

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 11, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, on House business, pursuant to rule 33(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin). The title of the resolution is Recognizing Indigenous Peoples as Founding Nations of Canada.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for The Pas. The title of the resolution is Recognizing Indigenous Peoples as Founding Nations of Canada.

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Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, on further House business, I would ask for leave to go to directly to Bill 221, and I would like to also canvass the House to put the question and have a recorded vote at five minutes to 11 on this bill.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider second reading of Bill 221 this morning? *[Agreed]*

Is there leave to have a recorded vote at five to 11? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 221—The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day Act

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Miigwech, Madam Speaker. I move, seconded by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that Bill 221, The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day Act; Loi sur la Journée de sensibilisation aux femmes et aux filles autochtones disparues et assassinées, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: So, I'm really pleased to be standing in the House today, bringing forward this private member's bill in respect of Manitoba's missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I just want to put a couple of words on the record in respect to this bill.

So I often always start—when I'm asked to speak on MMIWG in Canada or in Manitoba, I always start from a place of acknowledging the work of families, and so I know that, you know, across Canada, the vast majority of Canadians and here in Manitoba, obviously, have started to kind of really get engaged or understand—or somewhat understand the issue, I would say probably in the last maybe, you know, 10 to five years. But, actually, if you look across Canada, if you do a historical kind of chronological scan across Canada, there are families that have been working on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls—although it wasn't called that—for well over 30, 40 years.

So, in fact, if you look at some of—and again, I think that what needs to be explicitly understood in this House and by all Canadians is that the issue of MMIWG is actually predicated upon a history that we all share, a history in which the language that we used in respect of indigenous women and girls historically has created the conditions in which indigenous women and girls are thought to be less than and that violence is perpetrated on their bodies.

This has been generational, but if you look at some of the early beginnings in respect of raising awareness in respect of violence against indigenous women and girls, in fact, there's many families out in

BC who have been working on this issue, like I said, since the early '60s when some of their daughters started to go missing on the Highway of Tears.

And so, you know, it's taking us many, many, many years to get to where we are right now currently in Canada that no matter where I go in Canada, if I'm in—actually, in fact, outside of Canada as well—when I ask people have you heard about the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, the vast majority of people raise their hand. And so, you know, I attribute that always to the courage and the determination and the resiliency and the love of MMIWG families from across the country that, not only have they raised the awareness in their own community or in their own city or provincially, but across Canada and across the world.

So I want to put on the record that I dedicate this bill to families across the country, and I wouldn't be standing here presenting this bill if it wasn't for their work, and none of us would be speaking on the issue if it wasn't for their work. And just a little testament to that courage is that, you know, you can go coast to coast to coast and you'll hear stories from families that talk about over many, many years, that when they would go to file, you know, a missing person's complaint or if their loved one had been found murdered, oftentimes they felt that there wasn't necessarily an equitable response. And yet, actually, families everywhere across the country, including here in Manitoba, would go, you know, every week or every month or every couple of months to these various policing institutions across the country and would say, what's happening with my daughter's file. Like, have you investigated this, have you spoken to this, have you done this, and I think that that's a real testament to their courage.

I'm sure I don't have to explain to anybody in the House that, you know, in—there is not always the most trusting of relationships in respect of policing and indigenous peoples. It's the nature of our history here in Canada, and so you can imagine that, you know, a mom or a grandmother or a sister who's traumatized, who's literally living in the depths of trauma, trying to kind of navigate through this, but actually has the courage to every week or every month say what are you guys doing.

*(10:10)

And that alone has shifted, across the country, policing policies so that even here in Manitoba, and I can give you a prime example, and the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) will know this very well—is that in

2007, and I've mentioned her many times in the House, the body of Fonassa Bruyere, who is from my home community of Sagkeeng First Nation, was found, like, within the city limits but on the little bit just before you leave the limits. She was 17 years old. Her body was found. She had been missing for about three weeks. That was in August of 2007.

In July of 2009—and actually in August of 2007, actually September, the first week in September, we actually held a press conference. There was a whole bunch of indigenous women's organizations along with Fonassa's family. And, at that time, we were asking the Winnipeg city police and the RCMP to actually work together. We had started asking about the ability to develop a task force, which is what we had seen in BC and Alberta.

So fast-forward to July of 2009 where the body of Cherrisse Houle, also 17—just a small, small, if you knew her, she was just a small, small little girl, also a mother. Her son at the time, I believe, was 19 months old—her body was found. And three weeks after that, the body of Hillary Angel Wilson was found, three weeks of each other, and she was—had just turned 18.

And actually it's in those moments afterwards, in the couple of weeks afterwards that actually was under the leadership of Minister Dave Chomiak, who was the minister of Justice at the time, but with increased pressure from families and communities that the Manitoba integrated task force was developed in September of 2009. And, again, I also attribute that to families because families were demanding that we put the attention that we need to put in solving these cases.

And so, of course, we know that that morphed into Project Devote, and I do have to say, just take a quick moment to say that Project Devote does extraordinary work. Now—and I know that sometimes there's a disconnect in respect of what can be shared with families, and it's the nature of investigations. We understand that, but I have to tell you that I know several of the officers and they're just extraordinary human beings that dedicate so much of their time, energy and spirit into trying to solve these cases for the families.

And, actually, the families have, not everybody, but many of the families have put trust and developed relationships with members of Project Devote in the attempt to bring justice for their loved one. That's extraordinary that if we look at it historically, it's extraordinary that we've moved from a place of absolute distrust at different policing

institutions and what they're doing to now where a vast majority of the families that are a part of Project Devote actually have relationships with the officers and actually the officers have relationships with them.

Every year, we put on a gathering for the last five years. This December it will be six years. We put on a Christmas celebration for families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls to bring everybody together. I can tell you that since I started doing that, Project Devote members and actually other WPS and other RCMP officers from across Manitoba always make financial donations and always give us toy donations. So that's quite extraordinary.

So the bill here is about kind of wrapping all of that together, this history that we have in Manitoba. And I have to say that, like BC, Manitoba has incredibly active family members and active community engaged in this issue. And since 2009, we've been gathering every October 4 like folks all across the country to recognize, to honour and to feast our Manitoba's missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. And so that's why I thought that October 4 was the most perfect day to be able to offer this honouring, this official honouring of our almost 200 missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Manitoba. Again, those numbers aren't down pat because we know we can see, even the last couple of months, those numbers continue to rise.

So, again, I want to dedicate this bill to families and I want to dedicate it to our citizens that we've lost who have been missing or murdered.

Miigwech.

Questions

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

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I'd like to thank the member from St. Johns for bringing forward this bill in regards to murdered and missing indigenous women and girls.

I would like to ask the member from St. Johns if she could state when the Province of Manitoba signed on to the national inquiry.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I thank the member for the question.

In fact, Manitoba officially signed onto the national inquiry even before it was called. We actually hosted the third National Aboriginal Women's Summit here in November of 2012, I believe, and, actually, we hosted all the provinces and territories and NAOs across the country. And it was actually at that meeting that we actually got agreement for the national inquiry, and then a letter went to the Prime Minister at the time urging him to commission a national inquiry.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I, too, want to deeply thank my colleague, the MLA for St. Johns, for bringing this forward. She has fought for this issue with a unique and unstoppable combination of compassion and tenacity.

And I wonder if she might be able to share with the House a little bit of the impacts that this issue has had on the mothers, daughters, sisters, wives and friends and family of all those affected.

Ms. Fontaine: Actually, I appreciate the question.

I think that there's a range of responses from families. I think that some families—and, again, the specific files that—or the specific cases—so I talk about Felicia Solomon Osborne; her mom got an arm and a leg back. That mom, Matilda—it took her 10 years to be able to start engaging in some of the processes.

And then you have other families like the Catcheways that are so active—every spring and every fall are out there searching; at every vigil, every memorial—so the responses are always different from different family members.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): I'm very appreciative and cognizant of the MLA for St. Johns advocacy when it comes to the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

A question for the member: Would this—would the proposed awareness day be a first in Canada?

Ms. Fontaine: I really appreciate that question.

And I believe that it would be the first official legislative day, I believe.

Again, October 4th is celebrated across the country, coast to coast to coast, in an unofficial community-families-based, but to date—I could be wrong—I don't know of any legislature that's actually officially recognized it.

Mr. Altemeyer: The MLA for St. Johns does great credit for all involved by putting the families first in her opening comments and acknowledging the role that they have played. She, herself, has played an incredibly prominent role in raising awareness of this issue.

I'm wondering if she could share with the House a bit of an explanation on how the families and indigenous support organizations have worked together to bring this crucial issue onto the national stage.

Ms. Fontaine: I thank the member for that question.

In fact, there's a variety of activities all across the country, particularly, I would say, in the last 10 years. So, actually from BC, you actually have family members that will—and in Manitoba, you'll have family members that walk to Winnipeg or walk to Vancouver—walk all the way from wherever their home communities are to Ottawa. There's so many different activities that have been done to raise awareness of this issue: vigils, memorials, feasts. Here in Manitoba we actually have four each year to bring attention and to honour families.

*(10:20)

Mr. Martin: I appreciate the member for St. Johns', obviously, goal here in creating a day that will be a first in Canada, if I understood the member's comments correctly.

I'm wondering if the member has been in communication within her counterparts across the country in the hopes that what happens potentially here in Manitoba this morning may create similar days in other jurisdictions and if she's aware of any similar legislation—other jurisdictions to ensure that this becomes not just a Manitoba event but, obviously, a cross-Canada event.

Ms. Fontaine: That's a great question. So I have reached out to some of the folks that I work with, particularly in BC and Alberta. BC and Alberta have been also very active and they're waiting to see that what we do here and, you know, I've posted everything. I've always shared whatever work we do here in Manitoba, and I'm more than willing to work with partners all across the country so that maybe we

can get this all across the country and actually get it recognized as a national official day as well.

Miigwech.

Mr. Altemeyer: That would be a very exciting day indeed, Madam Speaker. I hope we can all agree on that.

The member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) has worked so closely with the families and communities affected by missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Could she share with us a bit of her appreciation of what this type of recognition for this issue will—what will it mean for them? How will this impact them?

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, and miigwech for the question.

Actually, I'm sure everybody remembers back many years ago. I actually don't remember the year, but when we were looking at a new date for February, actually, remember that we were looking for—I think it's called Family Day or I mean Louis Riel Day.

Actually, back then families were starting to ask for that they would have this official day recognized in honour of missing and murdered. So I can tell you that this is something that they've wanted, they've asked for and they've lobbied. I know that it would mean just an enormous amount to them and would make them feel that they're a part of this province and that their loved ones were recognized and still a part of this province.

Miigwech.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): I, too, would like to thank the member from St. Johns for bringing forward this bill.

Thanks to the work and support offered by many indigenous and women's organizations in our province, we know that Manitoban feedback to the inquiry was perhaps the most unique in all of Canada. Manitoba is in a unique position to provide feedback for the federal panel.

Would the member opposite not agree that it would have been important to have a member from Manitoba on this panel?

Ms. Fontaine: And I believe the member is talking about the commissioners, and I would have agreed that, yes, it would've been beautiful to have

somebody in—on the commission in a commissioner capacity from Manitoba. And I'm sure that the member knows that, actually, a lot of families were disappointed that we didn't have a member appointed to the commissioner. So, absolutely, I agree with you. It would've been beautiful to have someone from Manitoba.

Mr. Altemeyer: Racism, of course, lies at the heart of much of the issue around missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. It's not a topic that many Canadians want to look at, but it behooves us to do so.

I'm wondering if the member could explain for the House and help us all further our progress on this front by explaining how her bill will help promote racial equality here in Manitoba and beyond.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, and I say miigwech for that question.

I think that anytime you have an awareness day, it gives—it builds on the work that's already been—we've already been doing, but it gives more of an opportunity for public awareness and those opportunities to go and present at schools or universities or government departments or wherever it is, to actually dissect and unpacked the issue of MMIWG and actually how it is predicated upon racialized spaces of indigenous people, particularly indigenous women. So I think that you can marry those and I think that when people recognize we have an official day, they're more inclined to make special events to be able to do that public awareness.

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the member from St. Johns, again, for some of her answers this morning.

Can the member from St. Johns, in fact, confirm that August 30th, 2016, the Manitoba government actually passed a order-in-council granting access for the information for Manitoba's investigative work on this issue?

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for the question. I actually didn't know what the date was, but I did know that the government has participated in respect of offering that information to the national inquiry, so I can't confirm the date, but I trust what the member was saying. I didn't know the date.

Certainly there's—we still have a lot of work to do in respect to the national inquiry. I'm sure everybody saw the news yesterday and we know that some of the families are a little bit disheartened by that, and I think there's work for all of us to ensure

that families are lifted up through the process, but I say miigwech for the date; I didn't know it.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Chairperson: Debate is open.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, the issue of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls is arguably one of our nation's most complex, systemic and heartbreaking issues that we're facing collectively. We must all do our part to address the violence against women and girls and I do want to thank my colleague from St. Johns for bringing this issue to the floor this morning.

Our Progressive Conservative government was the first western province to affirm participation in the national inquiry in late August of 2016. My colleague, the Minister for Indigenous and Municipal Relations has done tremendous work in getting ready to support the inquiry, including assigning a representative to the inquiry's intergovernmental liaison committee and having fully committed to support the work of the national inquiry.

It has been almost a year since the national inquiry started and yet there have been many delays from the federal Liberal government. Manitoba acknowledges the frustration being felt by many families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, their advocates and members of the public. We can only imagine the sense of loss and devastation the families are feeling and we recognize that action needs to be taken to alleviate the grave danger indigenous women and girls are placed in as a result of the effects of racism and marginalization.

Our government believes that the work of the commission is critically important to our national collective efforts towards reconciliation. We understand that the coalition representing Manitoba family members is anxious for the work for the national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women to progress.

Manitoba's committed to fully support the work of the national inquiry and expects its processes and outcomes to be representative of and meaningful to the survivors of violence against indigenous women and girls, the families of missing and murdered

indigenous women and girls and the larger community.

Manitoba has stated that it is in a unique position to contribute to the inquiry as it has initiated and conducted considerable work related to murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. As part of the preparatory work related to participation in the inquiry, IMR, Justice, and the Status of Women have established a formal Manitoba officials committee that is comprised of three departments plus representatives from Families, fed/prov relations, Health, Education and Training, Parties and Planning Committee of Cabinet, and the City of Winnipeg. Communication officials have also been engaged in preparation for the inquiry.

Given that the commissioners have not yet publically shared specifics in terms of how the inquiry will operate, Manitoba officials have been focusing on work to ensure that Manitoba is well-positioned to act when the time comes. This currently includes the development of joint briefing materials for ministers and deputy ministers, the consolidation of key inquiry-related documents into an interdepartmentally accessible file system, work to inventory and identify past, current and future Manitoba activities and expenditures related to the issue of MMIWG, an inventory of government records that might be relevant to the commission during the inquiry and a review of key recommendations from past inquiries and commissions.

In addition to supporting the work of the national inquiry, Manitoba continues to support initiatives and community programming related to indigenous women and girls. This includes continued support for annual gatherings for families of MMIWG, and funding to send community members to the National Indigenous Women's Summit.

Madam Speaker, we do know that these initiatives are not enough, that these families have suffered gravely and that the work needs to continue until that there are no more women and girls—indigenous women and girls suffering at the hands of violence.

Our government will continue to support the efforts towards eradicating violence towards women—indigenous women and girls, and, in conclusion, I would once again like to thank my colleague for bringing this issue to the floor today, and I'm very happy to speak in support of it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'm pleased to speak on this bill. I thank the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for bringing this bill forward, and I thank the Minister for Status of Women for her comments this morning.

* (10:30)

When the member for St. Johns was first elected, I think we all knew she was going to be a strong voice for murdered, missing indigenous women and girls and their families, and she is. But she's much more than that, and I'm very impressed with her willingness to learn, her willingness to share, her willingness to correct some of us in caucus if we don't address things the right way all the time. And I've said many times this Legislature, Madam Speaker, that I learn something new every day. There's many days it's the member for St. Johns I learn from. I just want to put that on the record.

This bill would designate by every October the 4th is the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day. This will not be the first day that is designated as a day to be recognized by this Legislature, and I'm willing to expect that it won't be the last. It may be one of, if not the most, meaningful for this Legislature, and there's many reasons for that. And I believe the member for St. Johns has spoken beautifully about the importance for families, to lift up those families, as the member for St. Johns might say.

But it's so important, also, of course, to recognize those women who've gone missing or have been murdered, but it's much more than that and it's really for the rest of us in Manitoba who have to deal with this issue. And I think I'm going to have to leave many things out of the way because it is very difficult for all of us to fathom just how terrible an issue this is.

So I will leave aside many of the brilliant things I was going to say because I don't think I can top what the member for St. Johns would say, except to say that I'm pleased to hear that I think we have a tremendous co-operation in this Legislature this morning, and I think we can appreciate that that doesn't happen every minute that we're in this Legislature and that is something I think we can appreciate.

I can say that based on my own experiences as the minister of Justice for five years, we know that co-operation across party lines can actually bring major change, and I speak in particular about the

way that Canada's prostitution laws have been improved in the past. We know that being sexually exploited greatly increases the risk of a woman, girl going missing and being murdered. It's not to say that every woman and girl who disappears or is murdered is sexually exploited, not at all. That is not the case. And I also want to make it very clear that when a woman or girl is being sexually exploited, that is not her choice but it is a true risk factor.

And, in light of the Bedford case that was on its way to the Supreme Court of Canada several years ago, I was very proud that I had the support of caucus and Cabinet and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), the former premier, to go to the federal government—the Conservative government—to call for the Nordic Model, as many people call it, to change the way that we deal with sexual exploitation in Canada.

And I was the only attorney general that was authorized, I suppose, by any government to do that because it was an issue that wasn't especially comfortable to discuss. It was an issue that many attorneys general maybe didn't want to take on, but I told Minister MacKay that I would support him if he would bring this forward. To Minister MacKay's credit, that's exactly what he did and I did publicly support him. And, as many members know, I was proud to work with MP Joy Smith, who was a member of this House, then a Member of Parliament, and we worked deeply across party lines to work on this issue because we know it was important.

But the law is pretty good. Some of the support, not perfect, but we have something that's much better than what was there before. And I know that those changes will save lives and I know that if there are other things that can be done, then we can start to bend the arc and change the way not just the families that are impacted by this can work on, dealing with police, dealing with Crown attorneys, dealing with society, but if everybody in Manitoba has a greater awareness of these tragedies, and a greater understanding of the backgrounds, and a greater understanding of the suffering that these families go through, well, maybe we're going to have the desire and the will to try and change the path and to prevent some of these tragedies or perhaps all of these tragedies from occurring in future.

So I want to thank the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for bringing this forward, and for her passion and for her work. But I do want to say that it

is a pleasure to have members from all parties in this Legislature working for a common goal. I'm not sure there's any goal that could be more important than this one.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Once again, it's a great privilege to have the opportunity to stand in the House today and put a few words on the record. And I, too, would like to thank the member from St. Johns for bringing forward Bill 221 to declare or commemorate October 4th as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day.

It's been a tough, you know, many years for many families, and I know that the member from Minto put a few words on the record today as well. And I know many of us who have kids within this great province of ours, we definitely pray each and every day that every night that they come home to us and they're safe during the day. And for those families that go on for days, years, decades without actually knowing, I could not imagine the heartache that those families experience each and every day.

I know that our minister spoke just a few minutes earlier about the hard work and the great work that our Justice Minister and Minister for Indigenous and Municipal Relations put forward the end of August this past year in addressing the violence against indigenous women and girls by putting it as an order-in-council.

I also would like to commend the member from Minto basically mentioning how he received the support of his premier back in the day when he went to chat with other ministers across the country on some very important issues as well.

And it would—I absolutely need to put on the record that I'm proud, of course, to be part of the team with our present Premier (Mr. Pallister) of Manitoba, the member from Fort Whyte, for the work that he has done in the past for matrimonial property rights for indigenous women, because the absence of that equal matrimonial property rights on reserves had caused many Aboriginal women—and I know that the member from St. Johns knows this absolutely first-hand because her reserve is actually Sagkeeng, which I'm so proudly to—proud to represent—Sagkeeng and some of my other reserves as well in my constituency. In fact, some of those Aboriginal women would actually lose their homes, their property and even, at times, would have—would

lose that access to their children. And I know that our Premier, back when—for many years he tried to champion the fact that indigenous women on reserves receive those matrimonial property rights. And the victory for equality was actually achieved with the passage of the First Nations matrimonial property act in 2013. So I would like to applaud him as well, because of the hard work that I know he puts into this job each and every day and has been for a few decades already.

I had the pleasure on Monday to be part of an announcement in Pine Falls; it actually was an addition to the Pine Falls hospital. But Sagkeeng played a major role, and it was actually Chief Derrick Henderson that represented the four chiefs from Black River, Hollow Water and Bloodvein for the opening of the Giigewigamig healing centre. It's a fantastic addition to the Pine Falls hospital.

And so I had the pleasure of attending the opening ceremonies and the ribbon cutting with many of the elders from all four communities. And then we went on to the community of Sagkeeng to the recreational centre and celebrated that.

And I think that's where we're going, Madam Speaker. I see that even in, you know, as a teacher for—as a teacher before I got into this wonderful gig—I was a teacher for 17 years working with many of our underprivileged youth and through the student services departments, and I really have seen, even in that short amount of time, us making many, many leaps and bounds towards partnering with our First Nations communities, because we are acknowledging that absolutely everybody across this great province of ours—if we don't start working together, we're going to sink together. And I do see many people, indigenous and from all cultural backgrounds, actually join together and trying to work hard to bring forward many great initiatives to try to heal many of those things that have happened in the past as well.

* (10:40)

And so, again, I thank the member from St. Johns for bringing forward this legislation. And I know that our minister mentioned how actually signing onto the inquiry, Manitoba was actually the first western province to do so, and it's encouraging to hear from the member from St. Johns that Alberta and BC are, from her consultations and discussions with her—some of her counterparts out west, that they're actually looking to Manitoba to see how

they're going to proceed but sort of following our lead here in Manitoba.

I know that from being up at Sagkeeng just the other day, I know that they've had some major tragedy happen on the reserve lately, and, you know, I would be remiss not to mention Serena's family. I'm sure, again, as I said earlier, I could not imagine what they're going through. And then, of course, with the many families, I've attended many events and vigils, memorials up at—in the First Nations community; Tina Fontaine's, you know, relatives and that and sat with them and had those conversations that we do have more, a lot more work to do.

And it's—and it—and, again, it gives me great pride to be a part of this Manitoba Legislature where I know that we are going to be making significant progress as we're moving forward with how we deal with these issues on a day-to-day basis.

Driving here this morning, I knew that we were going to be not really debating this bill; we were going to be discussing the member from St. Johns' bill, Bill 221. And I was listening to—on the radio station this morning, not to put a plug in for any individual radio station, but they were discussing, today is another court trial for Candace Derksen, and, I mean, this has gone on for now three decades. And I, you know, I'm hoping that they find some sort of resolution or conclusion to that story because, again, I know we're here discussing murdered and missing indigenous women and girls day for October 4th, as well, but I'm a strong believer that all Manitobans—this is just absolutely horrendous things are happening to absolutely too many of our youth, and it really doesn't matter which cultural background. It's just absolutely painful to see and to hear many of these stories throughout the news.

And so, with that, Madam Speaker, again, I'm proud to be a part of the government, and as the member from Minto and the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) mentioned, we are going to be as a non-partisan Legislature, we are going to be supporting Bill 221, the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls day act for October 4th.

And so, with those few words, I again thank you and that'll be it, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'm pleased to speak on this bill. Our indigenous women and girls are truly beautiful individuals. It is incredibly heartbreaking that, because of violence, many go missing or are found murdered.

This issue needs proper support and recognition. While this bill being brought forward is a very positive step, we can still be doing more, both for preventative measures and to remember those that we have lost.

It does surprise me that while the NDP were in government, they had an opportunity to call for a provincial inquiry but they never did. Perhaps this government will.

Many of us will read or hear about the deaths or violence towards indigenous women and girls in the news. It's important to remember how every lost woman or girl affects an entire family, drastically impacting them for the rest of their lives.

Through this creation of an awareness day for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, we can encourage dialogue and further create much-needed support and understanding for the families of loved ones.

In declaring October 4 as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day, we move one step closer to protecting families and driving social change. Through this day, we will give the honour and respect to the many daughters, mothers, sisters, grandmothers, partners and friends who have passed on.

We, in this House, will always show our support and love towards our indigenous women and girls and their families. We believe that creating this awareness day is the right thing to do. On that note, I am also proud of our Prime Minister and federal government for their federal initiative.

In closing, I would like to provide my utmost respect to the families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and thank the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for bringing this bill forward.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further speakers on this debate?

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): I don't want to take up too much time because obviously this is a piece of legislation, Bill 221, as indicated, that we're not really debating this morning per se in the traditional sense; it's more, as my colleague from Lac du Bonnet said—more of a discussion and a sharing of comments and perspectives. And we all come to this Legislature with our own perspectives, Madam Speaker, and our own backgrounds and histories, and they—and we're

very cognizant that they shape us as who we are today.

And, with that in mind, Madam Speaker, I'm very appreciative of the passion that the member for St. Johns has brought forward on this issue as an advocate for murdered missing indigenous women and girls, and the hope that what occurs here in the Legislature will spark similar legislation in other jurisdictions, whether it's the NDP in Alberta following our lead here in Manitoba, or the new—I'm not sure if it's the coalition government in British Columbia or whatnot; I don't know if that's been quite settled yet. But there is the hope that Manitoba will take the lead role in this file with this declaration of October 4th being declared the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day.

Now, I know—obviously, this all ties into the issue of the ongoing inquiry. There are some concerns right now about the inquiry sort of putting its work on hold after having some hearings up in Whitehorse, Yukon, Madam Speaker, and that the commission actually won't be hearing and holding its regional meetings now over the course of the summer. And there's obviously some differing opinion as to what this means for the inquiry and the status of the inquiry.

Obviously, there's some disappointment with advocates with this delay, that they're no longer holding their regional advisory meetings, and obviously there's views on the other side that actually agrees with the delay. In fact, Eric Robinson, the former deputy premier and Aboriginal Affairs minister, actually—he was in the—he was quoted in the CBC saying that the delay is warranted in the—in terms of the—what the federal government is doing in not holding its regional meetings as originally planned, which is obviously his right as a private citizen to share those views. I know I, in that same article, there's advocates who believe that we do need to have those regional meetings as has earlier indicated, Madam Speaker.

This bill, Madam Speaker, this is a great opportunity because this is actually the first time that we've had to actually debate this legislation, and as appreciative as I am with the member for St. Johns for bringing it forward, this bill, I do want to put on the record my disappointment that when she first brought this bill forward, which was just Tuesday afternoon during Question Period, was when it was first tabled, that her first comment, instead of again

looking for facilitating that spirit of co-operation, in fact, was making that presumption, the presumption—and I'm quoting—the member who said that, quote: "When presented with the opportunity to take a positive step towards reconciliation, they ignore it." End quote.

Quote: "I'm disappointed to see the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls does not receive the support of this House." End quote.

Now, the member made those comments, Madam Speaker—actually prior to this debate, which—and today is actually the very first day that we've had the opportunity to debate and discuss Bill 221, as my colleague the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) has indicated.

* (10:50)

Members on this side of the House and the government of Manitoba will be in support of Bill 221. So it's just that kind of prejudging that actually, I think, is a negative on all of us as legislators and as individuals. And I think that it's an affliction that affects all of society, that when we just make those assumptions that because we may have a different perspective, a different background and a different history, that somehow we are not all linked as individuals, that we're all not cognizant of the pain and suffering of murdered, missing indigenous women and girls, that we're all not very cognizant that 32 indigenous women and girls have gone missing each and every year since about 1980. That's a phenomenal number; that's a phenomenal number of families whose sisters and wives and mothers and grandmothers have simply disappeared, for lack of a better word, and I can't imagine the hole that exists within those families, Madam Speaker.

So again, for the member to prejudge my comments today, my comments and my colleagues' and my potential on how I'm going to vote on it, I think, is somewhat disrespectful to the idea that this legislation is in the spirit of furthering reconciliation, which, I think, is paramount to us as a society working towards healing on this issue.

The passage of Bill 221 will not be the end of reconciliation and there is a significant road to go. The legacy of colonization, the legacy of residential schools, is one that continues to impact the First Nations here in Manitoba.

I'm proud that my children in their own schools are now being taught that history, a history that I was

not taught during my tenure in school. So there are positive steps, Madam Speaker, when it comes to the issue of reconciliation, considerably more to do when it comes.

I was proud that it was our government that was the first western government to sign the order-in-council under minister—the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) to give the commission full access to all documents, and a full month before the NDP government did in Alberta, Madam Speaker.

But, with that in mind, Madam Speaker, I do believe that I think all members of this House share the hope that with the passage of Bill 221 and the marking October 4th as that murdered—Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day, that we may start something here in Manitoba that will ripple from the east coast to the west coast and the north coast and that we will see October 4th done throughout Canada as an opportunity for all of us to be that much more aware of the history and, more importantly, of the challenges that those communities face, not just today but tomorrow.

So, with those brief words, I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I want to commend the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for bringing forward this motion for a national day to recognize the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. It's fundamentally important to who we are as Canadians and, of course, Manitobans, that we address this issue, we not forget it, we continue to make progress on it.

And I want to just put on the record that it was as early as 2010 when, as the premier, I wrote a letter to Prime Minister Harper recommending that he move forward on a national inquiry or task force to address this issue, and that was one of the earliest recommendations from a premier to move on this issue.

The minister at the time, Minister Eric Robinson, also was very supportive of it. His advisor, now the member for St. Johns, was bringing people together from all across the country to discuss this matter. We had official gathering in Winnipeg in November of 2012, where national agreement was forged with premiers to move on this and national aboriginal organizations to support a national inquiry. And I can say that this issue is something that Manitobans from all walks of life can be proud of, in the sense that we've moved on the issue.

It's certainly a major issue in our community here, one that needs to be addressed, and I believe that this motion and this bill, when it's passed today unanimously in the Legislature, will set an example for legislatures all across the country and will be picked up and used elsewhere to build national acknowledgement and recognition of the great and odious nature of this 'issue' and why it has to be addressed. It addresses issues of misogyny; it addresses issues of racism; it 'addresses' issues of ageism against young people; it addresses issues of how we keep our communities safe; it addresses issues of how we can bring people together to ensure that people are not victimized, and all of those things will make Canada a better place to live.

So, as we move forward on this, I think that we have to fully acknowledge the role that Manitoba has played from the earliest days in doing this, whether it was the Helen Betty Osborne foundation, whether it was the Nordic model, whether it was human trafficking legislation—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

As previously agreed, the hour being 10:55, I will put the question on this bill.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 221, The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day Act.

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

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I'd like to see if there's leave to call this unanimous.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to call this unanimous? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, I believe everybody on our side wishes to congratulate the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), and I'd also like to ask, if there is leave, to call it 11 o'clock.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to call it 11 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 13—Extension of Care

Madam Speaker: The hour being 11 o'clock and time for private members' resolutions, the resolution before us this morning is the resolution Extension of Care being brought forward by the honourable member of Minto.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I move, seconded by the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew),

WHEREAS young people under the protection of Child and Family Services who are ageing out of care require additional supports beyond the age of twenty-one to twenty-five years of age; and

WHEREAS extending the age of care to twenty-five years would provide important supports for young people as they pursue post-secondary education, find jobs, access mental-health services and seek affordable housing; and

WHEREAS many youth in care struggle to complete education programs, acquire work experience and achieve success in school, challenges which can create long term difficulties for youth as they age out of care at twenty-one years; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government already invests in some supports for young people who have aged out of care including covering post-secondary tuition fees; and

WHEREAS ending supports for children in care at twenty-one years can make it difficult for vulnerable youth, such as those living with mental illness, disabilities or addictions, to access secure housing and extra supports for themselves after they leave their foster home; and

WHEREAS other provinces, including British Columbia and Ontario extend care to youth until their mid-twenties and in a 2012 report the Provincial Advocate for Children & Youth in Ontario reasoned that for every extra dollar paid out the province would recoup \$1.36 over a child's lifetime through additional income tax revenue, less spending on social assistance and a reduction in criminal activity and incarceration rates.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to extend the age of care for children in care from 21 to 25 years.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This resolution will hopefully have the same kind of unanimous support in this Legislature calling on the provincial government to move to provide assistance and support to youths aging out of the child welfare system move from 21 to 25 years. It is an idea—I hope everyone can agree—whose time has come.

What kind of agreements am I talking about? Well, I'm looking at the publication by the Child Protection Branch of Manitoba Family Services dated back in 2015. What is an agreement with a young adult? An agreement for support services is offered to a youth who is under a permanent order at the time they turn 18 years of age and whose further planning that was identified at the assessment process meets the criteria below. These agreements may be renewed as provided by legislation.

An agreement may be signed with any young adult and an agency to support, as defined in The Child and Family Services Act, the following: Education goals, transition to adult services, transition to independent living, training, treatment program, and other services will provide an opportunity for the young adult to be safe, achieve success and well-being, including culturally appropriate services that recognize and support their background.

Why is this important, Madam Speaker? Well, I'm actually going to quote heavily from a report which was prepared in the province of Ontario, and it's a document called, 25 Is the New 21. And in that document, it sets out perhaps the best explanation for what this resolution is all about.

And I quote, starting at page 9 of the report: "The concept of adulthood is based on the idea that families are no longer legally responsible for the well-being of their children after age 18. The province extends this premise to youth who have grown up in the child welfare system. Yet most parents continue to provide resources and connections for many more years as their child pursues higher education, finds employment and becomes independent.

* (11:00)

"Indeed, in Canadian society, more young adults are staying with their families well into their twenties. In 2006, 44% of young adults between the ages of 20 and 29 lived in the parental home, up from 32% just twenty years earlier. The figure is much higher if one looks at those aged 20 to 24, where 60% are living with their family. More adult children are also returning to their parental homes within five years of first leaving, at triple the rates of two generations ago.

"Attaining independence is a gradual process, which requires financial and emotional support. Why are youth who grow up as the province's children-

youth who have faced considerably more challenges in their young lives than their peers—expected to be able to make it on their own once they turn 18 or 21?

"The unfortunate reality is that, compared to their peers, youth aging out of care do"—excuse me, Madam Speaker—"do not do well. Many do not complete their high school education. Many rely on social assistance. Youth leaving care are more likely than their peers to become involved in the criminal justice system, experience homelessness, become parents too early, and suffer from mental health and substance abuse problems.

"Many youth leaving care need more time and support to address challenges that have not been resolved by age 21. For example, youth leaving care tend to complete high school later than their peers. They are also more likely to need supports to address mental health issues and past traumas.

"The people of Ontario agree. In a 2011 survey, 94% of respondents stated that they would support the government of Ontario investing in children in care in order to help these children complete high school. In addition, 55% of respondents supported youth in care staying at home until high school or post-secondary education were completed or a full-time job was acquired."

In a nutshell, Madam Speaker, what many parents across this province provide for their children is really what it is now time for the state to provide for those children that have grown up as wards of the state and being in care. And why is this important? Well, it's important because it was something that Commissioner Ted Hughes called for in his report on the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

As you know, Madam Speaker, as Attorney General, I commissioned that report from Commissioner Hughes, and I received the report late in 2013. And this very recommendation, as I'm sure the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) is aware, is contained as recommendation No. 34.

But it's not just Ted Hughes that believes this is the right thing to do. It's also supported by the Children's Advocate. The previous Children's Advocate, Darlene MacDonald, had made a number of statements that it was the appropriate thing to do. The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, RaY—Resource Assistance for Youth—and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives have all called for this change to be made.

In Manitoba, it's acknowledged that moving along to accomplish this is already in progress. The Children's Advocate has confirmed that. But I think we can all agree that the pace has, maybe, not been as fast as those children who are aging out of care would expect. In July 2014, the Manitoba government reported on extension of care agreements between agencies and wards. Although there was an increase in the number of youth that were taking advantage of these extensions, the number in 2013 was 435 youth.

It should be made clear that not every youth who ages out of care wants these services. And, for one reason or another, it's understandable that many of these youths, if they're able to find employment, if they're able to pursue education on their own, are quite happy not to have any further contact with the system, and that's to be respected. But there's other youth who are effectively saying all they want is the kind of support past the age of 18 that those children living in their homes receive in great number from their parents.

So we know that other provinces have started to move. Ontario was the first. I acknowledge Ontario was the first to move, in February of 2014, to extend these services to those aged up to 24 to secure housing, education, employment services. They also put an after-care benefits initiative, allowing those up to the age of 24 previously in care to access additional health, dental and other benefits.

British Columbia moved just in the past year. In October 2016, they created the Agreements with Young Adults program, and that program now provides extended supports like life skills to youth previously in care, ages 19 to 26, also to cover living expenses, child care, tuition and health care.

Now, what are people saying about this? Again, the Children's Advocate—the former Children's Advocate, Darlene MacDonald, confirms that young adults who grow out of child welfare in many cases continue to require a little bit of additional assistance, a bit of additional help. Again, nothing more than parents provide to their adult children when they turn 18. Today, Madam Speaker, I have an 18-year-old daughter who's very reliant. She is driving our family car to get to her job. And I'm sure there will be eight other ways that we will be providing her some form of assistance throughout the day. She's 18 and she's an adult, but she is our daughter, and, of course, as every member of this Legislature would, we continue to provide for our

adult children. This is really about the state taking on some of those same responsibilities for a little bit longer.

Now, I know there are young people who were frustrated with the pace that this moved ahead. And I understand why they had some frustrations.

I've had the chance to read an article written by a young man named Dylan Cohen, who's with an organization called 25not21. He actually wrote a very passionate analysis in the Winnipeg Free Press in January of 2016 and explained why he believed the government needed to move. And I'll be honest, he was frustrated that this didn't happen before the election. He also put on the record in an article on the CBC website from January 22, 2016, that he'd met with the Progressive Conservatives before the election and he described the party as quote, "super receptive," end quote, to extending care to CFS youth.

So it would have been nice if this had been done yesterday. It'd be nice if this could be done today. The next best thing we can do is to speak with one voice as a Legislature to acknowledge the importance of moving ahead with this, to acknowledge that children who are aging out of care should have the same kind of opportunities, should have the same kind of rights as children in our own households and to call upon the provincial government to move ahead to extend care.

I expect the Minister for Families will have some idea of what the cost would be. Again, we're talking, as of 2013, less than 500 youths at that time getting care up to 21. The number may not be that much higher to go to 25, but the benefits we can receive are substantial.

That report I quoted from in Ontario shows that there is actually a net savings for government, savings in Family Services costs, savings in Health, savings in Corrections, which actually don't just make this the right thing to do, also make it a good investment.

So I'm hopeful that we can achieve the same kind of unanimity today and make sure we get this passed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam 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.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I appreciate the member bringing this resolution forward. It's something I think we should discuss across the floor.

But I'd like him to explain to the House why it was in 2008 that their government—the previous government, took—many of the agencies had started setting up trust funds for the students that were in CFS, where they put the Children's Special Allowance that those children received, and their government at the time actually took those trust funds. And I would like the member to explain to me how that helped those children.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Well, I'm very proud that our government actually stopped clawing back the child tax benefit that the previous Progressive Conservative government had brought in.

But I'd rather not look in the rear-view mirror, I would rather look forward for young people who—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —have come not just to the New Democratic Party, Madam Speaker, but to the Progressive Conservative Party, and I think made a pretty good case why it would be a good idea to extend care from 21, as had been done for many years, to 25.

In 2008, there were only 183 youth who were receiving extensions of care. By 2013, that had increased to 435. That's a positive step, but that's only to age 21.

I think we can do better and we can work together to help out these youth and get better outcomes.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Miigwech, Madam Speaker. I want to commend my colleague from Minto for bringing this forward.

It has been, you know, a pleasure to watch him come in and adjust to being on the opposition side, and I think that magnanimity is embodied in his willingness to bring forward new ideas like this

which continue to push our province forward in a positive direction, building on the work of great community activists who've led the 25not21 campaign.

* (11:10)

So I'd like to ask: With that in mind, what additional supports would be afforded to young people in care if we do make this extension?

Mr. Swan: Again, I think it's important to say that the kinds of supports that would be available are the exact kinds of supports that adult children living with their parents might easily call upon their parents to help: education goals, helping to pay for tuition for young people who want to go on to post-secondary, to university, to college, to take on a trade, transition into adult services to help get grounded and any special services they may need as an adult to be able to manage if they happen to have limitations, if they happen to have any disabilities. Certainly training; it may not be that post-secondary is what the youth has in mind. They may have some other ideas.

We'd like to make sure the state provides that hand up so that they can be productive members of our society, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): I find it passing strange that the member for Minto doesn't want to look in the rear-view mirror. I do remember actually one legislative session—I think it was in 2012—where, I think, one media report outlet reported that they had referenced the former Filmon government somewhat upwards of 200 times. But I appreciate that fact he doesn't want to look in the mirror anymore.

In his resolution, he notes that there's a 2012 report from the provincial advocate—advocate for children and youth in Ontario that provided a cost-benefit analysis to moving in this direction. I'm wondering if he can advise who the government of Manitoba was in office at the time that ignored the 2012 report of the provincial advocate of children and youth in Ontario that he's now basing this resolution on.

Mr. Swan: Well, I think the member for Morris needs to understand that this is—the idea of extending care to 25 is becoming the best practice in Canada. I acknowledge that Ontario was the leader. Ontario is ahead of Manitoba and moved ahead.

British Columbia became the second province to take the step. They only accomplished that in

October of 2016. I'm hoping that we can actually speak as one voice in this Legislature to move ahead, to make sure that Manitoba then becomes the third province to take an additional step which, again, provides those aging out of care with nothing more than what I think, as parents, we would like our own children to be able to enjoy.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'd like to ask the member what type of challenges are children in care facing when they age out of the system at age 21?

Mr. Swan: Well, some of those changes are within those children. Others are the situations in which they've been placed.

We know that there are some children who are taken into care who may have an FASD. There are some children who are taken into care who may have suffered trauma, who may have other limitations, who are going to require more supports, perhaps, throughout their lives, but most importantly as they age out of the system.

We also know that, unlike parents that may set aside money in an RESP or have funds available to help children go on to post-secondary, those same kind of resources do not exist for children that are coming out of care, and this will, hopefully, level the playing field and get better outcomes.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I thank the MLA for Minto for bringing this issue forward. I think it is important that there be supports for children who have been in care.

I'm just reading the resolution and looking and listening to the member's remarks. The proposal that's being put forward is to extend the age of care from 21 to 25 years for those children who would like it. Is that it?

Mr. Swan: Yes. I think, actually, perhaps that the better way to express it—I would agree with where I think the member for River Heights is going. It's really to make sure that those supports are there. When children turn 18, they're actually not technically in care, and those children then have the choice of whether they wish to receive these services or not.

So, really, what this resolution is all about is those support services for children who are otherwise independent as they age out of care, but need those additional supports to make sure that they can get ahead.

I thank the member for the question.

Mr. Martin: Madam Speaker, the member—again, he references a report out of Ontario in 2012 as the basis for the cost-benefit analysis of the resolution.

I do note that, when he was part of rebel five, he said, and I quote: "Our concern is the premier"—the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger)—"has become more concerned about remaining leader than necessarily doing things in the best interests of Manitobans." End quote.

I'm wondering if the goal of moving the age-out date to 25 was one of those priorities that was ignored by his premier.

Mr. Swan: The goal of bringing this resolution forward today is, again, to hopefully have us put aside partisan differences and get better results for young people who are passionate about their future, who see their future here in Manitoba, and who are looking for some assistance from the Province.

We know that many youth that are coming out of care, aging out, may take longer to get through high school. They may take longer to get through a college program; they may take longer to get through a university program.

We know that if there is an additional hand up that can be provided by the government, there's very little actual cost to the government. In fact, there's likely savings, but, more importantly, there's better outcomes and, again, a levelling of the playing field for children aging out of the system.

Mr. Kinew: And I also, you know, appreciate, you know, the perspicacity that our colleague from Minto brings to the consideration of these issues. I'll read Hansard tomorrow to figure out how to say perspicacity in French, but, that notwithstanding, I'd like to ask our colleague, you know, if he could reflect on how these extensions of care might impact the health, educational and social outcomes for kids in care who would choose to be a part of this program.

Mr. Swan: It's a difficult question to answer in 40 or 45 seconds. I suppose the most—the easiest to understand is the educational piece. We know—my daughter is motivated and she's off to take a full load. She has friends that are taking a gap year. She has friends that are going to take four or five or six years to get through what should be a three or four-year degree.

We know that children aging out of care that are motivated, that are bright, that are devoted, don't

have that same option and, in fact, if they don't complete their three-year degree in three years, if they graduate at 18, they will then lose their supports and be in a very, very difficult situation, even for those that are motivated to get a university degree and do their very best.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Can the member opposite explain why the former government did not do more to enact the recommendations of the Hughes inquiry?

Mr Swan: Well, I'm very pleased to speak a little bit about the Hughes inquiry because the Children's Advocate actually did issue a report on the progress and said that moving the extension of care was actually in progress by the government when the election occurred, so I'm hopeful that, in fact, the torch can be passed to the new government and I am hopeful they will complete, with recommendation 34 from the Hughes inquiry, not because I think there's a political win in it for either party, but because I think there's a big win for our society and there's a big win for young people that are aging out of care and simply want the state to step in and help them if they choose to take those supports.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The debate is open.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): And I do appreciate the opportunity to put a few brief words on the record about the member for Minto's (Mr. Swan) resolution regarding the extension of care.

I always find it interesting, as the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) noted, the transition from government to opposition that the NDP have faced over the last year. It has been a difficult transition, to say the least, but I was around, actually, as a staff person in '99, so I am aware of the transitional difficulties that can have, especially on individuals who were once Cabinet ministers, but I often joke to my—or comment and joke to my colleagues on this side of the House that a great deal of the comments and queries and calls to action by members opposite, the NDP, would fall under the theme of why won't you do what we never did, and this would be one of them, that, once again, we have the NDP standing up in the House and bringing forward a resolution, and I don't deny, obviously, the importance of, obviously,

post-secondary education, about access to mental health services, affordable housing, not just for young people, actually, but, indeed, all Manitobans.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

* (11:20)

And then—but the member goes on to, again, call on this House, in the interest of the unanimous support for his resolution when, in fact, it's very clear that as he's bringing this resolution forward as a member of the opposition, that he couldn't even garner that unanimous support within his own caucus when he was a government, and that actually it had gotten so bad that he had to lead a rebellion against the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) and go out in front of the cameras and indicate to all Manitobans that the priorities of Manitobans were no longer being reflected within the administration that he represented, that their priorities were more focused on retaining power, which I—which is unfortunate.

And I think this is one of the reasons perhaps why that previous administration, the NDP, never got around to doing this, because when you look at the—own information—and I'll take it at face value—where the member indicates that there was a 2012 report by the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth in Ontario—reason that for every dollar paid out, the Province would recoup \$1.36 over a child's lifetime through additional tax revenues, less spending on social assistance, and reduction in criminal activity and incarceration rates, and that's directly from the member's own resolution.

And so I think to myself and it doesn't take a—I don't need to be the Minister of Finance to deduce 2017 minus 2012 is five years ago, and I don't believe that this government was in office five years ago. I believe we found ourselves on the other side of the benches.

So five years ago, the same member that's bringing forth this resolution—calling for unanimous endorsement—was part of the very government that could—he was a minister, he sat around that Cabinet table, he was part of those decision-making processes in that he could have brought forward this resolution at that time.

He could have advocated for it, but not once during their entire tenure did this resolution—did this bill ever hit the floor in 17 years, because obviously they had different priorities and that priority was retaining power.

For some of my newer colleagues, actually, they won't—they'll appreciate maybe some history, and I know the members opposite, they don't like to look back anymore. And despite 17 years in government, where for 17 years they looked in the rear-view mirror—for 17 years—

An Honourable Member: Seventeen glorious years.

Mr. Martin: Seventeen glorious years, the member says—that they looked back, and if—I mean, if their toast was burnt, they would blame the Filmon government.

But just to give an idea for the new members of this House on both sides about how utterly dysfunctional it had become for the NDP party—so not only did you have, obviously, the well-documented rebellion, of which the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) was a key proponent of throwing the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) under the bus, where they all stood in front of a news conference and they made very unequivocal statements that the priorities of Manitobans were no longer being reflected in their government, that the day-to-day business of the government was so paralyzed that at one point the entire NDP caucus actually went off-site during the day for some active mediation.

They brought in a conflict resolution officer. I believe it was—it might have even been an elder—to help them work through—work their—through and mediate the conflicts that existed within their own caucus.

And, well, we know how that turned out, as the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) asks—asked me, and it didn't. It obviously didn't work out, because one by one, each and every one of those rebels, except obviously the member for Minto, decided to abandon the SS Selinger government when they had that opportunity. And so there is that.

And to give you another idea again, the paralysis that was occurring and probably prevented legislation like this and resolutions like this coming forward when that member was part of the government—a key decision maker within his own NDP government within those 17 years of mandates—of majority mandates—the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) actually brought forward a—I believe it was called a pledge of solidarity. He actually held a new conference. He and Mr. Gaudreau, the former member for St. Norbert,

felt that this was the interest—this was the priority of Manitobans.

We will actually hold a news conference and we will invite the media in and invite all our socialist brothers and sisters from across Manitoba to come to the mothership and to sign this oath of allegiance.

But, again, the idea here is that the priorities of, actually, Manitobans—the priorities of, say, the 12,000 children in care, how were they actually being promoted and reflected within that administration within the NDP when they're so busy stabbing each other in the back, throwing each other under the bus, demanding blood oaths of solidarity and that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you—one wonders that if anything actually got done.

And, you know, in talking to some bureaucrats now that we've—on this side of the—on this side in government, they indicate, actually, there was probably about an 18-month period behind the scenes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one that the members opposite and those in government would be very familiar with, that there was almost a government-wide paralysis within the NDP administration, a complete inability for any effective legislation or actions on their part.

And why was that, I remember asking a high-ranking bureaucrat—again, bureaucrat, 20 years history, non-partisan—this was just their perspective, and they said it had gotten so bad that, actually, there were ministers who would refuse to interact with ministers among the NDP.

The minister of Health refused to engage with, say, the—you know, the minister of Industry. And the minister of Education, who was on the pro-Selinger-government side, refused to engage with the member for Minto.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I would like to remind the member to try to keep his message on topic, on the resolution, if possible, please.

Mr. Martin: It is actually relevant. It lays the context for the fact that we're debating a resolution today, a resolution that's calling for the extension of care, that the member of Minto has said on the public record—indicated that he wants to see unanimous support.

He has actually called on all members of this Legislature to provide unanimous support to his resolution. And I was just simply pointing out the history and the background of the irony of that

comment, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that he was unable to achieve that unanimous support within his own caucus when he was one of their key decision makers, when he was part of the rebellion—couldn't even find, actually, enough colleagues to gather up the rebellion, according to Gord Mackintosh in his upcoming book, that they actually even failed to garner enough support for that, so he simply just quit as a member of the government, as an—and as Justice minister, who had an opportunity to bring in a resolution that could have offered that extension of care to Manitobans.

So, again, I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments on the record. I appreciate our government, and I'm very aware of our government's—after one year in office, our record in terms of enhancing opportunities for young people. I think this is paramount.

Our decision to focus, say, post-secondary access and post-secondary supports from the back end to the front end, I think, was historic, to go from about \$4 million a year in bursaries and scholarships to \$20 million a year.

I note that the resolution talks about the importance of post-secondary education, and that's why we as a government have moved in that direction, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, with those brief comments, I look forward to hearing other individuals offer their perspective on this. And I do hope that the member—I regret the member didn't have an opportunity during their 17 years of tenure not to bring in a similar-minded resolution—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I'd like to begin by taking this moment to introduce the Chair to a few guests that we have in the gallery here today who have advocated passionately, and for many years at this point, on behalf of the 25not21 campaign.

These are young people who have, through their sustained mobilization and advocacy and action, brought this issue of extensions of care for kids in Child and Family Services to the forefront of our public debate in Manitoba, and as such, they deserve not just congratulations, but also our thanks for helping us as public servants to better understand and be able to create a fairer and more equitable society.

* (11:30)

So, Mr. Chair, I'd—I draw your attention to Megan Linton, who is a—you know, an activist, I guess, in many spheres in our city, but in particular, has been involved with 25not21 over the past few years and, in particular, played an active role in some of their community events, which helped to bring attention to this issue and also to raise it in the minds of politicians, the media and many other people in our society.

I'd also want to, you know, tip my hat, figuratively speaking, to Benjamin Nattaway who is here with us in the gallery today. Benjamin is an alumnus of care, a young person who has aged out of care in our province and is finding success as an adult, but is also giving back for those younger people coming up in the system behind him by being a strong voice on the issue of 25not21 and, in the process, is not closing the door behind him, but rather is hoping to push that door further and further open.

And, if I could just reflect for a second, if you know, this is the calibre of young person that we are able to see reach their full potential as a result of pursuing the policies recommended by this resolution, then I think that that's all the proof that we need to support this motion here today.

Benjamin is a spokesperson and an advocate for the 25not21 campaign.

Now, it has been my personal pleasure also to work with some of their colleagues who have since gone on to other things. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge Dylan Cohen, who was a very tireless advocate on this issue. Today, Dylan Cohen lives in British Columbia, is pursuing his career out there, but I actually had the chance to first meet Dylan in my previous career at the University of Winnipeg.

There, Dylan was a student who was receiving financial assistance on his tuition through a program that we had there called the University of Winnipeg tuition waiver for kids in care program, and that program—it's a wonderful program. It helps so many young people, but it also neatly embodies what is possible when we raise the extensions of care from 25—or, from 21 to 25.

Essentially, what this program does is for young people aging out of the child-welfare system in our province, it covers the cost of tuition through privately fundraised dollars and accesses money through the Child and Family Services agencies to help those students who've aged out of care with the

cost of housing, with the cost of living and with the cost of books for their university programs.

Now, of course, what that means is that currently young people can receive supports through their university educations up to age 21. However, what is the barrier at 22 or 23 or 24 for a young person who's aged out of care, who is trying to pursue post-secondary education so that they can change their lives for the better and claw themselves and their younger siblings out of poverty and to improve their family situation?

Well, those barriers are quite significant. Those barriers are quite significant. They're financial barriers; they're socio-economic barriers and there's also barriers for people who may not have had help learning how to navigate structures of power.

I can tell you one young person that I was, you know, able to help through that kids-in-care tuition waiver program was entitled to housing through the University of Winnipeg student housing program but was unable to access it because when they first walked into the door they were turned away and the young person did not understand that there was an appeals process and that even before they had to exhaust the appeals process that they had the right to advocate for themselves and second guess and question the decision to turn them away from the housing office. It is interventions like that, the small, little shifts in behaviour and helping young people to understand how to navigate systems and structures of power in our society that really do make the difference.

It only took a phone call to have the housing office reconsider. Later the same day, that student had their housing situation secured, right.

That is the type of situation that we're talking about, making these little systemic structural adjustments can be all the difference between a young person sleeping in the streets at night and a young person having excellent, secure housing with tons of social supports in it.

That is what the content of this resolution is all about. And so I encourage all the members in the House—or in the Chamber today to consider this with an open mind and with an open heart, and to indeed vote your conscience on this.

Now returning to the story about Dylan. You know, he is a young boy who had, you know, through tragic circumstance, lost his parents. And though his extended family stepped up to care for

him it soon proved to not be enough, and so he, you know, was, you know, sent to the child welfare system. After finishing though, however, he finished high school, went to the University of Winnipeg, got excellent supports in the tuition-waiver program there and soon became a mentor to other young people coming up behind him.

And not only was he an academic mentor for that roughly two dozen other post-secondary students who had aged out of care, because, you know, he was a high-achieving student with a high grade point average above 4.0, he also became an activist and a mentor in the community. And it was in fact, you know, Dylan who was one of those prime moving forces that activated this 25not21 campaign.

And I'm proud to report to the House that Dylan is now in British Columbia leading a similar campaign called agedout.com, which is like—this brilliant website. It's gamified, meaning it provides incentives for young people who access this web portal to learn more and more about the services that can ameliorate their living situation by having, you know, high scores and various treats and little prizes that pop up the same way that it does when you're playing a video game on, say, PlayStation 4 or Xbox One.

And so it's really, you know, sky's the limit with this young person—absolutely brilliant, using the best from technology, using the best from politics, using the best from social supports to help younger people just like him and his younger sisters—or younger siblings were, rather, just a few years ago. And so to me, this is amazing.

I had a chance to review a letter prepared by the 25not21 group, and they point out a few important things that I think will help to foster an atmosphere of collegiality and non-partisanship. They remind us in this letter that the Progressive Conservative caucus was actually very supportive prior to the last election, and that that support was actually reported in CBC News.

They also point out that not only the Hughes inquiry but also the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Children's Advocate have advocated for children—for this sort of support to be extended.

And I know that that's the case, because we sat in a committee just a few months ago and when the previous Children's Advocate was about to leave what was her final call for us in—as public servants?

What was her final call to action for government in Manitoba? The last thing that she told a committee of this House was that the extensions of care ought to be moved from 21 to 25. I think, to me, that that being the parting words of our last Children's Advocate ought to underline just how important this is.

So I want to celebrate the young people who brought this forward, and encourage them to keep pushing.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Good morning, Deputy Speaker.

I am happy to put some words on record in response to the member from Minto's resolution with respect to extensions of care.

The member opposite speaks to offering extended services to children in care through support for young people as they pursue post-secondary education, find jobs, access mental-health services and seek affordable housing. The supports that the member is seeking for the youth in care are of importance for the well-being of our youth.

Gone are the days when you thought their worries were over career choices and parental disagreements. The struggles that our youth face are changing on a daily basis.

Our world has become very small through technology and the social media outlets that our youth are constantly using to connect to other individuals. Youth are constantly being faced with choices, peer pressures, and demands on their time to be better or to perform at a higher standard.

* (11:40)

Youth that have been in care are facing challenges which go beyond the general growing pains of youth who are not in the care of Child and Family Services or who have had to deal with negative environmental, social, and emotional factors, either in their community or in their home.

Some of these pressures placed on youth can be based on safety—or lack of safety—within the home for themselves, and maybe their siblings. Security within their home and the possibility that they will not be able to eat because there is no food, nor money to purchase food.

These are some of the life stressors which create an urgency for our government and our community, an urgency which requires the assistance of our government and the community to assist in the caring of our youth to ensure their success in the future.

Deputy Speaker, this is why I am proud of our government. Our government has taken notice of the needs of our youth and has made responsible changes to our support systems. This government has taken on the responsibility of ensuring there are supports in place for our most vulnerable population: our youth.

Our government has looked at securing the safety of our children and has further looked at the resources needed to help prevent the repeat of incidents from the previous years.

Bill 8, the protecting children act, and Bill 9, The Advocate for Children and Youth Act are two bills which support our youth and their future success.

The Children's Advocate has long protected the youth have been involved with Child and Family Services. Bill 9 will support the need for standalone legislation for the advocate for children and youth and support recommendations made by Justice Hughes as part of the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

Our government recognizes the important work of the Children's Advocate, ensuring that the voices of children and youth involved in the child welfare system are heard. The Children's Advocate is an independent office of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, and they are here to represent the rights, interest, and viewpoints of children throughout Manitoba who are receiving, or should be receiving, services under The Child and Family Services Act and The Adoption Act. Bill 9 will expand the mandate to include advocacy services to our vulnerable youth.

Deputy Speaker, Bill 8, The Protecting Children (Information Sharing) Act, will further support at-risk and vulnerable youth through the support of the professional—or, service providers who assist these youths.

It is through information sharing service providers can begin to build a network, or bridge, between the community and service providers, which removes the fear and isolation individuals experience and replace insecurities with direction and support. Bill 8 responds to recommendations made by

Commissioner Ted Hughes. The inclusive information sharing with a defined framework will support the needs of youth who need our support.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Further to the aforementioned bills, the Department of Families provides support to youth receiving Child and Family Services funding who are attending post-secondary education. Our government continues to collaborate with eight post-secondary institutions in the province to support the tuition waiver program, ensuring youth have the opportunity to access post-secondary education regardless of socio-economic background.

Youth can further apply for, and receive, grants to assist with their education costs when they are in post-secondary institutions. Our government, through the Department of Families and the Department of Education, has been supportive and inclusive in their support for the youth in this province. We are a government that is committed to the success of our future and, for this success to occur, we need to invest in the youth of today. All the youth, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it is this ongoing support and commitment to education, community support services, and resources to our youth which defines my choice to not support the member's opposite resolution. Not because I don't believe we need the support, but because I know our government is offering a better support through the bills and education supports that we have put in place.

Our government is not just offering support for our youth up to a set age, we are offering ongoing support through government programs, community resources, and professionals as our youth gain the knowledge they need to become young individuals.

Ongoing programming will provide the skills our youth need to become self-reliant, education assistance will offer a hand up for the youth to assist themselves in their choice of profession, and professionals will be accessible for youth to engage their support and direction as needed as they journey to their final goals.

Extension opportunities that are available through agencies like Resource Assistance for Youth, Building Futures, Ma Mawi, and CEDA youth housing program and MY TEAM are targeted to meet the needs of individuals. Our government will work with the indigenous communities and

support them as they put the supports in place to assist families and youth.

Madam Speaker, our government is here to assist communities and youth and families to rebuild so they can nurture their youth. It is this in the commitment from our government which offers more for the success of our youth. Our government has proven its commitment to make our youth a priority. Bill 8 and Bill 9 support our youth through the many resources, supports and education options being presented.

Our budget has made it easier for all youth to be able to seek the assistance they need when going to post-secondary education facilities. This aids with and helps to lessen the many costs individuals face when entering post-secondary institutions.

These are a few of the examples I have cited as supports to our youth. These ongoing commitments 'resem'—sorry, represent support to individuals up to and beyond the age of 25 years. This, in my opinion, offers more to our youth than the resolution put forth by the members opposite and is the base as to why I support our government and not the member from Minto's resolution.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I want to talk to this resolution.

Making sure that we're helping children who've been in care to the extent we possibly can is pretty important. And, certainly, these are children who've often been through a lot of trauma, the trauma of their circumstances, the trauma sometimes of being taken away from their families and from their community and the various traumas that many of these students have been through.

It is—as a Children's Advocate report talked about last year, the losses and the disturbance to the normal growing up process that these kids go through is very, very substantial.

So we, certainly, need to be providing supports for these children. Those 'shupports' should include the support so that they can complete high school; so that they can go on and do post-secondary education, whether college or university or elsewhere; so that they can get the training and the skills development that they need and that they want; and so that they can have the transition to finding work; they can have a transition to ensuring they've got housing and that they have a transition which looks and works

much more like a transition for a child as moving through the period from 18 to age 25; and has supports in other ways.

So, definitely, we should be providing very substantial support to children who have been in care to make sure that they have opportunities. The stories of children that I've heard in—who have been in care in the past who are dumped on the street at age 18 and forced to live homeless for quite some time is tragic.

The fact is that a disproportionate number of those who are homeless are still kids who are coming out of care. A disproportionate number of children who have been in care are still not yet being supported to the level where they really need to be supported.

As well as considering the supports that we provide to these children, we must also give them, as they become young adults and adults, the means to become more and more independent, so that they grow and develop and have the ability to look after themselves and do really well.

* (11:50)

And so I am opposed to these children being continued in care. I don't believe that they should have an extension of care, but, rather, that they should be supported in an alternative fashion in this period so that they really have an optimum opportunity to develop, but developing on their own, and with their ability to be supported but without being constrained by the label of continuing to be in care and the bounds of what will happen when they are continued to be in care without having a full complement, a full range, of ability to manage their own lives and to make their own decisions.

I had a chance, in January and February, to meet with Andrew Turnell, who has written a book, *Signs of Safety*, and has had international experience globally in numerous countries, and we had a chance to talk about this particular area. And he was, as I am, very strong on supporting these children, but also felt that the approach that we need to take is not one of keeping them in care or extending care, but rather one of providing a suite of supports which really works very effectively in all the areas that we've been talking about.

Now, the government has been argued that there are a variety of supports there. If they really think that those supports there, then we need, I believe, an

independent monitoring of exactly what's happening, and we need to make sure that the Children's Advocate has another look. If the government feels that it's changed things so much that now children are supported well, I'm a little skeptical of that claim, and that's why I think it's really important to have the Children's Advocate go back in and see, you know, are children actually being supported as well as they should be and as well as they need to be. And, if there are gaps, then we would call on the government to fill those gaps and make sure that the support is there.

One of the things that I'm concerned about in terms of the programs that the minister mentioned was the availability of those programs around the province, because there's much better supports in Winnipeg of the ones that the—or the members of the Legislature from the Conservative Party have mentioned. And so, I would want to be sure that the support is actually there all over the province and not just in Winnipeg, because I think that's critical that people and young people have the opportunity to stay connected with their home community and not just having to be in Winnipeg. Of course, that is their choice.

So, with those words on this resolution, Madam Speaker, I'll pass it on to others to comment, and I thank the member from Minto for bringing this important issue forward and for others for speaking on it.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): It's interesting to me this morning that the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) brings this issue forward today when he and his colleagues had 17 years to pursue it while they were in the government here in Manitoba. I think it's very well known that for 17 years, the NDP government failed our children in care, indigenous kids and children and youth who are most vulnerable in our province.

It—to me, it strikes me as wrong that the previous government were unable to track the number of foster kids placed in hotels. Can you imagine not knowing where these children were?

Under the NDP, Manitoba held the title as having the highest rate of kids in care in Canada, with a rate of more than double of that of Saskatchewan which is of similar size. Under the NDP, Manitoba have one of the highest child-apprehension rates in Canada and seized an average of one newborn baby a day.

The number of kids in the government's care jumped 55 per cent since 2006, with almost 90 per cent of them being indigenous youth. While indigenous children accounted for only 26 per cent of all children in Manitoba, around 87 per cent of children in care were indigenous under the NDP.

While less than 2 per cent of non-indigenous children in the province have contact with CFS at some point in their lives, for First Nations children, more than 22 per cent have contact with the system; that's one in five First Nations children who will be in contact with CFS in their lifetime.

A Manitoba Centre for Health Policy report showed that children in care have the lowest proportion of high school completion at only 33 per cent. That means two out of every three children in care do not complete high school.

For 17 years the mandate of the Children's Advocate remained unchanged, and our government

is committed to strengthening the powers and the responsibilities of that office. Major recommendations from the Hughes inquiry were never enacted by the previous government, allowing for major gaps in CFS to remain when they could have been changed.

The protecting children act will better help to protect vulnerable children in our province, and we are committed to doing everything we can to work with vulnerable Manitobans.

The record of the NDP with regard to Child and Family Services—

Madam Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have seven minutes remaining.

The one hour for private member's resolution has expired, and this House is now recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 11, 2017

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