

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

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

Vol. LXXVI No. 76A - 10 a.m., Thursday, October 27, 2022

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTomARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINew, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan, Hon.	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Kirkfield Park	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 27, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): 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.

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

Good morning, everybody. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Speaker's Statement

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As previously announced, the official opposition caucus has chosen Bill 241, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Licence Plates for MMIWG2S Awareness), as their third selected bill for this session.

In accordance with the Official Opposition House Leader's (Ms. Fontaine) letter, this bill will be considered this morning as follows: debate at second reading will begin immediately following this statement. The question will be put on the second reading motion at 10:55 a.m.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 241—The Drivers and Vehicles
Amendment Act
(Licence Plates for MMIWG2S Awareness)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, I will now recognize the honourable member for Point Douglas, to move her second reading motion to begin this debate.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member from St. Johns, that Bill 241, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Licence Plates for MMIWG2S Awareness), now be read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Smith: I'm going to try not to get emotional through this because as you know, this is something that's very close to my heart, as someone who has a sister that's been missing now for just over 14 years. This is something that's very near and dear to my heart.

I've done a lot of work with a lot of our family members throughout the years, not only here in our city, our province, but all across Canada. And, you know, resoundingly, I hear from families that they feel like their loved ones have been forgotten, that they feel like people aren't connected to the issue and that there's not enough awareness being raised around this issue.

So this would be a way for us in this House, you know, as leaders in this province, to stand with those families, to help those families feel like they're not alone. But not only us in this House, but Manitobans. You know, I drive around and I see plates from, whether it's the Winnipeg Jets or Humane Society. And, you know, I go to Jets games. I support Jets. I love animals and, you know, I support those as well.

And so many people, since I've brought this out and put it on social media, have contacted me and want to buy this plate, want to support this—people who aren't directly connected to this issue that say, I want to help raise awareness, I want to help educate through this.

And as I'm sitting in traffic and I'm looking at these plates and, you know, reflecting on, you know, being proud of the Winnipeg Jets or being proud of

the work that our Humane Society does to keep our animals safe, this is a way for us to acknowledge, to support and to help educate those around MMIWG2S.

You know, in 2016, when Tina Fontaine's, you know, body was found in the Red River, that awakened Canada. But I feel like a lot of Canadians have—are not conscious about this anymore. We see social media where our young people are missing. And people are turning blind eyes to this. And this is a way for people to awaken again, the same way that we did when Tina Fontaine went missing. The same way that families need our communities to come everyday and help support them.

And I think about, you know, Justice Murray Sinclair's quote. He said, you know, the way—the only way that we're going to get out of this—we got into this through education, the only way we're going to get out of this is through education. And the funds from this plate would go to support those families.

I think about my own family, you know, my brother-in-law that's raising three of my sister's children. My—one of them is already 18—well, he's 20 now. But he could have the opportunity—he's now a dad. He could have the opportunity through this fund to access post-secondary education.

He can have the opportunity because with one parent, often, you know, my brother-in-law struggles because he's the only one that is working. He's got three children and it's a hardship on families. And they're living in poverty. And this is a way to help his family and many of our families get out of poverty.

So many of our children that, you know, have gone murdered or missing—and I've worked with a lot of them when I worked at Marymount—have, you know, been in the CFS system. And often, you know, when these children leave the CFS system, they're not given the same support. So this is a way for those children as well to access some extra support to help them, you know, in their life and get to a place that they want to be.

The other thing is educating. You know, when you're stopped at a red light and you're seeing this, you know, whether it's a red hand or a red dress, which has become a symbol of, you know, missing and murdered, and people recognize that, people are going to have conversations in their car. Perhaps they're going to go to work and, you know, talk about this plate. Perhaps there's going to be conversations in classrooms about it.

And maybe people are going to choose to get involved, maybe walk with the Bear Clan to help keep our communities safe, maybe get involved with Drag the Red and the preventative work that they do. People think twice about putting someone in that river now because of the work that's being done. They also bring community together, these groups. Mama Bear Clan, that goes out and, you know, feeds the community, checks on our relatives. People will get involved with initiatives like this.

And most importantly, you know, we want people to stop turning a blind eye against the violence that's happening. And perhaps this will help someone who is in that situation or someone who knows someone who is in that situation come forward and help that person.

* (10:10)

So, you know, I really hope that the other side, you know, that we can unanimously vote on this today and pass this and let Manitobans decide, you know, whether they want to purchase a licence plate. We've heard that, you know, perhaps MPI thinks that there's too many plates out there, but again, we need to let the people of Manitoba decide. It's 1,000 licence plates that have to be purchased before they are produced and I think we can go well beyond that here in this province.

I think, you know, we have, oh, well over 1,000 families that are grieving the loss of their loved one, that are, you know, searching for their loved one, that have no answers. And this is a way for us to stand united with them, to support them and to honour, to honour the work that they've done, but honour those who aren't with us today.

So I'm—I don't want to speak a lot because I do want to listen to, you know, what the other side has to say and I really hope that they do support it because we do have a lot of family members in the gallery today and I want to acknowledge our families that are here today.

We—I also consulted with the Red River Métis national government and they were in support of this. I've consulted with the Inuit community as well; they were in support of this. And certainly our leadership here in Manitoba is in support of it.

So I really hope that our leaders here in the Chamber and that are going to come in and vote at 11:55, hoping we don't even have to get to a vote at 11:55, that we can pass this this morning and that we can all stand with our families.

And I just want to say miigwech to all of you that are here today that are supporting this, and that I love our families that are here today, and we will always continue to push and, you know, make sure that no other women have to experience what we're experiencing, that we don't have to be four times more likely to walk out our door and be murdered or go missing.

So with those few words, like I said, help educate the public, help support and honour our families and, most important, let's help support those families to get our children educated that now only have one parent.

Miigwech.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I want to thank the member for bringing this forward. I, myself, just had a bill passed in regards to licence plates, so I've been through the process before. And I know in her preamble the member mentioned that funding will go to the families. I know with MPI right now it's the—its that specialty plates cost \$70 and \$30 of the fee goes towards a designated charity.

So I'm just wondering if the member can explain how the money will get to the families.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I thank the member for that question.

So we'd like to set up a trust fund, and we'll get into that after this bill is passed, who is going to manage that trust fund, but children would be able to access that trust fund, again, for post-secondary education.

Families, resoundingly, that I spoke to don't have access to extra funds to be able to support their children through post-secondary, whether that's the trades. There's less bursaries in this province, unfortunately, for them to access and there's really nothing for MMIWG families in terms of support to help their children, especially when it comes to education.

And like I said, Murray Sinclair said it well, education got us into this mess and education is what's going—

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

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Thank you to my colleague for bringing forward this very important bill and for, you know, always using her own grief and pain in such a compassionate and constructive way to help families in Manitoba and to educate all of us.

I would like to ask the member how this bill would help bring Manitoba closer to fulfilling an MMIWG2S call for justice.

Mrs. Smith: Thank—I thank my colleague for that question. And of course, you know, one of the Calls to Action is to educate the community, and this certainly would help educate the community. Like I said, I'm—I know all of us have seen different specialty plates in the community, and you often think, where does that money go to?

So I've done a little bit of research and looked online and stuff, and a lot of the money goes to different causes. So Madox's Warriors, theirs goes towards cancer and supporting children. This would go towards MMIWG and supporting the children left behind. But also, you know, Manitoba has a responsibility to support our MMIWG families, and reconciliation—

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

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for Point Douglas for bringing this really important piece of legislation forward, and I'd like to thank our guests who have joined us here today as well in the gallery.

I was hoping that the member could share with us, just, is there a way to ensure that the red dress or red hand that would be designed on the licence plate could be designed by an Indigenous person here in Manitoba?

Mrs. Smith: Well, miigwech, I thank the member for that question.

I'm sure that's a detail we would certainly work out, and we would like to see an Indigenous artist, absolutely. I actually had my daughter's red hand tattooed on me from an Indigenous artist. And I did that in honour of my sister, but also in honour of my

daughter, because I don't want my daughter ever to experience going missing or being murdered.

This is, you know, nothing—this is something I don't wish on anyone, and again, this is part of reconciliation. This is a part of making sure that our children are safe, our women are safe, and this is just one small step that we can make together as leaders in this Chamber—

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

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): I'd also like to thank the member from Point Douglas for bringing this bill forward.

I was wondering if the member from Point Douglas had already looked at different designs to go on the licence plate, and if so, who she's spoken with to help design her plate.

Mrs. Smith: Miigwech, I thank the member for that question.

And we have put a draft, both plates out. My CA did the red dresses that we often wear in this Chamber, so, and she is Indigenous, she is from the community and she also has family members who have gone—been murdered. So, certainly, we'd like to see possibly that design used, and maybe my daughter's hand, or another family's, you know, design, but certainly we will work with families to ensure that what they want on that licence plate is what will be designed.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I would like to thank my sister colleague from Point Douglas for bringing forth this important piece of legislation and for also doing her part and more than her part to carry a lot of the heavy lifting and a lot of the heart that she really brings and the passion she brings to this understanding that it truly hits home for her, it hits home for a lot of Indigenous families here in Manitoba.

And it is something that's not new. This issue has been ongoing for quite some time, and it's been the families that have carried this burden and carried this load.

So the question I have is how have families and organizations and how have they supported and how have they brought this issue of MMIWG2S into the national spotlight?

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

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

Certainly, you know, families have been speaking out, trying to keep their loved ones in the media. Often, you know, they get one or two days of media when their loved one goes missing or is murdered. This is a way to help keep that in the spotlight each and every day.

* (10:20)

I think about, you know, the Catcheway family who every summer is out there searching. They've excavated a garbage dump. Drag the Red went out and helped them drag a lake. And these are the extremes that families go through with almost no support.

Ka Ni Kanichihk has Medicine Bear that supports some families. There are—

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

Mr. Isleifson: Just a question for the member. Putting this bill together, was there any thought or consideration to possibly looking at the costs associated with accessing these plates if the applicant was a family member of a MMIWG2S person?

Mrs. Smith: I know the cost of the plates is \$70 and \$30 goes towards that trust fund that would be established, and I have had several families ask if they could, that don't drive, if they could get a plate, you know, just to have in their home or to display somewhere and certainly that's something that we would try and accommodate and work with families that—any family that wanted that plate.

And I just wanted to quickly quote when the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) introduced 208, the support the troops licence plate, our current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) supported that and she said that this was just a small way that we can support. So I think this is, again, a small way that we can support—

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

Ms. Naylor: I have another question for the member for—

An Honourable Member: Point Douglas.

Ms. Naylor: Point Douglas, thank you.

One of the—part of the Calls to Action that we know about for MMIWG2S is to—education campaigns to challenge the acceptance and normalization of violence.

Can you—can the member talk a little bit more about how this would accomplish that goal?

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

And again, this is—it—this is about education, as well, not only educating Manitobans but I think this could be, you know, something that other provinces could replicate right across the country because this is something that, you know, is long overdue in terms of providing support to those families, but educating Canadians.

I remember in 2006 when NWAC, the native women's association first put out the report and said that there were about 600 women missing then, and people were like, no, there can't be that many. And then when the RCMP released their number of 1,200, like, people were kind of like, wow, I can't believe that many. And we know that that number is much, much larger and we need to, you know, ensure through education that this stops.

And I just want to acknowledge all of the women's centres that are in the gallery today and that are supporting this that do a lot of work on the front lines. We have a lot of front-line workers here, as well, from Mama Bear Clan, from Comm.UNITY.204 as well as family members, so thank you so much for being here, much love to all of you and that you for all of the work that you do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House today and speak to this very important topic. I commend the member for bringing this bill forward and helping facilitate the work that these incredible organizations are doing to support the families of MMIWG2S individuals and to help address the root cause of why Indigenous women and girls are overly victimized.

In 2015, the federal government called a national inquiry to investigate the high victimization of Indigenous women and girls. This was done in response to the Call to Action No. 41 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which stated: "We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, to appoint a public inquiry into the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls."

The goal of the inquiry was to investigate and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls and to examine

the underlying social, economic, cultural, institutional and historical causes that contribute to the ongoing violence and particular vulnerabilities.

This was a historic undertaking by the federal government and our provincial government. I have had the opportunity to speak to participants who shared their stories at the national inquiry when it visited Manitoba for the hearing. And I have spoken to members of the community who attended to learn and hear the stories of survivors, and what can be done.

Over the multiple days of hearings, many people spoke and shared their experiences. In addition to these many experts from around the country that were brought in, there was a chance to present their research into the inquiry, and how it was considered.

The conclusion of this report from the national inquiry was similar to that of the truth and reconciliation. It laid out 231 individual calls to justice, to help address the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. Our government has begun responding to these calls to action.

The department of Indigenous and northern relations has taken concrete steps to address the systemic causes of violence to Indigenous women. Our government created a specific Cabinet committee that looks at addressing gender-based violence. We as a government have asked the departments to start a review of all the efforts across government that are being undertaken to address the gender-based violence that disproportionately impacts Indigenous women and girls.

This work will contribute to a fulsome and co-ordinated approach to responding to the final report and calls for justice from the national inquiry. Our government's working to develop a concrete and effective response to the national inquiry that builds on work that is underway at the community level, and aligns with the main pillars of Manitoba's framework for addressing gender-based violence.

This long-term plan is exactly that: a long-term plan, and does not offer immediate solutions. It is part of addressing the broader systemic issues. But that has not limited us. Our government has also implemented immediate measures to help the families of MMIWG and two-spirited individuals. Our government has already partnered with Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata to co-develop, sorry, to co-develop a provincial program to

raise awareness and end violence against Indigenous women and girls.

This was a real investment by our government into addressing the gender-based violence that disproportionately impacts Indigenous people. Another concrete action that our government has taken is meeting with over 40 stakeholder organizations and Indigenous leadership to develop trauma-informed solutions for family members and survivors, with the help of funding provided by our government.

Our government has worked to support the families of MMIWG and two-spirited people by funding and helping facilitate with trauma-informed guidance of Indigenous-led organizations such as Manitoba Moon Voices and Two-Spirited People of Manitoba MMIWG2S sisters campaign, the Soles on Fire Walk/Run Half Marathon, the Gaynor Family Library in Selkirk Sacred Spirits of Turtle Island Mural Unveiling, the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata October 4th Ceremony, Healing Support, and National Panel Discussion, and the 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the Light of Helen Betty Osborne.

These are some of the programs that we have actively helped fund, facilitate or participate in as a government. But the overall aspiration is to prevent any more people from becoming a victim. Prevention of gender-based violence has also been undertaken by our government. Our government has contributed to the Southern Chiefs' Organization's initiative tentatively called—and I apologize here, because I may say this wrong—Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgoohn, meaning, it is visible, Anishinaabowin [*phonetic*].

This project will build a space for economic and social reconciliation in the former Hudson's Bay Company building in downtown Winnipeg. A total of nearly 300 new affordable homes for members of local First Nations, including families and post-secondary students, will be created, and a portion of the units will be culturally safe, assisted-living units for First Nation elders.

* (10:30)

High-quality, licensed child-care facilities will also be located on this site. We have donated—or sorry, given three—35 million dollars as of April 2022 to this project. This is a historic step forward towards the prevention of gender-based violence by helping to play our part in supporting the creation of safe, supportive communities.

In addition to another prevention program our government has partnered with was the creation of a

healing lodge in Thompson. This will work to help end the re-offense rate by providing culturally appropriate healing support to those in need.

This program will focus on helping youth and helping to get youth out of a cycle that often traps them. This program will provide young people with easier access and improved, quality mental health and addiction supports, employment and skills training. This is crucial investment in the time of life when young people can escape the cycle of crime and become strong community members.

We have also invested in and partnered with the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation to develop the Buffalo Riders program, which provides early intervention free on people by providing them with access to substance use and addictions treatment.

There are many programs to list, Deputy Speaker, but I believe at this point, I would like to just highlight on some of the work with Clan Mothers to enhance access to land-based teachings to Indigenous youth who are at risk of sexual exploitation.

Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank again the member from Point Douglas for bringing this bill forward as I support her with her bill.

Thank you.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): First and foremost, let me acknowledge all of our guests that we have in the gallery here today. We certainly have a lot of folks, community members, MMIWG2S family members and folks that are on the front lines of bringing attention to the issue of MMIWG2S, those that are on the front lines of working to protect and safeguard Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited.

I'd like to acknowledge we also have Willow Tree action therapists, who are all women therapists who have reclaimed the space at McGregor and Main Street and are currently working on a memorial in honour of Simone Sanderson.

And so I know on behalf of our colleagues here, we acknowledge each and every one of you for your work today. And a profound miigwech for being here and again, of course, for the work that you all do.

I want to say miigwech to my sister colleague, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) for bringing forward this important bill. And, you know, I think it's important to, again, put on the record that the member for Point Douglas is, you know, has been doing this work for a long, long time, since her sister went missing.

And it's important to highlight that again, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) is one of, if not the only, and first one, as well, MMIWG2S family member ever elected to any legislature across our territories here in Canada.

And so that's important to put on the record because when the member for Point Douglas, you know, presents a private member's bill in respect of MMIWG2S, we should commit ourselves to ensuring that that bill receives royal assent and unanimous consent and agreement here in the House.

Really, Deputy Speaker, in many respects, this bill is actually the bare minimum of what we can be doing in this Chamber to draw attention to the issue of MMIWG2S. And, you know, I think it's important that we recognize that there is so much work that needs to occur, so much co-ordinated work, so much political will in order to tackle the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited.

You know, I think that anybody that pays attention in this province or certainly across the country, but pays attention to the issue of MMIWG2S, will note that this year alone, we have had a significant number of our sisters who have been taken from us and murdered, and again—and left in some of the most grotesque ways imaginable. Thrown in—just grotesque ways imaginable, Deputy Speaker.

And so, you know, it's important for us to bear witness to that continued violence. It's important for us to bear witness to that continued violence in this Chamber. And as I've said many, many times, it's in this Chamber that the decisions that impact on the lives of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited are made.

Those decisions are made and executed in this Chamber, and so, once again, the bare minimum that we can do today is pass the member for Point Douglas's bill on having licence plates in honour of MMIWG2S. You know, the member for Point Douglas talks about, you know, the ability to continue to draw attention to the issue of MMIWG2S through licence plates, and I think that that's really important.

And there are a variety of different folks, stakeholders and community groups and PTOs that continue to draw attention—through public awareness campaigns, through art, through community engagement—about the critical nature of MMIWG2S. And this is one of those things that can complement all of that work that's taking place, again, not only here in

Winnipeg or Manitoba, but certainly that work that's taking place across the country from coast to coast to coast.

I just want to—for the record, just—I want to just list some of the licence plates that are currently in circulation, because I think it's important for the discussion. So they are, Deputy Speaker: Winnipeg Blue Bombers, blue; Winnipeg Blue Bombers, gold; Winnipeg Blue Bombers, Grey Cup; Winnipeg Jets; Winnipeg Jets, heritage; Winnipeg Goldeyes; CurlManitoba public insurance; Brandon Wheat Kings; Winnipeg Humane Society; University of Winnipeg; Fish Futures; Snoman; Support our Troops; Fish Futures, limited edition; Basketball Manitoba and Madox's Warriors.

And I list that current infrastructure—or current list of licence plates that are available to Manitobans because there's not one single Indigenous licence plate on that list. There's nothing in respect of—clearly, there's nothing in respect of MMIWG2S. There's nothing in respect of residential school survivors. There's nothing in respect of reconciliation. There's—and more than half of the licence plates on this list have to do with sports.

And so I put that on the record because we are in the midst of an ongoing genocide of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited. And if we can't agree in this House, and have the political will to ensure that the lives of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited are honoured, acknowledged and in some way sought to bring attention or action, the calls to justice.

If we can't do that today, what that tells us, what that tells me as an Indigenous woman, is that my life doesn't—is not as important. It doesn't matter more than the sports teams or fishing or curling. And in 2022, that's simply unacceptable.

And once again, this is literally the bare minimum that can be done to draw attention and honour families, and all of the lives of those women, girls and two-spirited that have been stolen from us; that have been taken from us; that have been stolen and taken from their families and their communities and their nations, and their children in many cases.

* (10:40)

I just want to say this, is that Manitoba is ground zero for MMIWG2S. That's not something that we should be proud of. We have the distinction across the country of being ground zero for MMIWG2S.

My own community of Sagkeeng First Nation has one of the highest levels of MMIWG2S anywhere across the country. The member for Point Douglas's (Mrs. Smith) home community has also some of the highest numbers of MMIWG2S, certainly here in Manitoba.

We shouldn't be proud of that. We should be actively seeking to address that. We should be actively seeking to prevent that. And we should, as a society, and certainly every member in this Chamber, should be positioning Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited as the sacred beings that we are. As the powerful, generous, resilient, courageous women, girls and two-spirited that we truly are.

And again, the bare minimum in lifting up, affirming Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited that our lives are worthy, that our lives mean something, that we are sacred, the very bare minimum that we can do today is pass the member for Point Douglas's bill, and ensure that the lives of all of our sisters and relatives are honoured and acknowledged for many, many years to come.

Miigwech, Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I want to just start off by thanking the member for Point Douglas for bringing forward this legislation and just all the work that she has done and continues to do for murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people here in these Chambers.

I'd also like to thank all of our guests who have joined us today. It is really, really telling with we can bring people into this building. It is a public building. It is meant for everyone here in Manitoba to come and join us, and it is frankly very, very inspiring to see you all come out today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the beginning of the month I lost a friend who—I grew up with her. We used to hang out after church every Sunday and we'd hang out in her basement. And she was adopted, and she went missing at the beginning of the month. And this is the first time that it's actually affected me personally, where I know someone who is now part of MMIWG2S.

And I can tell you, it does hit you differently when you become familiar with it, when it is someone, in fact, that you do know. I'm just going to speak for a couple of minutes, because I do want this legislation to pass this morning. I want to talk a bit about when I first started learning about residential schools, it was

through a class that I took through the University of Winnipeg. We had to read the TRC.

In the TRC—I'm incredibly grateful, because we debriefed it as a class—but it was the first time I was really exposed to really important and significant parts of Canada's history that I'm disappointed we were not exposed to growing up in our school systems. That the conversations were not happening. And they're starting to happen now, which is great, but they should have been happening as we were growing up.

And I've referenced, actually, my friend in the past: her name is Yuliia. She's from Ukraine. I remember a few years ago she had a sleepover at my house, and she was telling me all about the history of Ukraine, the good and the bad. And it really challenged me, because I think Canada is very, very good at highlighting the good parts of our history—which is good, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we're not very good at highlighting and remembering and making sense of and learning from our bad history.

And I think that this is critical, and we are learning this more and more. And that's why we need to be gaining awareness and spreading awareness in education, and this piece of legislation does, in fact, do that. And I know there are many things we can be doing to gain that awareness.

I know very popular shows including, I think it's called Bring Her Home that is a popular show that has been gaining awareness on MMIWG2S, and the TRC, of course, and calling for the calls of action. All levels of government need to get involved in these calls of action, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But this, having a licence plate that will be driving around our province and—not just in Manitoba; the—people leave the province too. This will be spread across Canada, across the world, and it is such a beautiful way to be able to put on someone's mind MMIWG2S.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need this, and I am in—very much in support of this legislation. I love the idea of getting the community involved, of having it on our vehicles throughout the day, of having proceeds go towards the loved ones of those who have been left behind. And we hope to see this legislation passed.

Thank you.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record for Bill 241, in regards to MMIWG2S. And I—also, as in my question earlier, I'd like to thank my sister

colleague, member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), for bringing this forward and continuing to do a lot of the heavy lifting in this building and in this Chamber, in regards to the issue of MMIWG2S.

And I'd also like to thank the families. I'd like to say thank you, but I'd also like to give my heartfelt thoughts and prayers with what you go through, with what you go through everyday, with what you have to deal with everyday.

If there's things we could do on the floor of this Chamber, in the slightest way to help, to bring awareness, to bring comfort, then every member on this floor should be doing that. And doing something like this, bringing forth this piece of legislation to bring awareness, is a small thing.

It's a small step that we can do, but it's also a necessary step that we need to do. We need to have those communications. We need to have that talk. We need to have the discussions that many, many people in government, people in law enforcement, people in the community did not want to have.

They did not want to have this because they didn't think this was an issue. They didn't think this was a priority. They didn't think this was something that was devastating our communities and devastating our families, and it is.

So I applaud you. And I almost hazard to not use the word applaud, because it shouldn't be about a celebration because of the issue and the heartfelt and the heartache that this is causing. And I know, perhaps, when your families were younger and your loved ones were with you, that it was maybe an issue that we never thought about, that we never thought would be an issue, but it is.

As a father myself to four daughters, I have no idea how I would feel, how I would react and what I could do and what would happen if I was immediately impacted the way some families are. I'm impacted to a certain degree because there's a lot of people that I know, families that I know, loved ones that I know, that are affected more intimately than I am.

For myself, I reside in my community. I live there. Even when I'm in this Chamber, that's where I am. So this morning when I left home, I passed by it. And my house is very close to the graveyard, and there's Jana Williams' grave is in that graveyard.

And I see that every day. I pass by there every day. And the loss that those families, and that family is suffering is tremendous, and I have no idea what

that would feel like. And for families to be able to—have to feel like they're chasing down a government, they're chasing down society to address this issue, to see this issue as the true emergency that it is, I can imagine the frustration that must be.

Because for some, they just see it as a cause of the day. Oh, that's going to go away. But as my colleague for St. Johns had mentioned, it's the—Manitoba is ground zero, and that's not something to be proud of. But we need to use that to be able to bring that awareness and bring that forward.

And when we talk about the licence plates and what it would mean, there's the monetary component in terms of there's the financial contribution to the organizations and to the families to help bring awareness, but it's about also encouraging that discussion, and encouraging that awareness, encouraging a discussion.

Because when you drive around—and I was in the States this past summer and I do have a Winnipeg Jets plate on my vehicle currently. And I got asked, what is that about? So, you know, people didn't really know, so I had a conversation.

* (10:50)

But I would also love to have that conversation with an MMIWG2S licence plate when I travel across Canada, when I travel into the States and they ask me, what is that? What is that for? And maybe those organizations and those other territories don't even know that the issue is there. So that's bringing the awareness.

And there's a lot of conversation about, oh, we need to make a threshold, we need to—in order for this to happen it needs to be a thousand licence plates that need to be sold or whatever that threshold may turn out to be. Well, let's let that—let's let Manitobans decide. Let's let all of Manitoba decide, because while you, as families that are going through this, carry a lot of the heavy lifting, part of that heavy lifting is having those discussions and bringing forth that awareness so that we all need to have that discussion, that we can all do our part so that we get to a point and a day where this does not—no longer happens. We don't lose our loved ones, we don't see our loved ones go missing, we don't have so much uncertainty with what our loved ones are experiencing and the violence that they're experiencing.

So in regards to what we do on this floor, we bring forth something just like this, just so we could have that discussion, so we can show our support. Because

as leaders in your communities, sometimes you think, well, there's nothing I can do, you know, I'm just one person, I'm just a small voice. But when we collectively speak together, when we collectively have those discussions together, that voice is so great. When we come to this place and we have these discussions that perhaps this Chamber and this room never had before, that's doing our part, too. So I applaud you for your efforts, my heart is with you, and if I can do the smallest thing by voting yes to this, absolutely. But I want to do more. We all need to do more. And that's why we need to do this.

So with that, I'd say *miigwech* for all the work that you do. My heart is with your families when you suffer your losses, when you have those discussions, when you relive those wounds over and over. And if there's things that we can do on this level, let's have those discussions so that we can all be better.

Miigwech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers? Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 241, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Licence Plates for MMIWG2S Awareness).

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

All those in favour—[*interjection*—I don't have to say—okay. Thank you.

Agreed and so ordered. I declare the motion passed.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Deputy Speaker, is it the will of the House to see—call it 11 a.m.?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 11 a.m.? [*Agreed*]

RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time being 11 a.m., we will now move to private members' resolutions. And it behooved me to remind the House that then we will recess for lunch at 11:54, not 12:00, because we're calling it 11:00 right now.

So, the honourable Opposition House Leader, on?

House Business

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On House business.

Ms. Fontaine: Pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Cutting Education Funding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Pursuant—it has been announced by the honourable Opposition House Leader that, pursuant to rule 34, subsection 8, the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Keewatinook. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Cutting Education Funding.

Res. 26—Calling on the Provincial Government to Adequately Fund the Construction of the New Aquatic Centre in Thompson

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will now move to private members' resolution hour. Resolution previously stated before this House for this hour is No. 26, Calling on the Provincial Government to Adequately Fund the Construction of the New Aquatic Centre in Thompson.

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): I move, seconded by the member from Maples,

WHEREAS the only public pool in Thompson closed in 2019, leaving the city and surrounding communities without an aquatic facility; and

WHEREAS the closest public pool is in The Pas, a four hour drive away; and

WHEREAS Thompson has been without a public pool for the three years since the closure; and

WHEREAS on May 9th, 2022, the day before the deadline to call the Thompson by-election, the Provincial Government finally announced funding to build a new aquatic centre in Thompson; and

WHEREAS \$15 million was put forward by the Federal Government, the Provincial Government and the City of Thompson to cover the construction of the aquatic facility of which \$5 million was provincially funded; and

WHEREAS in actuality the total project cost is closer to \$20 million, meaning the province did not provide enough funding to cover what was required; and

WHEREAS this nearly \$5 million shortfall places the status of the entire project at risk; and

WHEREAS the province has offered no additional funds to make up for this shortfall; and

WHEREAS the province has not provided a timeline for when the aquatic centre will be built.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to adequately fund the construction of the new aquatic centre in Thompson and provide a timeline for its construction.

Motion presented.

Mr. Redhead: Thompson has been without an aquatic centre going on for almost four years now. The closure of that aquatic centre's had a devastating impact on the citizens of Thompson, the surrounding communities, who rely on that aquatic centre for first aid training, for swimming lessons, for just having pool parties with your family.

I know growing up in Thompson, the pool was such a pillar to our daily life, and a necessity to the community. Its closure is really devastating to the community, and I know that the members of Thompson have continued to push for this aquatic centre to be constructed. And they're—they've gone without a timeline for quite some time and they're urging the government to provide that timeline for construction.

I know there's been a beautiful design that's in place. Funding has come through from all levels of government, but we know that the funding that's provided falls short by about \$4 million. And so without that \$4 million, we don't know whether or not we're going to be able to actually see that pool, the aquatic centre, constructed for the citizens of Thompson.

Like I said, I know, growing up, I spent a many number of days, summer days at the pool with family, with friends. Even as a young parent, we've had birthday parties there for our children. It was just a huge pillar for the community of Thompson, surrounding communities.

Now, without the pool, there—people have gone without swimming lessons, and we know how important aquatic safety is. I think about 22 people in Manitoba drowned each summer. It's a huge number. It's a preventable number. I'm thinking of a member who called me over the summer saying, you know, they've done swimming lessons in the lake in August. I know—I don't know if you know the August months in northern Manitoba, but they're frigid, pretty cold.

And so some of those children weren't able to participate in the swimming lessons and aquatic safety lessons provided by the Red Cross.

And so, the aquatic centre would be able to provide that type of training, safety for children, for the members of the North. And I know the Thompson swim club has been devastated by the closure of the pool, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they've been urging the City, the Province, my office, to push to make sure that this facility comes to fruition, right? And right now, that is not possible with the amount of money that's on the table.

We know that because of COVID, because of inflation, that the cost of these projects and a lot of projects have skyrocketed, right? And so the initial estimates for construction of a new aquatic centre aren't what they are today. They've actually gone up by millions of dollars.

And so that's what we're doing here. We're asking the provincial government to fund that shortfall, so that we're able to see this aquatic centre built for the city of Thompson, but not only the city of Thompson, the surrounding communities.

* (11:00)

It serves about 50,000 Manitobans, the region. I know that surrounding communities bus in children, school trips, or used to anyway when we did have a facility, to take swimming lessons, to just have a good time and a safe environment. That's not possible and hasn't been possible since 2019, and so we're really urging that the province fund that shortfall, to make sure that this project comes to life.

Yeah, it's—it has had a devastating impact on people's mental health, we know that through the pandemic and—recreation has had a huge impact on people's mental health, and the lack of a pool contributed to that mental health issues and stuff.

And so, you know, what we want is, we want our youth, our children, to be able to fill their time with something positive. We know that there's not a lot of recreational opportunities in Thompson, and so this would help fill that gap in terms of recreational opportunities for Thompson and surrounding communities.

Yeah, and, you know, even my children, who live in Thompson, they say dad when are we going to get a pool, we hear a lot of talk about it. One of my daughters is a, we call her a fish because she lives in the water, she loves the water, and I feel for children

like that who don't have the opportunity to exercise that joy in the winter months.

You know, in the summer we have Paint Lake and other beautiful lakes to swim at, but as you know, Thompson is a northern community and that time-frame is very, very short for being able to swim out in nature.

So, the facility provides a lot of opportunity, economic opportunity, jobs, safety training and a lot of other things. So, with that being said, this is what we're bringing forward and I appreciate your time, Mr. Speaker, and I hope the government considers funding the Thompson aquatic centre fully.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions

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

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I thank the member from Thompson for bringing this forward.

Could he possibly tell me what're some of the specific costs that have increased since the city of Thompson submitted its initial written request, and why were these contingencies not accounted for within the original plan, when they applied for the three-way funding?

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): I thank the member for his question.

I think, you know, the initial estimate for this project was based on a design, but of course the pandemic had hit, inflation had hit, and it's been about three years now since that initial design was submitted, and as we know construction costs, material costs, have skyrocketed through the pandemic, and for other reasons.

So I—no one seen that coming and that's why we're asking the provincial government to step up and ensure that the pool is built, and adequately funded.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I'd like to thank my colleague the member for Thompson for bringing his knowledge of the area to this House. It is great to have a voice back here for the northern region in Manitoba, and an important voice, and I want to thank

him for that. Especially relaying the experience as a family as well.

So I'd like to ask the member, Deputy Speaker, is what sort of impact has a 'lengthly' closure of the Thompson aquatic centre, had on water safety, on recreation, and on the community generally?

Mr. Redhead: I'd like to thank my colleague for the question. It has a—had huge impact on water safety. We're not able to provide aquatic safety lessons to children, to young ones in the region since the pool has closed.

Not only that, but seniors are not able to do their aquacise any longer, which has a huge impact on our senior population in Thompson, and we know that the aquacise was a huge program when the north-plex pool was in operation

And so it has an impact on seniors, on youth and on the community as a whole.

Thank you.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I thank the member for Thompson.

This is an important measure. A friend of mine, Les Hansen, was a—became a competitive diver thanks—and started his career at the Thompson centre, so.

I was just wondering if you could give some background on the centre and the—and explain its importance to the community.

Mr. Redhead: I'd like to thank my colleague for the question.

The importance of this facility—it goes forever. I mean, there's so many benefits that this facility would bring to Thompson. I know I'm thinking of a friend of mine who started at the north-plex pool as a lifeguard and a first-aid instructor, and that triggered their interest into the health-care system. And now they're a nurse and that president of MNU in Thompson.

So the benefits of an aquatic facility go far beyond just aquatic safety. It gives an opportunity for people to explore interests and possibly other careers down the road other than, you know, aquatics. So, thank you.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I would assume the member from Thompson has read the ICIP agreement that funded the new aquatic centre.

Can the member tell us specifically what the agreement says for cost overruns and who will be responsible for those cost overruns?

Mr. Redhead: I thank the member for the question.

This isn't cost overrun. This is a shortfall in funding. So thank you, member, but it's not a cost overrun. These are actually shortfalls in funding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just a friendly reminder to direct all questions and answers through the Chair, not directly to the member in question.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Altomare: The constituents of Transcona, Deputy Speaker, definitely recognize the importance of an aquatic centre. We have a first-class aquatic centre now in Transcona, opened in 2017. It has waterslides, a zero-grade beach entry. It has geysers that allow for a shallow-water spray pad for not only younger children but also for older adults that require a zero-grade entry.

So I'd like to ask the member if he can outline the importance of having publicly available and accessible recreation facilities such as the old Thompson aquatic centre, particularly in northern communities like—

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

Mr. Redhead: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

I mean, recreational facilities provide an opportunity for youth, for families to fill idle time with positive recreational activities. You know, growing up—I know that when we fill our idle time, I call it, with positive things, you're less likely to fill it with negative things, right? You're going to find other things to fill it with and usually it's not the best things to do.

So having a aquatic facility or recreational facilities in the North, particularly, is going to be very helpful in terms of crime reduction, mental health for children and youth and even adults. Surrounding communities are going to benefit from this aquatic facility—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): I want to thank the member and welcome him to the House and congratulate him on his win there for Thompson.

Manitoba's raised the issue of cost overruns—and I know he mentioned that it's not a cost overrun. This is a project overall cost. But we've mentioned and the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) asked directly the Prime Minister, you know, indicating these cost increases are not—or, need to be addressed.

A portion of funding allocated for this Thompson aquatic centre came from the Liberal-NDP federal coalition. Are they being asked to step up—

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

Mr. Redhead: I thank the member for the question. We are continuing to lobby all levels of government, all—even the private sector has stepped up with money for this facility.

* (11:10)

But right now, what we're doing is we're asking the provincial government to fulfill that shortfall in funding. We know that this aquatic centre is going to benefit Thompson, it's going to benefit the North, it's going to benefit families. I can't wait for the ribbon-cutting ceremony when—if this thing ever gets fully funded, to be able to take my family swimming there for the first time.

It's a beautiful facility, the design is gorgeous, it's going to be the gem of the North and in Thompson, so—

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

Mr. Altomare: I want to thank, again, the member for putting forth this PMR. It certainly outlines the importance. We're starting to feel the real impact of not having an aquatic centre in Thompson.

Can you outline the impacts that a nearly \$5-million funding shortfall could have on a new Thompson aquatic centre, on the City of Thompson who will have to pick up this tab?

Mr. Redhead: I thank the member for the question. You know, as we know, municipalities are facing a funding crunch as it is. It's very difficult for municipalities to even get roads fixed nowadays. And so to ask a small city to find an extra \$5 million so that its members—its community members, its seniors, its youth, its families are going to be able to have a safe, fun recreational facility, it's nearly impossible for a community that size to find an extra \$5 million.

It's very difficult. But, you know, we're asking private sector, we're asking all—

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

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Given that just inflation has caused the price of everything to go up in this country and everything to become more expensive, it seems logical that the federal government should foot the bill, or at least a significant portion of it. The member opposite has indicated that he is apparently lobbying the federal government to do so.

I'm wondering if the member opposite can talk about the response that he's received from the Liberals on this.

Mr. Redhead: I thank the member for the question. We are continuing to lobby all levels of government, the private sector. Right here, right now, I am asking the provincial government to step up. I don't understand what it's—why is it so difficult to step up for its own city, for its own citizens. I find it mind-boggling that, you know, a Province is not willing to help its own citizens, to step up to the plate, making sure that its own citizens have a facility like this.

We will continue to lobby the federal government, we'll continue to lobby private sectors. And the City of Thompson will continue to try to fundraise. But it's going to be very difficult without this government's support to make that happen.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I know the member—[interjection]—and I know the member from Thompson is here representing his community, and really appreciated some of the thing that he's putting in the bill.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

But there's also a bunch of information that I'd like to bring forward, some of the factual information of that nature. It's important, again, to share some of these. Our government has been working hard to correct the disordered course, and as a result of Manitobans, we're seeing the financial relief which they have suffered for a number of years during the time of the NDP government.

And they left Manitoba with a long-lasting debt and complete financial dysfunction. And every day, you hear from constituents: please don't take us back into those dark days of the NDP, and that's, you know, a lot of things, we've got to make some tough decisions and stuff.

So since—oh, sorry, is that on? Okay, just on my speaker. Apologize for that; I put a paper on it.

Since 2016, our government's been investing to build thriving, sustainable communities that provide high quality of life for Manitobans. And we've been working with the North, we've been working with Thompson hard in making a lot of things happen within that community. Our government recognizes the important of these roles and recreational facilities and a place with our—where our young people can go, you know, and find that opportunity to take part in with families and be able to get that, you know, those various exercise routines and do the things they enjoy in these community centres.

And we've never neglected northern Manitoba and recognize the importance of this. Our government has taken significant steps to build sustainable economic and business development and growth for certain Manitoba. Our government recognizes the North is a diverse region with opportunities, various areas, particularly in sustainable natural resource development. And Thompson has a lot of those rich resources within their community and our government is making infrastructure investments that respond to local priorities in improving the quality and safety of life of all Manitobans.

The need for economic and diversification in the North was ignored far too long under the previous NDP administration and our government sees the incredible potential. And I know just recently at The Pas, the—you know, there was the linkages and the—a lot of people and partners from all over the North came and they all have come into agreement that the North is rich in resources and it can be a real hub. So our government is doing everything possible to look after that.

Government is proud to partner with ICIP partners and the City of Thompson to build this new aquatic facility in Thompson. The project is cost shared between three levels of government, okay, it's—under the ICIP and it's, you know, through ICIP, through the federal government, through our Province and through the municipal government. And we've worked closely and we committed to the \$5-million request for this project and the Government of Canada

is investing up to \$6 million and City of Thompson is contributing to approximately \$4 million.

And I want to urge the member from Thompson—it should be very easy with the Liberal-NDP coalition that exists at the federal level, that should be an absolute shoo-in to make that request and I urge the member to do that. This—and this will enable our government to put other resources into Thompson. I mean, it wasn't us that formed a coalition with the Liberals. It was the NDP that did that.

And this project will provide the residents of Thompson and surrounding area with a modern and larger multi-use venue. The facility will consist of the two tank pools, including six-lane pool and another pool featuring shallow end with beach entry and splash pad and it'll also include a sauna, space for small gatherings and meetings. This new pool will be a regional facility for, we understand, more than 50,000 people who live and work across the North.

As per current agreement with *[inaudible]* and the project agreement with Thompson, all cost overruns are to be managed by the proponent. And these kind of cost overruns are common and are being managed by the project proponent. Manitoba's raised the issue of cost overruns numerous times with the federal government. Our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has taken that forth and we are not getting responses from the NDP and the NDP-Liberal coalition and these are the people that can make the difference on these cost overruns. Yes, there's unforeseen, you know, circumstances that happen from time to time with the—and we came through a tough time. Our government has fiscally managed this very, very well during this pandemic and we know that things can escalate in costs.

The Manitoba NDP government that exists doesn't support the true potential of the North. We saw this for 17 years; they just ignored the North. The leader of the Manitoba fort—or, member from Fort Garry signed the Leap manifest which stated that natural resources must be left undeveloped and in the ground. So I wonder what veil would say if the member from Thompson went and said our leader wants to leave it in the ground. What would happen then?

The next thing is, well, hopefully he'll support his—or encourage his leader to make sure that he doesn't go ahead and say, well, let's leave it in the field, too, because that would really throw things into that—so those are the—*[interjection]* I apologize on behalf—on that there again. The paper went over top,

and realize it's—anyway, so this is the kind of stuff that we are seeing, all right?

* (11:20)

We're seeing this stuff where this government is wanting to leave it in the ground, potentially leave it in the field, so, you know, I think this really aligns with their record of ignoring the North, and I hope the member from Thompson convinces his leader otherwise.

With the high inflation which is impacted by the carbon tax, you know, from the federal NDP-Liberal coalition, everything is more expensive than before, and would Manitoba NDP support this federal NDP-Liberal coalition carbon tax, which is costing our northern Manitoba more than anyone, as they travel long distances? And we saw that too when we went up to the mines in Snow Lake when I travelled with the minister, and just extracting those minerals from the ground is costing the North huge sums of money.

Now, to look at some of the facts. For example, through Building Sustainable Communities funding, the constituents of Thompson received over \$255,000 in the last three years to support six projects in Thompson: \$75,000 went to the City for the aquatic facility engineering, and also the design report that was in existence there, so those are important things that we look at in supporting the North.

Just this year, Thompson received \$72,000 in Green Team funding, which is helping many young Thompson residents finding summer employment. In 2019, our government has started to distribute nearly—or, sorry, our government is starting to distribute nearly \$450,000 through the Proceeds of Crime Fund, to police agencies across Manitoba, including an investment of nearly \$50,000 to support programs to reduce youth crime in Thompson.

I just want to make a correction to, you know, when I was referring to the Leader of the Opposition there, and—with the Leap and leaving it in the ground. I meant to say the member from Fort Rouge, so I apologise to the member from Fort Garry for that error.

And our government is working to 'modernize' veils, mineral tenure, to ensure it can spend up to \$150-million investment announced in 2021 to find new mineral deposits and extend the lifetime of the Thompson mine. Our government's working increase Indigenous participation, resource development and attract additional mining investment to Manitoba.

And, with some of the great announcements in the MOUs dealing with revenue sharing in our forest products—our government has developed Look North, to build sustainable economic and business development and growth for northern Manitoba.

And, you know, there—this goes on and on, and I'll give one of my other colleagues the opportunity to tell a few more things that we are doing in the North, because we are truly investing in the North. We care about the North, unlike the members opposite, and we will continue to work for the people of northern Manitoba.

Thank you.

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

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I am grateful for the opportunity to put a few words on the record this morning in support of my colleague, the member for Thompson's (Mr. Redhead), resolution this morning.

It is, we all know that recreation in communities is vital, and I remember our colleague—our late colleague, Danielle Adams—talking about the importance of this pool in Thompson. And she actually brought forward this as a policy point, and was just very clear in how she brought it forward.

Thompson doesn't have a pool. Thompson needs a pool. Advocate for pool in Thompson. It's very clear and very straightforward, as she was. And, you know, I think it's really wonderful and it speaks to the importance of this issue that our colleague, the MLA for Thompson now, is advocating on behalf of his constituents to ensure that they do have a pool in Thompson.

And I think that many folks, especially those folks like myself who live in Winnipeg, who, you know, have grown up in Winnipeg, we can't actually, I think, fully appreciate what it means when a pool of that magnitude in that community is lost. You know, there are many different recreational opportunities that folks in more urban settings, Winnipeg, can access; if one pool closes, maybe there's another half dozen that you can access and get to meet your needs.

That is not the reality in Thompson. And so the loss of this pool is significant. Our colleague, the MLA for Thompson, has talked about the pool being more than just a place where folks can take swimming lessons. It's a place where families gather. It's a place where communities connect. It is a public health

resource, right? It is not just about the pool, it is about community connectedness.

It is about having strong recreational 'otumity'—opportunities. It's about socializing. It's about economic opportunities. It's about good health and wellness in Thompson. And so, quite frankly I think it's unfortunate that the member for Thompson has to bring this forward because under this government we haven't seen them actually take the steps necessary to ensure that the citizens of Thompson have this very essential public health amenity.

We all know, as we've navigated this pandemic, that not having access to public services that are centred around bringing community together, that are centred around improving people's health and wellness, can have really challenging and significant impacts. And, you know, this is a moment in time where unfortunately, you know, when we could be talking about many other things, we could be talking about many other areas that could be looked at and addressed, you know, our colleague is having to—and rightfully advocating on behalf of residents of Thompson—for something that should've been addressed several years ago under this government.

You know, the commitment should've been made, pool should be in place, residents of Thompson should be enjoying that amenity right now. So, you know, I—there's not really, quite frankly, a lot of in-the-weeds debate that we need to get into here. It's a very straightforward issue. Very, very clear-cut issue. The government needs to make sure that they provide all the resources necessary to make sure the residents of Thompson have this pool. They should've done it several years ago; they haven't. We're making sure right now today that we're amplifying the voices of Thompson residents so that they can get this very much-needed pool in place.

I think, you know, what is important about this moment, however, is to also highlight the fact that there are other areas that we can also be looking at enhancing in terms of recreation and the positive impacts of being able to access recreation in the North, in Thompson. You know, the member for, I think it's Swan River, just spoke, and he talked about his government and how they support the North, et cetera, et cetera; we all know that's not true. We all know that this government has been neglecting the North.

We all know. I mean, just go to the North, go to Thompson, specifically, since we're talking about Thompson, and talk to residents of Thompson. Talk to

constituents of Thompson. There are a myriad of issues that they will bring up where they highlight this government has neglected their needs. Doesn't need to come from me. I don't need to convince you. If this government takes this seriously, they can just go and listen to the residents of Thompson and hear it directly from them.

You know, the delaying this particular issue, this government not taking the appropriate and necessary action to ensure that residents of Thompson have their pool in place, have their recreational and public health needs met, speaks to a larger issue under this government. That this government doesn't really seem to value, equitably, the needs of constituents and residents in the North, in Thompson. This government seems to think that they can play politics with what residents in Thompson need.

That is unacceptable. Again, the MLA for Thompson shouldn't have to be bringing this resolution forward today. He should be able to talk about a swath of other issues. But he's raising this because it is significant, it is important, and it is reflective and representative of the fact that this government has not been prioritizing, equitably, at all, in any way, shape or form, the needs of the North. And the needs of those constituents in Thompson.

This is, you know, a commitment that was made that, again, we lack clarity from this government as to when they're going to see this commitment through, or if they are.

* (11:30)

That speaks to other areas in terms of public health. Again, this pool is a public health amenity. It is a way in which residents of Thompson can address their physical, mental, emotional and social well-being. It represents a number of opportunities for folks of all ages to get their health needs met in a positive way.

We can look at the staffing shortage crisis happening in Thompson in the North right now as another clear-cut example of how this government fails to take the steps needed and make the investments into public services that would benefit residents and community members in the North. The pool, and this government's lack of appropriate action on this issue, is yet another example in terms of how this government lacks any urgency whatsoever to ensure that communities in Thompson have what they need.

And so, you know, I reflect today on the fact that this is something that has been raised many times. It

is an area that Thompson residents have made very clear is of significant importance.

And if this government wants to start getting themselves on the right path and show Thompson residents, show northerners in Manitoba, show Manitobans more broadly that they listen to their concerns, that they value public services, that they care about folks in the North having good health outcomes—because again, this pool is a public health amenity—they'll just take the step. They'll commit in the House today to providing whatever is necessary immediately to get this pool dealt with, to make sure the residents of Thompson no longer have to petition, raise their voices, advocate, that they know it's going to happen, it's going to happen soon, there isn't going to be a financial shortfall because the government prioritizes their well-being.

The government has a really easy, kind of like a—what do they call it? It's a baseball or a softball opportunity.

An Honourable Member: Slam dunk.

MLA Asagwara: Slam dunk; that's more my sport.

Slam dunk opportunity right now to just commit on record to getting this done in the way that the MLA for Thompson has outlined it needs to happen.

That would be an easy signal to residents of northern Manitoba, constituents of Thompson that this government has maybe turned a new page and is going to prioritize their needs, listen to their voices, make sure their communities have what they need to be well.

This morning is that opportunity for this government. I'm not going to get my hopes up that they're going to make that step. But, you know what, I know that the residents of Thompson have their hopes up and are needing this government to make the right choice today and to turn that page.

So we'll keep advocating. We'll keep amplifying their voices, and the residents, constituents of Thompson and northern Manitoba can know definitively that on this side of the House, our NDP caucus is listening. We firmly believe in the equity that they deserve across public services and the wellness of their communities, and we'll keep fighting for them.

Thank you.

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): I'm pleased

to rise today to correct some errors that have put on the record.

And first of all, I'd like to congratulate Mayor Colleen Smook for being re-elected in Thompson along with the councillors that were elected and re-elected and it's been great to work with Mayor Thompson. She's been very helpful in advancing the requirements and needs of Thompson and area, and commented in her remarks just last night that Thompson has been very fortunate and thankful to have over \$130 million in grants from various levels of government coming to Thompson for the many required areas there. So I'm thrilled to be able to work with the mayor again.

And last time I was in Thompson, she was very proud to point out all of the work that we were doing in conjunction with Thompson and the Province and the federal government, that the matching funds that were being advanced and the work that was actually being done on the ground, in contrast to previous NDP governments.

And I might remind the members opposite about what experiences Manitoba had with the previous NDP government. They not only went out publicly and announced that they were going to rebuild the northern campus of Assiniboine Community College, they announced that they were forwarding that application on to the Building Canada Fund. And when the school called the federal government to say, well, if you need any information we can certainly give you that information, they said we have no application.

The federal—or the provincial government of the day told the community that they were rebuilding that facility, advancing that grant application and they did not do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is shameful. That is not the way that we operate; we work with the municipalities to make things—these things happen.

Not only that, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, they also told the City of Brandon that they would advance the water treatment plant under the Building Canada Fund, and again, didn't do so, and didn't tell the City. We're now building that plant with the City of Brandon and the federal government. Those are things that are being done.

This pool has been announced by the federal government in conjunction with the City of Thompson and ourselves. The City of Thompson is the proponent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will issue the RFP, they will find out what the market will bear, they are

responsible for any cost overruns, but I'm sure they'll come and talk to us, and we're already talking to the federal government about the things that we are seeing out there.

I was very pleased today to be with the Berens River council, the chief-in-council, to announce that we were partnering with the federal government in Berens River to announce \$31.6 million in projects for Berens River and area.

These are improvements to provincial and federal roads, and as they move water around the community, they have trucks that have been damaged by the condition of the roads. This will fix those roads. Upgrades to water treatment plant, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. Critical infrastructure in all communities, especially on First Nations, and a new arena and multi-purpose facility.

It is critical that the youth in this community have time and an area and a place that they can meet, and that they can participate in sports and community, and have something to do. So it's very important and the chief-in-council—I was very fortunate to be able to meet with them this morning for these announcements.

Those are the types of things that we can do with our municipal, federal, First Nations partners, to—in the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

I know there's more to come, and perhaps we'll hear some announcements in the future. It is a \$1.17-billion fund that has been matched by federal, provincial, municipal, First Nations, Crown corporations, throughout Manitoba, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. We know there's much more. We know that the government of the NDP, at the time, left all these infrastructure programs and all these infrastructure needs lagging, and just not being fulfilled.

So they left us a huge amount of projects, billions of dollars, that were not done, that now we're having to work through and get done, and the Thompson pool is one of those that we're working with the City of Thompson.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I'm very happy to speak in favour of this motion. Look, I—we have to acknowledge that inflation is a real thing. We shouldn't leave all the costs on the proponent, especially the City of Thompson, and I just want to touch on a couple of the bigger things.

One is that we do need to have better mineral extraction up North. The fact is, is that there were—a couple years ago, there was a report from Saskatchewan that said at the current rate of permitting, it would take 250 years for Manitoba to have a sustainable mining industry.

Though we have these—we actually have some of the greatest access to ore anywhere in the world—we have to be partnering with First Nations and making sure that we're sharing in resources and that we're respecting the environment, but there is enormous potential in Thompson and in the North.

* (11:40)

And, you know, if you go to the North, I'll say one thing that people often—will often comment on, and it's extremely important: there are enormous riches in the North, and the fact is, is that Manitoba especially—is that the southern Manitoba has benefitted from the riches in the North, whether it's mining, whether it's hydro. And there have been enormous impacts—enormous impacts—on those communities, who often aren't compensated as we benefit from it.

So this is part—part of this is doing the right thing and making sure that Thompson is supported. The other is that we also have to be flexible. If we want to make sure this thing gets done, we should make sure that the funding will be there.

And it's—I don't think it's realistic for the Manitoba government to sort of say, well, that they don't have any money, when we're in the middle of debating BITSA, which is going to make a \$350-million unfunded tax credit permanent.

So if we can find \$350 million for that, to cut cheques to Bill Gates or to the Koch Brothers and big commercial landlords who don't really need the tax break and who are doing pretty well, and—we can certainly afford to find the money to fund things like the Thompson aquatic centre.

The other is—you know, and these are projects that were delayed, or ignored. We've—well, we've been putting off essential infrastructure investments in Manitoba for decades. It's something like \$16 billion and growing all the time. The city of Winnipeg is just part of that. But we've not made the investments we need to into community recreational infrastructure, not just in Thompson but across the province.

And some of this is because, look, if we're worried about the cost of this now, these are all programs that could've been announced three years

ago. This is a—the ICIP program was announced, I think, in 2018, and in 2019 it was discovered that the PC government had failed to allocate \$1.9 billion in funding: \$400 million for housing, for an agreement that other provinces were already building affordable housing and Manitoba hadn't even spent a dollar; \$400 million in a health transfer, which included about half of that going to home care, half of it going to mental health care, untouched; and then \$1.1 billion in infrastructure funding.

And we've heard over and over again that it's just not moving. All these things have been sent to Ottawa, but the thing about this—I used to work at the western economic—I used to work with Western Economic Diversification as a communications person, but I sat on the federal-provincial infrastructure secretariat. The people who pick these projects, it's the Province. It's not the federal government. The federal government comes up and says—you know, asks the Province to designate projects. So, if the Province doesn't designate projects to make them a priority, they don't happen.

So some of these projects could've been announced three years ago and we could've been—had shovels in the ground three years ago, and some of these things could've been built and finished. We wouldn't even be talking about this, because inflation wouldn't yet have hit.

And so, part of the problem that we have, in this province especially, is that we keep kicking important projects down the road, and then end up being surprised when they cost more. Well, if it takes three years, and you have inflation, it's going to cost more.

And part of the reason—it also has to be said—part of the reason that Manitoba struggled with these projects is for two reasons. One, is that we've had massive—certainly between 2010 and 2016—there were massive changes to the way the federal government funded the Province of Manitoba. All transfers were flatlined. It was just capped. So for six years straight there were no increases whatsoever.

So we shouldn't be surprised that there were no—that there weren't that many investments, because the provincial government was expected to pick up—so much of this stuff is being funded by the federal government. And I don't say that because it's a federal Liberal government. I don't care. It's—this is one of the things, I just want to say this quickly: we don't—we are an independent party. We don't co-ordinate. I don't know what the other parties do. We do not co-ordinate with our—with the federal party. We don't co-ordinate

on messaging. We don't co-ordinate on policy. We're separate.

So I don't understand it when I hear talking points from the federal Conservatives being repeated, many of which are simply completely inaccurate when it comes to just about—when it comes to the economy, funding and so much else. Because, you know, like, if we're actually going to represent Manitobans in this place, we need to be a bit more independent and think for ourselves, and not just read out talking points that have been written in Ottawa. Because we don't do that.

So I—I always want to say thank you very much, thank you very much to the member for Thompson (Mr. Redhead). This is an important project and frankly, it just has to be—it's a question of political will and getting it done. We need a commitment to say this is going to happen, no matter what. And so, we're more than happy to support the opposition on this.

Thank you.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): It is a pleasure to get up and speak on this resolution here today that was brought forward by the member for Thompson.

It is an important project. It's an important resolution and—but I don't necessarily agree with some of the preamble that's being suggested in this resolution. Again, having said that, I do support the aquatic centre and the need for a centre like this in Thompson, especially just looking at a little bit of the details of what this facility will be able to provide people in the North. It's a very—it is a regional approach to this facility and, again, I think this is a great idea. And the proponent, being the City of Thompson on this, I commend them for their application. And again, it's a—this is a good project for Thompson and for northern Manitoba.

But one of the whereases here—and the member from Thompson brings this point to the floor of this Legislature—that the Province did not provide enough funding. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's really misleading when it comes to the ICIP program, the process of application, what was approved. Because, in fact, what happened was the Province of Manitoba is a—is one of three funding partners that approved the application and this is the truth of—that the Province did support this project, has supported this project and I'm sure remains in the belief that this is a great project for northern Manitoba. So it's not a question of not providing enough funding.

Our government really, from what I've seen, has not and never neglected northern Manitoba and, by all

accounts, they recognize the importance of investing in this region. And their actions and the steps that they've taken prove that. Our government has taken significant steps to build sustainable economic and business development and growth for northern Manitoba and, for the last five or six years, have taken a real positive, focused approach towards helping rural Manitoba, northern Manitoba. Because it is important to the entire province of Manitoba that the whole province is moving forward in a positive way.

Of course, when you're talking outside the city of Winnipeg, sustainable economic and business development is tied to sustainable natural resource development. Manitoba is blessed to have a very diverse economy, natural resources, many, many sectors across. And of course when we go to—further North, we land in Thompson and that's a big service area for a large, diverse area of northern Manitoba.

So again, I'll point back to the fact that the Province has committed to funding for the aquatic centre and that needs to be made clear here when it's suggested that the Province didn't provide enough money, while the Province did approve what was asked for.

* (11:50)

So, our government does see incredible potential in northern Manitoba, and a number of initiatives that have been announced over the course of the last year or two. Of course, we've had significant interruption, I would say, by COVID, and related to that, of course, there is inflation issues that—which has been mentioned on the floor. There have been supply chain issues, there's been issues of being able to get parts, to be able to get building supplies. In a—in—really it has been a environment of—that's been very disruptive to the economy of, not only Manitoba, but to Canada and all over.

So that doesn't change the fact that our government does still see incredible potential in this province and in northern Manitoba, and we have a wide array of opportunities and great qualities of life across the province, including the North, of course. And I'll go back and say the government has supported this aquatic centre project, and that remains to be the case.

And, just for clarity, because I don't think it was a—necessarily fair to come to this House and I don't know if it was a shaming exercise or what it was, but the PC government is a proud partner with ICIP, and there's funding partners, the City of Thompson and the Government of Canada.

Our government is committed to providing or funding up to \$5 million for this project and, again, going—some of the pieces, the components to this project are really exciting. Two tank pools, six-lane pool and another pool featuring a shallow end with a beach and splash pad.

And I can say, you know, I look at—in the city of Dauphin, it was not—a few years ago, there was a pool, an aquatic addition to our sports complex, so I can say with certainty how important this facility would be to Thompson.

And I again I applaud the government for fully supporting the application made by Thompson, but I know how critical a part—I know in Dauphin where there was hockey and there's curling in there with the aquatic side, and it really, really was a great facility for the—for our community, not only in Dauphin but in the surrounding regions.

So, again, I'm really genuinely happy for Thompson on this application. The facility will also have a sauna and space for small gatherings and meetings, and the new pool will be a regional facility for more than 50,000 people who live and work across northern Manitoba. Excuse me.

The project is cost-shared three levels of government and ICIP is fully committed and I want to thank the minister—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) will have one minute remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 27, 2022

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Resolutions	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Res. 26—Calling on the Provincial Government to Adequately Fund the Construction of the New Aquatic Centre in Thompson	
Speaker's Statement			
Micklefield	3393	Redhead	3402
Second Readings—Public Bills		Questions	
Bill 241—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Licence Plates for MMIWG2S Awareness)		Wowchuk	3404
B. Smith	3393	Redhead	3404
Questions		Altomare	3404
Isleifson	3395	Lamont	3404
B. Smith	3395	Khan	3404
Naylor	3395	Michaleski	3405
Lamoureux	3395	Guenter	3406
Morley-Lecomte	3396	Debate	
Bushie	3396	Wowchuk	3406
Debate		Asagwara	3408
Morley-Lecomte	3397	Helwer	3409
Fontaine	3398	Lamont	3410
Lamoureux	3400	Michaleski	3412
Bushie	3400		

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>