

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXXII No. 34A - 10 a.m., Thursday, April 4, 2019

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 4, 2019

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

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Is there leave for selected Bill 228 to be considered on Thursday, April 11th, at 10, with a question put at 10:55 a.m. that morning instead of this morning as previously announced?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for selected Bill 228 to be considered on Thursday, April 11th, at 10, with the question put at 10:55 that day instead of this morning as previously announced? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader?

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Oh, sorry—the honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Maybe some day, again.

We've denied leave for the moment, Madam Speaker, but I'd entertain the member raising the leave issue again before the end of the hour.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied, so we will move into—or the honourable Official Opposition House Leader?

Ms. Fontaine: Can we move into Bill 229 for—*[interjection]*—228, sorry, Madam Speaker, for debate this morning?

Madam Speaker: We will now deal with Bill 228 this morning, The Sikh Heritage Month Act.

The honourable—*[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: Second reading.

Madam Speaker:—second reading of Bill 228, The Sikh Heritage Month Act.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 228—The Sikh Heritage Month Act

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 228, The Sikh Heritage Month Act; Loi sur le Mois du patrimoine sikh, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kinew: I am very humbled and, indeed, very honoured to be able to bring this bill forward for consideration here at second reading.

The reason why I'm honoured to do so is because I bring this bill forward at the request of the committee of Sikh Heritage Manitoba, and we have many of the committee members here with us in the gallery today. So, I just want to acknowledge them and congratulate them for all their great work that they're doing so far this month, and of course, to wish them well for all the other celebrations that they have this year.

It is the inaugural celebration for Sikh Heritage Month in Manitoba, and so it seems fitting that we also give that celebration legislative standing by passing this law here in our Legislature.

Again, so, I'm just the conduit for this bill. This really represents the work that the committee's been doing and, of course, they've put a lot of their own time and effort into not only shaping the bill but also talking to my colleagues in the Chamber about the importance, and so I just want to thank them for all that work they've been doing in the community.

In particular, I want to thank one committee member, Imreet Kaur Grewal, for helping with the draft—the statement that I'm giving here—the introductory comments. And so I just want to acknowledge her work and I have no doubt that it was informed by the expertise of her fellow committee members, as well, so I want to thank them for all their input here.

So this bill is an opportunity to celebrate and to educate people in Manitoba—people in Manitoba about the importance of Sikh Canadian stories and to recognize the contribution of Sikh Canadians both here in our province of Manitoba but also right across our country, Canada. It's an opportunity to reimagine the Manitoban and the Canadian story through the Sikh lens, and if you would have spent some time in the rotunda looking at the display from the Sikh Heritage Museum, you will understand what that really means.

I've been very privileged, you know, over the past number of years, to have been invited in to gurdwaras and to celebrations by practitioners of the Sikh faith. And it really has been a very meaningful experience for me when I'm visiting. Usually, maybe I'm invited by a friend to participate when they're doing the langar, they're doing the ceremonial feast and they're feeding their fellow community members. Sometimes I'll come beforehand and listen to some of the prayer service and pray with the community members there, and I find it very meditative and very meaningful to participate like that.

And so I just want to thank, as a general statement, the members of the community who've helped me to increase my understanding about the Sikh faith.

We also know that Sikhs across the world embody the principles of honest living, of selfless service, of social justice and they do their part in creating communities that not only serve as spiritual centres but also economic, political and civil rights centres, as well. The Sikh community advocates both for their own well-being and interests but also on behalf of many others and you will note that the committee this year, in addition to spreading the word about Sikh Heritage Month, they're also collecting donations for some of the less fortunate brothers and sisters that we have here in our province; embodying those principles of service along with their own celebrations.

So the reason why April is chosen is because this month is of paramount significance to Sikhs. It's during this month of April that the Sikh faith was institutionalized. It is the 10th guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, who introduced Sikhs to a unique kind of initiation ceremony called the Amrit Sanchar on the day of Vaisakhi in 1699. And he institutionalized these principles of Sikhi into a disciplined community.

Guru Gobind Singh dealt with political conflicts that were rooted in the fight for freedom to practice one's religion. And he organized a kinship called the Khalsa Panth to institutionalize Sikh values and beliefs. And he bestowed on the Sikhs a new last name: Singh, meaning lion; or Kaur, meaning lioness.

Now this was done to eliminate discrimination within Sikhs based on their gender or on their caste. Now members who have been initiated into the Khalsa Panth, they adorn the five articles of faith, which are required to keep on them at all times. Now these five items are: the kesh, which is uncut and covered hair; the kangha, which is the comb; the kara, which is the steel bracelet, the kirpan, which is a small sword; and kashera, which is the undershorts.

And I'm proud to say that Manitoba was the first province to recognize the articles of the Sikh faith, and I believe it was the father of my colleague from Burrows who led the recognition. So just another example of how this is a cross-party, non-partisan activity in supporting the celebration and recognition of the Sikh faith community here in Manitoba.

* (10:10)

Guru Granth Sahib, the eternal guru of Sikhs, quotes the following: Show kindness and mercy to all beings and realize that divine permeates everywhere. This is the way of an enlightened soul which builds a solid foundation for social equity.

The ninth guru of Sikhs, Tegh Bahadur, is referred to as the protector of the universe because he stood up for the rights to practice one's faith for members of another faith—and that's one of the things that I really find impressive about the Sikh community, is how even as they fight for recognition and stand up to celebrate and commemorate their own community's inroads, they also work to be good allies to many other communities as well. And speaking as a member of the indigenous community, certainly, we appreciate the acknowledgments that

have been included in this month's Sikh Heritage Month's celebrations.

Now, we know that despite fighting for the equality and the human rights of many other communities, unfortunately, Punjabi people and members of the Sikh faith community have faced their share of discrimination in Canada's history.

Now, the Sikh-Canadian story begins in 1809 when the first Baron, Charles Metcalfe, married a Sikh woman in the Lahore court the same year that he signed the Treaty of Lahore with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Now, that's significant because Charles Metcalfe would later on become the Governor General of the Province of Canada. Famously known as the first Sikh settler in Canada, Kesur Singh travelled in 1897 from British Hong Kong to Vancouver on a ship named the Empress of India.

We have been reminded many times recently of the discrimination that happened after the docking of the Komagata Maru ship in 1914 in Vancouver. The ship had 376 passengers; 340 of them were Sikhs, the rest were Muslims and Hindus, all of whom were British subjects. Now, Canadian immigration policy at the time prevented people of colour from settling in Canada for many decades and that, unfortunately, came into place for the people on board that ship and they were turned away.

Now, an official apology was issued to Sikh-Canadians 102 years later in 2016, but we know that the Sikh-Canadian story is not just one of oppression. There's also been many great leaders, including: Baltej Singh Dhillon, who was the turbaned RCMP officer; Private Buckam Singh, who was a Sikh-Canadian soldier fighting for Canada during World War I; Dr. Naranjan Singh Dhalla, recipient of the Order of Canada; Palbinder Kaur Shergill, who was the first turbaned Sikh woman to be appointed judge of the Supreme Court of British Columbia; and, of course, to all of us on Instagram, Rupi Kaur, who is a phenomenal poet, but also a huge celebrity these days who inspires many people, many young women and young men as well with her beautiful prose, beautiful poetry and wonderful artwork.

So on this side of the House we're also very proud of our brother, Jagmeet Singh, who is the leader of the federal NDP, first person of colour to be a leader in the House of Commons for a major political party in Canada; and we're also friends with his brother, Gurratan Singh, who is also an MP—P—as well. Course, there are many Sikhs who serve in

many legislatures and, of course, the House of Commons right across the country.

Now, this bill would help us to recognize the important contributions of these members of the Punjabi community as well as many others and for us to all learn a bit more about the Sikh faith, the traditions, the culture and the arts through many of the programming opportunities such as those being afforded to us by Sikh Heritage Manitoba.

I just wanted to close by sharing a quote that was shared with me by the Guru Nanak, and in this quote the guru says: Air is the guru, water is the father, earth is the great mother of all. So I was reflecting on that, having grown up in a culture where we are told that water is life and that the earth is our mother, and it was on shared basis of fellowship and seeing myself reflected in the practice of the Sikh faith that I was able to develop a certain understanding and a certain feeling of a bond to the Sikh community. And it's my hope that by passing this bill and further supporting the work of Sikh Heritage Manitoba, that we will ensure that many Manitobans from many different communities can have the same opportunity to learn about the Sikh faith, to be able to see themselves in the members of this community and for us all to be able to build a beautiful Manitoba together, recognizing we're all human beings and the diversity by which we practice our faiths is the beautiful representation of life on Earth.

Madam Speaker: Are there any—oh, pardon me.

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. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I do thank the member for introducing this bill this morning.

I do want to ask the member if he had an opportunity to consult with the member for Maples. I know the member for Maples is introducing a very similar bill. I believe the member for Maples has had a number of times, over the last few years, talking about Sikh heritage legislation or resolution.

Just wondering if the member from Fort Rouge had a chance to consult with the member for Maples.

Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So I mentioned this in my preface, in my introductory comments, that I brought this bill forward at the request of the Sikh Heritage Manitoba committee. I met with them prior to the launch of their celebration this year. They explained to me the importance of the federal bill acknowledging Sikh Heritage Month, and they talked about how it would be meaningful to have a provincial piece of legislation here.

And so this group is composed of many members of the community, members of many different gurdwaras. It's representative, I believe, of many aspects of the Sikh community here. All 10—is it 10 gurdwaras—nine gurdwaras in Winnipeg, I'm corrected—soon to be 10, and so I just want to say that—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I think the member put—gave us a very clear picture of why this is important, why this is important not just to the community but to Manitobans at large, and I just wanted to just give him another opportunity to expand on exactly how he feels this bill will help promote the importance, the awareness of the legacy of the Sikh people here in Manitoba.

Mr. Kinew: Well, what I've heard from members of the committee—and speaking to other members of the community in the—both the lead-up to the introduction of the bill, but also in some of the events that I've attended this month as part of Sikh Heritage Month—is that recognition and representation from the Sikh community are important.

And because some aspects of the history in Canada are underappreciated and often we still have much to learn about one another as Manitobans, that it seems like being able to foster understanding based on culture is a positive way to start. Rather than maybe jumping straight into, maybe, the difficult aspects of say, Komagata Maru, perhaps we can start with a positive conversation about culture and then that will ground our inquiry and understanding into some of the more challenging aspects—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Thank you to the member for bringing this forward.

So I have a question regarding—just this week we issued a proclamation regarding honouring Sikh

Heritage Month. Perhaps the member can elaborate a little more why a bill, legislation, would be required when we've already recognized this, and governments moving forward could do it as well.

Mr. Kinew: Well, I don't presume to speak on behalf of the Sikh heritage 'monsh' committee, but having observed the presentation of the proclamation, I would say that the proclamation was certainly very welcome and was well received, and I saw a lot of smiles on the faces of the people when that was presented.

However, I think when we pass a law in this place it becomes permanent, and rather than just having a proclamation issued each and every subsequent year, that if we have it as a standing piece of legislation that Sikh Heritage Month is honoured and represented in Manitoba, then that is a very important part of that journey towards recognition and inclusion. Again, here in Manitoba we have an opportunity here to make Sikh Heritage Month not just an annual celebration, but, indeed—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wiebe: I think it does speak to the non-partisan nature in which I think the member has brought this forward in terms of legislation, in terms of the then movement by the government to move ahead and make this proclamation the other day. I stood with the member and also appreciated how much the community was coming together, and we as legislators were doing the same.

* (10:20)

One of the things the member mentioned at—in his remarks to the group at that time was the impact on—in the intergenerational legacy that's being built here by bringing this legislation forward. Can you expand on that point?

Mr. Kinew: Well, I'm not sure if Parminder is here today, but he—I don't think he is. But he did make a—he's a member of the committee. He did make a comment at the launch of Sikh Heritage Month here, and he says, often, when members of the Punjabi community are presented, their story is presented as that of a newcomer. But what he had hoped for in the celebration of Sikh Heritage Month is that while we can still celebrate those in the community who are newcomers, that you can also celebrate those members of the community who've been here for a very long time and are, indeed, nation builders and have contributed to the construction of Canada. I mentioned soldiers, Mounties, chief justices from

this community, and so, when we're talking about intergenerational, let's also talk about inter-generational contributions from the community as well.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for bringing forward this bill which we as Manitoba Liberals will support.

I—Manitoba Liberals believe that Sikh heritage is important enough that it should be taught in schools throughout Manitoba, that they—it should be a part of our curriculum. I wonder whether the member would also support this.

Mr. Kinew: Yes. I think it's important for young people in Canada to learn about incidents like the Komagata Maru situation so that they can understand the importance of standing up for human rights today, much the same way that residential schools, for example, are taught in some parts of our curricula. I think there's a need to include the history of the Sikh community, but hope, also, that we can find a way to create a positive experience across cultural lines, and, you know, I'd leave it to the experts, who are the educators themselves, about how we can do that. But I think we're all better off if young people in Manitoba get to learn about every other person in this province and where they're coming from as well.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I thank the member for bringing this forward.

My question is, is the member aware if Manitoba recognizes in legislation any other days, weeks or months for other faiths or religions?

Mr. Kinew: Well, I think the proposition of this bill is that Manitoba could join other provinces like Ontario and British Columbia, and also the federal government who, at a national level, has acknowledged Sikh Heritage Month, and we could join that kind of leading class of jurisdictions in this country who are acknowledging Sikh heritage. And so Sikhi is certainly a faith, but it's also a cultural community and it is an opportunity for us to learn about an important group of Manitobans whose stories are worthy of being celebrated.

So I would encourage the member for Rossmere, particularly—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wiebe: It does seem that there is a momentum that's occurring across the country right now, and I think it's important that we recognize the work, once

again, that the community—that this has come directly from the community and put the momentum behind this bill to bring this forward here.

But, in particular, we're in the month of April now, and I just thought it might be an opportunity for the member to explain exactly why April is the month and why it's so important that we pass this legislation now.

Mr. Kinew: So I absolutely in no way am an expert. The only reason I can fit to answer this question, anyway, is because of some of the help that I've gotten on the topic from the members of the committee. But, essentially, April's an important month and the—for the Sikh faith community. It includes the celebration of Vaisakhi, and in so doing also includes the commemoration of the institutionalization of certain aspects of the Sikh faith. It's very important in the celebrations for that community.

And so I think the community as a cultural group today has taken that month forward as the month they want to designate to celebrate their heritage, their faith and their culture, and since they are an important part of our public life in Canada I think it's worthy of us marking the occasion as well.

Mr. Yakimoski: I'd like to ask the leader, or the member bringing it forward, why today have you changed what we've traditionally done in this House over the last three—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Yakimoski: —and why have you brought forth two bills to be debated on a private members' bill morning, not really giving us the time to put on the record all the great things that we'd like to say about this bill?

You've really kind of brought it forth and really curtailed our ability to speak and speak in—positively about the Sikh community.

Mr. Kinew: I think what might be the best opportunity to talk about this bill would be to vote in favour of it at second reading, send it to committee; let's hear from the public; let's have the Manitoba community come out at committee and speak to this—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —bill, and then, of course, at third reading everybody can stand up and offer their praise for the Sikh community at that time as well. So that's

one option, but again it begins with the member voting in favour of this bill.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has expired.

Debate is open.

House Business

Madam Speaker: The honourable House leader for the official opposition, on House business?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

Just seeing as we know that the member for Maples would like to speak to this bill, and I suspect that there are other members that would like to speak to the bill, is there leave for the selected Bill 232 to be considered on Thursday, April 11th, at 10, with the question put at 10:55 that day instead of this morning as previously announced?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for selected Bill 232 to be considered on Thursday, April 11th, at 10, with the question put at 10:55 that day instead of this morning as previously announced? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I heard a no. Leave has been denied.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

The honourable member—well, according to our format it is time for a member from the government side to speak according to our rotation.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): It's truly an honour to stand here today and put some words on the record, and I want to, first of all, start by thanking Sikh Heritage Manitoba for the tremendous work that they've done.

Of course, I know we had an excellent event on April 1st. We know that the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox) had the opportunity to introduce a proclamation proclaiming the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month. And I know when—before she had done that she had approached me and a few members of our caucus and she was so excited to do that. And I know that it's the first time in Manitoba's history that's ever happened and it was an exciting time, and I know that all members in this House have great deal of respect for the Sikh

community. I know it's been alluded to before that the Sikh community has been in Manitoba for a long time and, of course, that population continues to grow and that community keeps growing and contributing not only to Winnipeg, but I know to other parts of Manitoba and to rural Manitoba we see more and more people moving there from the Sikh community.

So I want to say thank you to the Sikh Heritage Manitoba board and, of course, everybody who—here at this morning in the gallery, to them: Sat Sri Akal.

I believe that it is such an honour to be able to speak and I know I've been quite involved with the Sikh community over the years and, of course, the closest gurdwara to my home, Madam Speaker, is the gurdwara on Archibald, and I know that when I go there every time I—it's funny that they actually introduced me as Andrew Singh rather than Andrew Smith, and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order please. Order, please.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable House leader for the official opposition, on a point of order?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On a point of order—and I apologize to the member opposite for interrupting.

I'm just wondering—

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

I'm just wondering if there is leave of the House to not see the clock so that we can ensure that those members, including members of the government side and members from our Liberal relatives or our Liberal caucus members here, can speak to this very important bill.

Madam Speaker: Can the member be more clear in terms of what she means when she says not see the clock—until when?

Ms. Fontaine: I apologize, Madam Speaker, until every member that would like to speak to the bill has spoken to the bill.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for every—*[interjection]*—on the same point of order?

An Honourable Member: Yes, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Oh, the honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On the same point of order.

I'm not sure what the confusion is this morning. The schedule that was set out this morning wasn't set out by the government; it was set out by the opposition and they don't seem to want to follow their schedule.

* (10:30)

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that that's not a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: But is there leave to allow a debate to continue until all members have spoken?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Southdale (Mr. Smith) will have nine minutes remaining in accordance with rule 24.

Bill 232—The Election Financing Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: And, as previously announced, the House will now proceed to consider second reading of Bill 232, The Election Financing Amendment Act.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 232, The Election Financing Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: Thank you to the member for Concordia.

I am so excited to get up in the House this morning to put on the record thoughts in respect of our Bill 232, The Election Financing Amendment Act. The bill does three things, Madam Speaker: it opens up rebates to more candidates and parties; it lowers the contribution limits from \$5,000 back to \$3,000 so that wealthy donors do not have too much influence on our provincial elections here in Manitoba; and it limits government advertising for

premiers who want to ignore fixed election date laws.

I think that I've said it before previously in a member's statement. I know I think I have said it in respect of some debates that we've had on bills that we've really seen in the last, well, since the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has taken office, his—[interjection]—well, I mean the members opposite are excited about the fact that their boss is actually dismantling democratic infrastructure here in Manitoba, which tilts elections in his and their favour. I don't think that that's something to celebrate, Madam Speaker, I actually think it's something for every member of this House to be extremely concerned about and actually take a moment to stand up and maybe school their boss on actually what democratic processes should and must look like.

You know, I've shared this many times. I—the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself, as everyone knows, we do a lot of our events together. We border each other, so it makes sense that we go to community events and put up events together and, you know, we're always blessed with the reception that we receive. And one of the things that is always asked of us, Madam Speaker, is what is the best part of being an MLA. Obviously, folks do ask what is the worst part of being an MLA is, but I'll save that for another time. Certainly, I would suggest that one of the best parts—and if I could be so bold as to speak on behalf of the member for Point Douglas—for us, as indigenous women, is to be able to see the transformative effect in the community. So, when indigenous women and indigenous young girls see themselves reflected in this space where they have traditionally not been a part of, there is a transformation, there is a sense of pride.

I know that when the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) was first elected in April of 2015, I was the special adviser on indigenous women's issues here, and I remember going to the member for The Pas' signing—oath ceremony—[interjection]—swearing in, thank you—and the room was packed. And I remember standing in the back and just crying because it was so beautiful to see, finally, an indigenous woman, a First Nation woman, take up her rightful place in this House, as is the right of every culture and community in this province, this beautiful province that we have.

And so, to that end, political representation in this House matters, Madam Speaker. Who sits in these chairs to represent Manitobans matters.

And we know, and you know—those who have heard me speak, you know, I—every opportunity that I have I share the history of this Chamber, that, you know—the statistics of who has been elected, how many. We know that there's been upwards of 834, give or take, men who have been elected to this Chamber. We know that only 60 women have only been elected to this Chamber. We know of those 60 women, only five are women of colour or indigenous.

And I know that we're so proud that we have three indigenous women in our caucus. We're so proud and honoured to also work with the member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen). We're proud that, you know, we're able to actually cross party lines and do a lot of work together, myself, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) and the member for Kewatinook.

Because political representation in this House matters. Manitobans deserve to see themselves reflected in their—in this House. And to be honest and bold, they do not see themselves reflected in this House, at all. When I look across the way, I don't see any African-Canadians who have yet to be elected to this House.

And, although we gave a really good try in respect of Blandine Tona, who ran for us against the Leader for the Liberal Party, and who is an amazing candidate—brilliant woman who I absolutely love—we were not successful. Nobody has been successful, in 2019, to get an African-Canadian person elected to this House.

We have yet to see a Muslim person elected to this House. That is unacceptable, Madam Speaker. It's unacceptable. So, instead of standing up for, you know, equitable representation, so that actually, you know—even when I look at the students in the gallery and I say hello to all of the students in the gallery, I see beautiful diversity that is a reflection of who we are as Manitobans.

And yet, tragically, Madam Speaker, when I look in this Chamber that is certainly not what I see. And while members opposite choose to kind of ignore that and fight to maintain—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —the status quo of this House, where they're in positions of absolute power, it is unacceptable. I want every single one of those students sitting in the gallery today to know that it is

their right if they choose to run in this House, that actually this House belongs to them.

It doesn't belong to us; it belongs to you.

And, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, to those students that are sitting in the gallery, should any of them ever decide, I want to run for politics, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) has just made it difficult in the last three years for you to be able to do so.

And how has this Premier done so? He is getting rid of all of the democratic infrastructure that allows for people—for marginalized, disenfranchised—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: I would just ask that while the member is speaking that we respectfully hear a member that is in debate. There will be plenty of time for people afterwards to have their say in this as well.

Ms. Fontaine: As I was saying, this Premier, alongside every single one of these MLAs who are sitting in this House today, who sit by and do absolutely nothing while their boss dismantles democratic infrastructure, that I want to remind the House, Madam Speaker, at one point in this country, with the measures that we brought in place when we were in government, Manitoba took a lead across the country in respect of equitable democracy to ensure that those that want to run for political office have the supports to be able to do so.

* (10:40)

It is absolutely egregious and naive to think that everybody that wants to get a seat in this House starts off at the same—level playing field. It does not happen. It's not equitable for women. It's certainly not equitable for indigenous women or black women or Muslim women or Asian women. It is not equitable.

And so, instead, what is this Premier doing? Instead of ensuring his sacred responsibility to make sure that any one of those students who want to run—and the member over there can do whatever the heck he just did, but these students are watching you as you guys all laugh and as you sit there and you sit by while the democratic infrastructure of this province is slowly eroded.

And it's slowly eroded and tilted in favour of the wealthy, the rich, and certainly, I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, not the demographics that we see and we know and we love in this province.

So I'm proud to sit up in the—stand up in the House today and bring forward Bill 232, because I want to know when students ask me, well, what did you do, as the member for St. Johns, to protect democracy, I actually got up in this House and fought for their right to be able to run for a seat in this Chamber and represent their communities and their areas and represent Manitoba in the best way possible.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): My question for the member is that—is why does she believe that taking money off the kitchen tables of Manitobans and putting it into the pockets of political parties and to fund political activities is okay?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, actually, Madam Speaker, I never said that, so I'm actually not going to answer that but I will—I do want to comment on what the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) said to my colleague, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), calling us lazy on this side of the House.

I think—*[interjection]*—and then we have another member, who just confirms and says it again, that we are lazy on this side of the House because we're standing up for democracy. That we don't rely on the wealthy for their money to ensure that we're standing up for Manitobans—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —that are so disadvantaged and disenfranchised that they don't have a voice in this seat. I'm proud to stand on this side of the House.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Just a clarification from the member on exactly the intent of the bill. As my understanding, it would require a 90-day window banning advertising before any election is called.

But, if there were to be a call as a result of a fall of the government or for some other crisis reason,

then how would you have 90 days banning if you have to have an immediate election?

Ms. Fontaine: I want to thank the member for River Heights for that very thoughtful and concerning question. And I will share with the House that the bill is in refer—it references the 90-day blackout period for fixed or unfixed dates, not including loss of confidence in the government. Recognizing that we know that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) has been contemplating—he put it on the record about December of this year, so clearly the Premier knows what he's doing or has a plan in respect of calling an early election. So, if he chooses—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —to be in contravention of our election laws and still promote advertising that we've seen all over—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I want to thank the member for bringing this bill forward. So, democracy should be what this Chamber, what this House is all about.

So can the member explain again to the members opposite why this bill is important to democracy in this province?

Ms. Fontaine: I want to thank the member for Flin Flon for his important question.

The bill is important for democracy because actually what we've done in the bill is we've reduced the required number—percentage of number of votes that qualifies for a rebate from 10 per cent to actually 2 per cent, which is actually the federal rebate for parties. And that allows actually more candidates and more parties to be able to access and participate and have the support to run in political parties, like the Green Party or even like the members opposite former colleague and his freedom caucus now. They would be able to access those rebates to be able to support to run in a fair and equitable—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Madam Speaker, does the member of St. Johns believe that if a Manitoban wants to support a political party, they should be able to do that at their own will without being forced by legislation?

Ms. Fontaine: I'm not even sure who worked on that question for him, but—maybe nobody, because I actually think that he probably just constructed that

himself because it actually doesn't even make sense. Who on earth is going to legislate how voters participate in the electoral process? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: It's a ridiculous question and actually, Madam Speaker, it's quite a lazy question.

Mr. Gerrard: I'm just wondering—I would ask the member, if there were to be a national crisis, would it be possible to have an election between—before the fixed date and, for instance, in the United Kingdom at the moment, there is a situation where things are going absolutely nowhere. One of the options could be an election.

Would that be possible under such a crisis circumstance like this?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, I thank the member for River Heights for his question.

I suppose that when we have a premier like our current Premier (Mr. Pallister) who does whatever he wants, whenever he wants, however he wants, divorced from actually the law of Manitoba in respect of our elections law, I suppose anything is possible.

Mr. Lindsey: Again, I want to thank the member for bringing forward this important piece of democratic legislation that we should all support in this House.

So one of the things when we're in opposition is we're not allowed to introduce legislation that costs money. So could the member just give us a little insight into how much this bill that she's introducing will cost?

Ms. Fontaine: I want to thank the member for the—for Flin Flon for the question.

As everyone in the House knows or should know, any private member's bill should not be a money bill and this is not a bill—a money bill. It simply re-allocates and redistributes the dollars that are currently under The Elections Act in respect of the 10 per cent and it allows more individuals to be able to be entitled to that rebate. *[interjection]*

I apologize, Madam Speaker, the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) keeps chirping. I don't know what he's chirping about, but he's invited to get up and speak to this bill.

Madam Speaker: I would call the member for Morris to order, please.

Are there any further questions? The honourable—well, I did see the honourable member for Thompson at one point standing up. Go ahead.

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Our government repealed the NDP vote tax subsidy for political parties. We declined it each and every year while the NDP and Liberals took hundreds of thousands of dollars away from Manitoba families.

Does the member for St. Johns think that it's acceptable to take taxpayers' money and give it to her party?

Ms. Fontaine: Actually, let me flip that question. Every single member in this House has taken the 10 per cent rebate, so turn it and ask it on yourself whether or not that you guys think that that's appropriate as well.

Madam Speaker: Just a caution to the member that when making references to other people in the Chamber, it should be in a third-party manner and that the questions and responses should be coming through the Chair.

* (10:50)

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I would ask the member if she's considered whether any of the measures that she's proposing should be extended to leadership contests in parties.

Ms. Fontaine: This bill does not discuss that and we haven't considered that at this point.

Mr. Lindsey: We'll attempt to get reasonable answers which we've seen so far, sometimes to unreasonable questions, but we'll continue.

So my question to the member from St. Johns is, why did you choose 2 per cent for the cut off? Why not a different number? What's the significance of the 2 per cent?

Ms. Fontaine: I think that, as I have noted, it's important that this private member's bill, in order to fight for democracy, wouldn't violate any of the rules of the House in respect of private members' bills, not being attached to any additional dollars.

And, coupled with that, we know that federally the rebate for political parties is 2 per cent. So I think that we were in line. We wanted to ensure that more people would be able to access those rebate dollars to promote, at a very grassroots level, democracy here in Manitoba.

Mr. Teitsma: I can perhaps reiterate something that the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) asked because I don't think it was well understood by the member, but what's going on in this bill is that money will be taken from Manitoba taxpayers disproportionate to their willingness to support any particular party, proportionate to the way that that party chooses to spend it. That's what it's proportionate to and this bill is asking for that to happen: for taxpayer dollars to be given to parties who spend more—the more they spend, the more they get.

Do you think that's okay? Does she do—think that's okay? Sorry.

Ms. Fontaine: Again, I don't quite understand when the member for Radisson gets up to attempt to ask his questions. What I will share with the House, Madam Speaker, in what I think is unacceptable is, you know, \$3,000 is more than enough money for individual donors to donate to a particular candidate or to a party. Five thousand dollars is a bit excessive in respect of—and I would suggest to the House, unduly influencing elections. The—you know, there are several constituencies in Manitoba that don't have access to those dollars, which then disenfranchises those constituencies in order to run a fair and equitable election. Three thousand dollars is more than enough money.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. The time for this question period also has expired.

Debate

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I have a lot to say, but perhaps not as much time as I'd like to have to say it, so I'll try to be quick.

This bill is perhaps unsurprising coming from the NDP. You know, I think we all should be grateful—we should all be grateful that private members' bills can't be money bills, because if they were money bills, I could hardly imagine what kind of juicy nuggets there might be in this legislation. But, as it is, it is true to form. What this bill is trying to do is take money from taxpayers and keep giving it to political parties, and established political parties at that.

You know, I do appreciate the symbolic gesture to drop the 10 to two, but the fact of the matter is that if you want to treat everybody equally, zero is the way to treat everybody equally. That's what our legislation is going to be doing in Bill 16. It's going to ensure that the way that political participation

occurs, the ultimate expression of democracy is that (a) people are voting, (b) people are volunteering and spending their time and in some cases, donating their money. Now, I do, you know, I can concede that having a political tax credit on those contributions is reasonable, but I should note that that contribution, that kickback to the people who are making the contribution is equitable based on the level of their participation. It doesn't take money away from people who are not willing to participate. They are free to stay out if they want to. And that's the way democratic—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

In accordance with rule 24, and as previously announced, I am interrupting this debate to put the question on the first official opposition selected bill.

The question before the House, then, is second reading of Bill 232, The Election Financing Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

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

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

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

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 232.

Division

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

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Nays

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

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 15, Nays 29.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

House Business

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Deputy Speaker, on House business.

Pursuant to rule 33(9), I am announcing that the next 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 Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). The title of the resolution is Curriculum Support Centre is a Needed Resource for Manitoba Educators.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable member for St. Johns that private member's resolution be considered for the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Concordia. The title of the resolution is The Curriculum Support Centre is a Needed Resource for Manitoba Educators.

Order. The hour being past noon, the House is now recessed and stands recessed 'til 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 4, 2019

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Bill 232–The Election Financing Amendment Act	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Fontaine	1021
Second Readings–Public Bills		Questions	
Bill 228–The Sikh Heritage Month Act		Teitsma	1023
Kinew	1015	Fontaine	1023
Questions		Gerrard	1023
A. Smith	1017	Lindsey	1023
Kinew	1018	Ewasko	1023
Wiebe	1018	Bindle	1024
Yakimoski	1018		
Gerrard	1019	Debate	
Micklefield	1019	Teitsma	1025
Debate			
A. Smith	1020		

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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