Lee and they want to ensure that what happened to her and what happened to the family—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Hiebert: I'd like to ask the member: Why is it important for us to have a new policy for 17-year-old Myah and for other children in care?

Mrs. Stone: I thank my colleague for that good question. You know, this was a terrible and senseless tragedy that happened. And as we've seen, you know, throughout the media, through conversations, Myah-Lee's texts—voicemails, sorry, with her CFS worker went unanswered. Two months later, she did tragically die.

We need to understand fully what happened. Why did her calls go unanswered? Why did she tragically and senselessly die within, kind of, that two-month period from when she left a voicemail and that call for help went unanswered?

These are the types of things that we need to know; the failings of what happened within the CFS

system, so that we can make the changes that we so desperately need for children and youth in care now and for children and youth in the future.

Thank you.

MLA Cross: This is going to be a tough question because I know members opposite don't know what they don't know. It is integral to understand that when we have these discussions about CFS, child safety and Indigenous communities, that we approach it from a decolonizing perspective. Members opposite have demonstrated they don't understand reconciliation or what it means to decolonize the system.

The history of Canada includes the genocide of Indigenous peoples and one of the methods of doing this was taking children from their parents and away from their culture. This has left us with pressing questions about how to right these wrongs and manage a system that has caused harm.

Our government is committed to this work. What is the—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: You know, this resolution is a call for help for Manitobans. It's a call to ask for additional resources so the Minister of Families can do her job in trying to decolonize the current system.

And, you know, this is a path that we all want. We want to ensure the transfer to Indigenous agencies. This is something that the PC government initially started and it's going to take time; it will. It's not happening overnight.

You know, as we've seen, certain agencies, they're spending years trying to make this happen, but what we're seeing right now is children and youth do need help. They need help now and they're not getting the resources or the support that they need—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Hiebert: I was able to meet with the family of Myah in Carman. My question would be about them, to focus on them, because they're the ones who have lost somebody, or they've lost many that have—they have loved.

What does the family want in regards to an inquiry?

Mrs. Stone: The media—sorry, the family has said in the media that they are encouraged that the Premier

(Mr. Kinew) was open to a public inquiry, however, we have not seen, over the past couple of months, any sort of answers or any sort of commitment to this inquiry.

So the family has certainly said that they're encouraged by this but they need to know that this is going to happen. AMC has also asked for a probe and Manitobans are asking for answers to these very, very serious questions.

* (11:20)

We need to ensure that this does not happen ever again to any child or youth who is currently in care or any child or youth who is in future care within this province.

Our side of the House wants to ensure that we get these answers and that—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member's time has expired.

The question period complete.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I'm pleased to put a couple of words—factual words—on the record here this morning. First, let me just be explicitly clear with folks watching and for members opposite who have put so many erroneous statements on the record today.

It should be explicitly clear—and I have made note of this previously both in the House and in the media—that I immediately called for a departmental review of the tragedy that occurred in Carman, and I think that it's important to understand that the department has its process to do, to ensure that we are executing a comprehensive, robust departmental review, so that is taking place as we speak and has been taking place for a while since that tragedy. So, No. 1.

Number 2, I want to point out to the member opposite in respect of public inquiries. Canada actually has some of the most public inquiries on record in respect of Indigenous peoples and the particular colonial context here across our territories. We have the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples that also looked at child welfare. We have the national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited that also looked at the role that child welfare has played in respect of the epidemic of violence against Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited.

Here in Manitoba we had the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Implementation Committee, both of which looked at child welfare and delved deep into what we need to do in respect of decolonizing child welfare.

The issue has been that there has not been the political will or courage to be able to do the work of decolonizing child welfare, and we didn't have the legislative framework only until a couple of years ago with the advent of bill C-92. Now we have the federal legislative framework in which to pursue jurisdiction, in which to pursue the transfer of child welfare to First Nation rights holders where it rightly belongs, where it has always belonged, but Indigenous children have been used for well over 150 years as political, colonial pawns in executing colonization, starting with the advent of residential schools in which many of our members on this side of the House, our grandparents, our parents, our great-grandparents, our aunts and uncles went to residential schools, continuing on with the '60s scoop and continuing on into child welfare into what we know now as child welfare.

We have the information and the inquiries to support that work. We have that. That's what we're doing. As I've stated in this House several times now, I hadn't even been a minister for less than 48 hours when I gave the directive to my department, with the support of the Premier (Mr. Kinew), that our priority is jurisdiction. Our priority is decolonizing the system, and so that has been the work that I've been doing since I've been appointed, alongside our very capable and dedicated team that I work with, day in and day out.

I've actually brought on as advisers Indigenous women—two Indigenous women who have been working in child welfare for many, many years, one of whom is actually doing her master's research right now in jurisdiction and Indigenous law. So much so that the staff that I have surrounding me that we work together are experts in the area of child welfare and are also experts in the area of decolonizing child welfare and also experts in bringing our children home, where they rightfully belong.

Part of that pursuit of jurisdiction is also holding up and leaning into customary and kinship care. I know that the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) a little while ago got upset or was offended when I said in the media that there children that are in care but are also thriving.

And I didn't have an opportunity to explain that, but let me explain this: We have children that are with

their grandmothers. We have children that are with their aunts and their uncles and their cousins or their sisters and their brothers. We have children that are in care that are in their communities. And yes, we have children that, in those circumstances, are thriving because they're with their families and in their community, speaking their language, playing on their land and going to school among their peers. And so of course there are children within the system that are thriving.

We have children in the system that are thriving in really phenomenal foster-care homes. I have a constituent, her name is Andie [*phonetic*]-Angie Houston. She has been a foster-care mom for 20-plus years. She is a phenomenal foster-care mum. And she loves the children that she has in her house, but she also supports and understands the need for children to be with their families and in their communities.

I want to just say this final couple of words, that the members opposite have not a leg to stand on when it comes to all of a sudden becoming the saviour of Indigenous children in care. They—we don't know who they are. All of a sudden, they want to get up in the House and they want to put words on the record that make themselves maybe look like they're doing some work. But that's not the case.

In fact, members opposite are the same ones who, in 2020, supported Brian Pallister when he embedded in BITSA taking away the constitutional and the Charter rights of children in care to come back and sue the government for dollars that were rightfully owed for them.

But you know who just settled in a good way? Our government. Our government is making things right and settling—and making Indigenous children whole again. Our government's doing that. We're doing that in my department, not any single one of those members opposite,

In fact, they all celebrated when Brian Pallister took the constitutional rights away from Indigenous children. And luckily, the courts told them that they were wrong. So they have not a leg to stand on when it comes to—about children in care.

Finally, let me just say this: I want to acknowledge all of the Indigenous women who, for the last 30 and 40 years, have been the ones that are on the front lines of fighting to bring our children home. It has always been Indigenous women that fought for their children, that fought for their families, to say, enough of this colonial system, our children deserve

to be home, we deserve to raise our children in our communities and with our families.

It's always been Indigenous women that have done that work. No one else—have I ever seen anyone from that opposite side—I've never seen them at MMIWG2S rallies. I've never seen them at any of the funerals that I've attended. I've never seen them at any of the vigils that I've attended. I've never seen them at any of the community feasts. We don't know you. Nobody in the community knows who they are in respect of child welfare, MMIWG2S.

What we do know about their record on MMIWG2S is using a political campaign on the murders and the deaths of three Indigenous women. That's what you all ran on: the deaths of Indigenous women and off the backs of trans kids. That's who you guys are.

And so you're going to stand up in the House and act like all of a sudden you care about child welfare. You know nothing about child welfare. You know nothing about our people. Look around the room and see what representation you have: none, in respect of Indigenous peoples.

* (11:30)

So our government has the commitment, the courage, the dedication, the expertise, the capacity to decolonize child welfare once and for all so that we're not here in 20 years again apologizing to children in care.

We're going to take care of children. We're going to make them whole, and we're going to pursue jurisdiction and uphold the right of First Nation peoples in Manitoba to take care and have control of the care of their children.

Miigwech.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I want to thank the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) for bringing this forward. She obviously cares about her community and those in her community that are hurting and have been attacked and broken, so thank you for doing that.

I'm going to go off script for a minute because I've heard a lot of things from across the aisle, and I am offended deeply when I get told that I don't know foster parents or foster care, I don't know Indigenous children, I have never grown up with any of these things, I've not attended vigils. It's heartbreaking for that to happen across the aisle when they don't know

me. That's right; they don't know me. Have they taken time to get to know me as a member?

I am speaking as a mother from a broken child who came to my home as a foster child. I went through the foster care training system. I went and I did training on how to respect—to teach and be part of his spiritual journey as an Indigenous child. I spent days in Winnipeg learning so I could do the best I could for this child. He requested to come to my community of Winkler. He requested to come there because he wanted to come there.

I'm talking to you from a woman who has been used—who has used a shelter. I am talking to you from—as a woman who has been at vigils and has met with families and been heartbroken because that's how much I care about people in my community.

So I just needed to put that out there because I think it's disrespectful for people to say things to us that—if they don't know us. And I am open any time to meet to get to know me because I would love to share my story with you because I think it's valuable. Just like everybody else in this province has a valuable story to tell.

It's an—we are here to talk this morning to bring attention to a very important topic. It's an issue that needs to be addressed in an urgent manner. We are calling the—on the province of government to prioritize and protect children in care and commit to a public inquiry into the deaths of a mother and her three children and her 17-year-old niece.

Her niece that was living with her and her family was under the care of Child and Family Services. We are here today to discuss what happened in February. In February, police discovered the bodies of five multiple people, crimes around Carman area. Five members, including her four children, were slain tragically. Five victims, including 17-year-old Myah Gratton. Charges have been laid against Amanda Clearwater and her family's then-partner—common-law partner. Sorry, I'm just a little riled up.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) has said he is open to a political inquiry. He has said internal work about asking questions and pursuing accountability is already under way. This is one of the worst tragedies Manitoba has ever seen, involving four children. One of those children was 17 years old and in the family services system.

Something failed in our system. Something happened, and 17-year-old Myah's life and future are gone. Her hopes and dreams taken away.

The breakdown of the system has catastrophic consequences, especially when dealing with children in care. Let's find out what happened and what the breakdown in the system was. It's a simple question: Why are we not trying to find out what happened?

This tragedy highlights the obvious breakdown of these systems. Why are we not doing everything we can to find out what happened and correct it for the next 17-year-old that needs help, for the next 10-year-old who doesn't have a safe—isn't safe, and for all children who are in a situation that are dangerous and need help?

This tragedy is a direct result of the breakdown in the system right here in Manitoba. We need a public inquiry. We need to find out what caused the breakdown. Are the staff overworked? Is there a gap between communication with children in care and their workers? Is there a lack of follow-up or checking in on children in care? Is there a lack of funds to hire enough workers? These are all questions I believe that a public inquiry would—could answer.

I believe doing an inquiry, we can find out what happened and how the system failed. We can find out better ways. We must always continue to move forward, improving and giving kids the best possible future, and that includes doing some things that protect children.

We need to learn from the situation like this tragedy. We need to do justice for the mother and the children and those who are still in care.

We want to know what is being done and make sure it doesn't—it happens immediately. One life lost is one too many. This can never happen again. We must do everything possible to protect the vulnerable children.

The minister has failed to address immediate and near terms and risks within the existing system. There are kids in care right now that are in situations that are not safe. How has this changed in the last six weeks to ensure that if a child calls in, and they are heard, and they are removed from the dangerous situation as fast as possible?

We are asking for a public inquiry to be done. We do not want an internal review. Internal reviews fail to produce objective, productive conclusions. We need to ensure that a public inquiry is being done. The public is rightfully concerned. We, here at the Legislature, are rightfully concerned.

The impact of tragedies is devastating and causes a ripple effect across families, communities and our province. We need to take this as an urgent cry for help from a teenager who was not heard. A public inquiry must be done. We need to do this on behalf of all the teenagers and children in care right now. The government and leaders—we need to do what we can. We must do something so that this never happens again.

Manitoba has the second highest rate of intimate partner violence. This should always be a red flag when children are placed in homes. Manitobans are deeply troubled to know that one of the victims had reached out for help. Seventeen-year-old Myah called and reached out for help. Manitobans want to know why that call went unanswered and did not result in her safety. I ask again: Can we do a public inquiry?

We must exhaust every option to prevent tragedies like this from happening again. Exhaust every option.

Indigenous governing bodies assume—assuming agencies over their own communities' child welfare would benefit from a robust public inquiry, the findings of which would be universal across Manitoba.

We need accountability. We need to find out what happened and how the system failed. Why did her calls not resound an urgent situation?

Again, there is a shortage of staffing. Is there a process that's not being followed through with? We need to find out what happened for the future children and families. We need to make the changes. We need accountability and we need transparency.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) has gone on record saying they are conducting internal review, believe work of inquest is up for—to Chief Medical Examiner. An investigation would be up to advocate and criminal proceedings.

We would encourage the Premier and minister to do a public inquiry.

In the news, it has been reported that the family were encouraged to hear that the Premier was willing to open the door to an inquiry. I'm sure it has been discouraged that there—I'm sure it has been discouraging that there's been no further update.

We want an inquiry because it is—an inquest—sorry, inquest, because in inquest a judge is asked—sorry, tasked with making recommendations, but a judge cannot find fault. In an inquiry, it would be a

fulsome, objective investigation with recommendations and public accountability and transparency.

* (11:40)

We need to find—provide safe spaces for women and children. For example, the tragedy in Carman that took the life of 17-year-old Myah; I attended the 'vilig' in—or the vigil in Carman, at the site of the family home, and it broke my heart.

We don't know how the tragic events unfolded but as I stood there, I thought if only we could have gotten her out; if only Myah had gotten out and gotten to a safe space.

Thank you.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): I rise today, you know, wanting to acknowledge how heavy the subject is for many of us here in this Chamber and, as such, I hope that we can keep the temperature down.

I don't think that there's any discounting how heavy and how difficult the tragedy in Carman was across communities, and especially the local community. I don't think that there's any discounting the personal experience that is within this Chamber, when it comes to, you know, the member from Morden-Winkler and her contributions to caring for kids in need. And I don't think that there's any discounting when it comes to our Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) and her lived experience as a child in care.

Meanwhile, why I ask that we bring the temperature down on this subject is because this lived experience is something that can be so easily forgotten and insensitively pushed aside when it comes to this Chamber, especially when we hear heckling from the other side, hearing quote, unquote: do your homework, being yelled at a child—a former child in care, who now has come across all kinds of challenges in order to make it here in government, to do the decolonizing work that is necessary, in order to ensure jurisdiction.

I would ask all members of this House to truly and sincerely consider what their words mean.

I also want to put some words on the record when it comes to just the value of foster parents. And personally, in my culture, you know, there's no question about whether or not Filipinos are welcoming and whether or not Filipinos are nurturing. I myself have, you know, several loved ones, several family friends who actually—well, unfortunately and bittersweetly

left the public-health system in order to become medical foster parents.

They, you know, underwent the entire shebang of planning a home around what this opportunity would present for them and many children who are looking for a home. And, you know, I hear stories from folks who, across the previous campaign, have heard many valuable stories about foster kids who have been stripped of their identity.

And so two things can exist at the same time: one being a community like our Filipino community being nurturing and welcoming and ready to step up to the plate when it comes to taking care of kids; but also the need for those kids in care who are being cared for by their caregivers to have their identities fully honoured and realized.

And that's why I think that it is so important that we, you know, recognize and do justice by the work that our Minister of Families is doing for the system. You know, she said it herself that in the next four years, child welfare here in Manitoba is going to look drastically different in the best of ways. Jurisdiction is going to be returned to First Nations authorities and governance, and the communities of which these children truly and over generations, heartfully belong to.

And I think, you know, jurisdiction belongs with families, it belongs with these nations and it belongs in community. And I find it heartbreaking when there are—when I hear of Indigenous children who hear—or to—who believe to their core that they aren't Indigenous. They believe they're Filipino, in fact. And while we continue to be welcoming, again, we need to honour the true identity of the kids in care.

Now, the resolution that's in front of us, I—upon reading it, you know, the purpose of this resolution really calls for our Families Minister to do work that she's already doing, work that she's been doing since she was appointed. And again, I just want to honour her, thank her for her work, but also, you know, acknowledge how brutal this Chamber is on Indigenous women and continues to be on Indigenous women.

For generations, attempts have been made to silence Indigenous voices, to silence Indigenous women, and I am honoured to be part of a government alongside Indigenous women who refuse to be silenced. And as such, we've got to honour the work that is being done and the labour, the emotional toll

that it takes, and work that is already seeing quite a bit of progress.

Now, over the past election I had the privilege to be door knocking in the Manitoba Housing complex as well as the centre-service by the Plessis family resource along Plessis. And I met many children outside of their units, outside of school; of course, it was summer, it was blazing hot outside and so there were many kiddie pools where kids were splashing around.

And there was one kid that ran up to me and, you know, asked if I was from the government. And I said, no, but I'm running to be. And they said, well, can you do something about my front door? I don't have a door knob. And, in fact, he took me to his front door, did not have a door knob. This gaping hole where the door knob should have been, and that alone can be so demoralizing for a child to see. And that, in your own home, you don't have a method to keep anything out or even to keep yourself in.

And so just recently, I was invited to go back to the Plessis Family Resource Centre, and I was truly honoured to deliver a few remarks about the importance of youth being involved in politics. And I'd argue that, you know, this doorbell-door knob situation is certainly something that can be used as an example as to why children so need to be involved because they are, you know, the recipient unfortunately of a lot of harmful policy choices.

But the same kid that I met door knocking that summer or this past summer, came up to me and said, I'm so glad you made it; I finally have a door knob. And I don't know what had to happen along the way to get that door knob for that kid, but I am so grateful that kids these days are seeing the impact, kids who rely on social welfare in our province are seeing the impact, the good impact that our government is putting forward in such a good way.

And so I also want to raise attention of the members opposite to something that they might not actually know about. So when I was doing my research on home care recently, of course there's a lot of overlap when it comes to caregivers in the seniors realm, but also when it comes to kids and folks living with intellectual disabilities. And in 2011, actually, the NDP government brought forward The Caregiver Recognition Act.

And so they brought forward this act in order to lend a voice, in order to amplify the voices of caregivers in our province. And as such, they formed

this thing called the caregiver advisory committee. So while bolstering supports for caregivers and giving them that standing voice at the decision-making table, they also advise government on, you know, on resources that they so desperately needed in order to do their job justice.

And so, while I imagine members of the opposition and maybe even someone on our side of the Chamber are googling, you know, what The Caregiver Recognition Act is, what they'll find is that there hasn't been a report since the last NDP government prior to us. What they'll find is that there was a report due in 2017 that, actually, the PC government didn't put forward. If anything, if there was work being done on that, they didn't make it publicly known.

* (11:50)

Further, that report would have called the caregiver advisory committee to continue meeting. And there are no public records of the caregiver advisory committee having met since the last NDP government. And so I would, you know—I am in no position to give members opposite political advice. Frankly, I don't think that they should be giving us political advice, but I would advise them, if anything, to look into that act and to look into the advisory committee that they, you know, have left without the infrastructure.

I would also advise, you know, giving new members on that side of the House the benefit of the doubt, you know, that they look to what was done in the past when it comes to legislating away the rights of children in care. It's heartbreaking, truly, that after having so much stripped away from children in need of care that a provincial government under the PCs would try and slip this under the rug.

And, you know, I want to really honour the fact that—

The Deputy Speaker: And the member's time has expired.

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I know there's not a person in this House that doesn't care about kids and you know this issue, you know, doesn't, you know, discriminate. We all are in this position because we care about Manitobans.

And I think, you know, as leaders, as politicians, as people who are sent to this House to lead and to really, you know, bring forth policy and bring forth voice and really are supposed to come collectively together to really bring impact and, you know, really

support families. And I think, you know, what our minister is doing in terms of decolonizing the system, supporting families in terms of bringing kids back to their families and into their communities.

And I know the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) since day one has been doing that work, has been listening to families, has been working with families, has been working with communities. And I know members opposite, you know, they want to do the right thing as well. And I know the critic, you know, wants to do the right thing as well. They want to, you know, help families. They want to make sure that things like this doesn't—don't happen again.

And the right thing is—to do is to work collaboratively together. Like we shouldn't be, you know, on opposite sides on something like this. We should be sitting down, figuring out how do we ensure that something like this doesn't happen.

When this happened, you know, the minister immediately actioned her department to have a comprehensive review done. This is an active criminal investigation. There will be a MACY review done, and we are, you know, making sure that kids are returned to their homes so that we don't have an 80 per cent over-representation in every single system across our province.

I was just in Brandon meeting with the Brandon community renewal corp. and they're doing a comprehensive review on homelessness right now. And over 80 per cent of the people that they met with for this study that they're doing are kids that have been in care, that are homeless, that have been incarcerated, that don't access the medical system because they don't have good relations because of being in care. Like, there are so many ramifications for families, for children, because of going through the system.

And we need to work together to figure out how do we keep families whole and keep families together?

When I was in opposition and I was first elected, one of the bills I brought forward—and I was so thankful that we had unanimous support in this House—and that's what we need, is unanimous support and coming together and collectively working together to solve. How do we make sure that things like this never ever happen and take place in our province again?

It's making sure that kids aren't apprehended due to poverty, because kids should not be apprehended because a mom doesn't have food or a single dad

doesn't have food or a parent or a caregiver doesn't have food in their house or they don't have, you know, two beds for kids to sleep in.

Growing up, I often, you know, was at my grandmother's house, and five of us slept on one bed. You know, we all slept sideways. We shared a bedroom growing up—three of us. You know, a CFS worker could have walked into our house and said, you know, they all need a bedroom; we're taking your kids away.

But, we can't be doing that these days. Like, we need to support families and meet them where they're at and ensure that kids are staying in their homes, because we know that it does more damage to take kids away than it does good. So how do we do that? We do that by this customary care and supporting kids and keeping them together.

We've seen what, you know, residential school has done. We've seen what '60s scoop has done. And we see now, you know, what the new residential school and '60s scoop is. It's the child-welfare system. And I think we can all agree that this isn't the way that we want our kids raised. And sure, there are times where kids do have to be apprehended and taken into care, but at the same time, we have to figure out how do we keep our kids safe when they are in care.

And as a teacher, you know, I also worked in the child-welfare system for 12 years when I worked in Marymount. And there's—there are some amazing people that provide care to our kids, and there's—there are some amazing foster parents as well. And, you know, I just want to uplift and honour all of the work that's being done out there because there are some amazing people that are doing some incredible, incredible work.

But, again, we all need to come together and figure out solutions together and we shouldn't be on opposite sides on this. We should be coming together and figuring out solutions because we—like, this is a such a sensitive issue. Like, kids are sacred.

And, you know, I'm a mother, a grandmother. My daughter just had a son—seven months old—and I just look at this little guy and I think, like, I couldn't imagine not being able to, you know, hold and kiss and, you know—I FaceTime him every day. I can't see him every day, but I just think about, you know, not being able to—as a parent, not being able to see that little guy every day, but that for some people is a reality, right, for some parents.

And when I was in opposition, I remember some parents—and this was one of the reasons why this bill came forth, was parents would often contact our office and say that, you know, we're struggling with, you know, keeping our lights on, and we're afraid to ask for help because someone's going to come into our house and judge us and take our kids away.

And that's still happening, and we're trying to figure that out. We're trying to as a government make sure that that is not happening because we want to ensure that kids are staying together and that they're supported by their parents or their caregivers in a safe manner, and we can do that as governments. We have the ability, and people are looking to us as leaders to be able to do that.

As a kid, myself—I have told this story many times in this House—my mom had to put me in care. She made the choice because I was at the time putting myself at risk and there wasn't supports for her.

She couldn't just, you know, call CFS and say, hey, can you send someone to come and help me with my parenting? That just wasn't an option, so I had to go into care.

But we have the opportunity to provide those kinds of supports today to parents so that parents don't have to put their kids in care, that they can actually have someone that can come and provide a parent

support worker to work with the parent and work with the child, and, you know, figure out solutions in the home instead of removing the child if it's not a protection issue.

And there are so many of these instances. When I was in Brandon, like, I was listening to some of the reasons why some kids were apprehended through these stories that were being told to these researchers, and I was just, like, blown away at why some of these kids ended up in care and why they're on the streets now, and some of them were parents themselves, and their kids were apprehended, so it's like this cycle.

And how do we help break this cycle? Well, we have an opportunity here as leaders to be able to break that cycle, and we need to come together and help, you know, support through this bill C-30-C-92. We have a great opportunity to decolonize the system, to help support the work that's being done, and we also have a great opportunity to come together as leaders to make sure that something like this in Manitoba doesn't—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have one minute remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 11, 2024

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