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DEBATES
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PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	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	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	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	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 13, 2021

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

Please be seated.

House Business

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before we get started here, I wanted to—for the information to all members, the Speaker's office received a letter yesterday signed by the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the Opposition House Leader indicating that the House will sit tomorrow, Friday, May 14th, 2021 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. to consider department Estimates in the Committee of Supply.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Pursuant to rule 33(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 Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith). The title of the resolution is immediately invest in mental health and addictions crisis in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable government—Opposition House Leader that, pursuant to rule 33-8, 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 Point Douglas. The title of the resolution is Immediately Invest in the Mental Health and Addictions Crisis in Manitoba.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Would you call Bill 227 for second reading debate this morning.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As announced by the—asked by the honourable Opposition House Leader, we're going to go into Bill 227, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 227—The Residential Tenancies
Amendment Act**

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor), that Bill 227, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Sala: I am very proud to have an opportunity to introduce this piece of legislation today, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act.

The goal of this bill is to respond to the growing housing affordability crisis which is impacting Manitobans in every corner of this province, and it aims to do this by amending our existing RTB legislation in a manner that will significantly lessen the impact of above-guideline rent increases on Manitobans while ensuring that property owners are still given every incentive to invest in their properties for the benefit of all.

Early during my first year as an MLA, I learned about many apartment buildings across west Winnipeg that had experienced government-approved above-guideline rent increases of 15 per cent or more. The reason we learned about these rent increases is because constituents were coming to our office to share that they didn't understand how it was possible that their rent could possibly go up 15 per cent or higher in one year. The experience of listening to these constituents and learning about what these rent increases meant to them and how it was going to lead to some very tough choices for them and their families really stuck with me.

For some of them who are on fixed incomes, a 15 per cent rent increase, which translated into \$125 or \$150 increase in monthly expenses, was simply unaffordable. It was literally impossible for them to cover these additional costs, and that meant that they were either going to be forced to move out and find cheaper accommodations—which is challenging in this current market—or they were going to be forced to make some very hard choices about reducing their food intake or the medicines they needed to buy.

When we dug into the validity of these huge increases, I was shocked to learn that every single one had either been approved by the Residential Tenancies Board or was in the process of being approved by the RTB. In one instance, I was even more shocked to learn that tenants at 2075 Portage Ave.—which is in my own community—were being required to pay a 17 per cent rent increase before it was even approved by the RTB.

To learn more about the extent of the problem across the province, we submitted a FIPPA, and what we learned shocked me. Out of 310 applications for AGIs which had gone into government in 2019, a total of 310 of these applications had been approved. To repeat: every single above-guideline increase application submitted to the RTB was approved in some shape or form that year.

If you're a property owner in Manitoba, this makes for a pretty attractive proposition as it seems pretty much guaranteed that if you put in for an above-guideline increase, you're going to get an above-guideline increase.

In that one year, a total of 20,440 rental units in Manitoba were affected by above-guideline increases and of these 20,440 units, approximately 2,700 units had seen rent increases of 20 per cent or more, with many units seeing increases that were significantly higher.

In essence, our current RTB legislation is facilitating massive government-sanctioned rent increases for thousands of rental units across the province at a time when increasing numbers of Manitobans are facing an affordability crisis in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is crystal clear that our current RTB legislation is failing to balance the interests of regular Manitobans and those of property owners, and that it is permitting property owners to too quickly download the costs of investing in their properties onto the backs of Manitoban renters. This

isn't a partisan statement, and I hope it's something that resonates with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

Everyone in this House has a connection to a senior or a low-income relative or friend living in a rental unit somewhere in this province and, as it stands, they're at serious risk of being subjected to a massive increase in their living costs, of potentially being forced to leave their apartment, and all because we as legislators have allowed this RTB legislation to stand as written.

It is in desperate need of amendments to protect renters to tip the scales back to ensure that the interests of both property owners and renters are properly balanced.

And so with the goal of improving RTB legislation, we analyze shortcomings in the current Manitoban RTB legislation. We consulted with some highly informed stakeholders here in Manitoba and we looked at a number of other jurisdictions to determine how they were working to protect their citizens from out-of-control above-guideline increases. In doing this, we identified some of the ways that RTB legislation could be drastically improved to protect renters and to protect affordability in Manitoba.

First of all, our current RTB legislation requires the RTB to consider a laundry list of operating and capital expenses when calculating the amount granted for an AGI. Some examples of allowable operating expenses include the cost of advertising to acquire tenants, the cost of tools and bank service charges.

The list of currently allowable capital expenses which can be included in the calculation of an AGI is also extensive and, as a result, property owners are incentivized to submit expenses relating to work that is fundamentally cosmetic in nature or routine and ordinary as part of maintaining an asset.

* (10:10)

This is in major contrast to other provinces like Ontario, where property owners are much more restricted in terms of expenses that can be submitted. What's clear is that our current legislation creates an environment where property owners have every incentive to submit for an above-guideline increase as often as possible, as our current RTB legislation allows them to make significant increases in rent for things which are in no way extraordinary and which would simply be considered part of the cost of doing business.

Manitoban renters shouldn't be footing the bill for a property owner to do the basic things required to maintain a building. And so, in response to this issue, our bill proposes to amend RTB legislation to significantly limit the types of expenditures which can be considered by RTB when a property owner makes a submission for AGI.

Unless there's an extraordinary increase in taxation costs on a building or in utility costs, or an extraordinary capital expenditure, an application for an AGI would no longer be considered.

This is the approach taken in provinces like Ontario, and I would argue that these changes are reasonable and that making these changes would drastically reduce the scope of our above-guideline increase problem here in Manitoba.

A second key issue which we heard about from renters and others is that our current RTB legislation allows property owners to charge an AGI prior to it being approved by the RTB director. In my own community, this has resulted in families receiving a notice of an above-guideline increase and actually having to pay the increased costs before the increase is even approved by the RTB. In these situations, tenants are promised that additional funds will be returned to them if the increase isn't approved but it is totally ludicrous that renters should be forced to shoulder any costs prior to an above-guideline increase actually being approved by the RTB.

Consider this for a moment: we are currently forcing renters, many of whom are seniors or low-income families, to carry these costs on behalf of a property owner, sometimes for months at a time. This shouldn't be happening in any way, shape or form, and other Canadian provinces have prevented this by clearly stating that a rent increase cannot be charged to a renter until it is actually approved by the RTB. Our amendments would help to solve this problem.

A third concern which we identified was the use of rent discounts by property owners as a means of luring tenants into renewing their leases after an above-guideline increase. In these situations, the renter is told that an AGI is being applied to their rent when they renew their lease but that they'll receive a discount of some degree, which will offset the costs of the AGI.

This creates a false sense of security for tenants, who sign their new lease with a much higher rent thinking that the rent discount also needs to remain in place for the duration of the lease but, in reality, our

current RTB legislation allows property owners to remove the rent discount with only three months notice, meaning renters can be put in precarious situations without little warning.

Our amendment proposes to fix this issue to protect renters by preventing landlords from removing a rent discount in the same year an AGI has been granted.

A final key issue identified is that in those cases where a large AGI is needed, our current RTB legislation does not permit the director of RTB to direct that the increase be spread out over a longer period of time to mitigate the impacts of that rent increase on tenants.

In BC, for example, they've granted this power to the RTB and this has helped to reduce the sticker shock associated with some of the more extreme increases. In looking at some of the increases granted in Manitoba in 2019, some were 50 per cent and higher. No tenant should be expected to pay this level of increase in one year and our proposed amendments would allow the RTB to reduce the financial impact of a particularly large increase by spreading it over a period of years, as determined by the director.

This gives the property owner an opportunity to recover costs associated with an extraordinary investment, but it also ensures that renters aren't shouldering the burden of these additional costs in a short time-frame.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the proposed amendments outlined are reasonable, they're targeted and they ensure that landlords can continue to have every incentive to invest in their properties.

AGIs are a massive problem in our province and they're a silent driver of our housing affordability crisis. This is an issue that affects regular people in every corner of Manitoba and if it continues to go unmanaged, rental housing costs in Manitoba will continue to skyrocket.

Not only would this continue to threaten the housing security of thousands of lower income Manitobans in the middle of a pandemic but it also threatens our economy. Allowing the cost of rental housing in Manitoba to endlessly inflate is incredibly unproductive, as it sends ever increasing amounts of money to landlords instead of our local economies.

This bill and its proposed amendments are a huge opportunity to take control of our affordability problem here in Manitoba. I strongly encourage our

colleagues on the other side of the House to consider the proposed amendments and to support this bill, knowing it will protect—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

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 addressed—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. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): The member for St. James has told the House this morning he spoke to several tenants when drafting this legislation.

Did the member also talk to any landlords for their point of view on this legislation? And if not, why?

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Well, I thank the member for the question.

Frankly, at this point we have not engaged with landlords, but it's pretty clear where the issue lies, and the issue lies on the side of renters. We know that the changes that we're proposing have been implemented in other Canadian provinces, we know that they're fair and we know that they're in the best interests of protecting affordability of life in this province.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Could the member for St. James tell me what sort of expenditures could be eligible for a landlord to have an above-guideline increase approved under this bill?

Mr. Sala: I appreciate the question from my colleague.

In order for an AGI to be approved under this bill, there would have to be an extraordinary increase in municipal taxes, an extraordinary increase in utility charges or the landlord would have to have incurred an eligible capital expense, and those capital expenditures that we've included in this bill are extraordinary capital expenditures.

So it would significantly limit the types of expenditures that could be included when applying for an AGI, and I would expect that that would significantly reduce the number of AGIs that are approved in our province.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Just for some clarity: I mean, I know that—I understand that the—before the PCs were elected several thousand exemptions were routinely granted to landlords under The Residential Tenancies Act.

Was it not the case that this was also a problem prior to the PCs coming to office?

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

The reality is that this issue is happening now and that our current PC government has been aware of this issue with an out of—with these out-of-control above-guideline increases. We raised this issue a year ago and we flagged the concern with 20,440 units receiving above-guideline increases in 2019 and they still have failed to act.

And so we're asking now that this government take action in response to this problem because this is a massive issue for renters across the province, especially given the financial challenges people are facing during this pandemic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for McPhillips.

The honourable member for McPhillips, would you unmute your mic.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): Here we go. Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I thank my colleague, the member for St. James, for bringing forward this legislation this morning.

I'm just wondering if the member can advise why they're looking at switching rental properties from a residential to a commercial designation within his proposal.

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

The focus of the bill is on residential rentals and the bills seeks to focus on improving the—or, sorry, reducing the number of AGIs that are impacting Manitoban renters in residential properties. The focus is not on commercial properties.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Can the member share how has the Pallister government made life harder for Manitoba renters?

Mr. Sala: I thank my colleague for the question.

Well, there's a number of concerning things that have happened under this government for renters—first of all, most recently, the removal of the Education

Property Tax Credit, which is going to have a significant impact on the affordability of life for renters across the province.

They've also reduced the Portable Housing Benefit, and they've allowed Manitoba Housing waitlists to grow to record levels. They've allowed vacant units in Manitoba Housing to grow to record levels and, overall, they just have not been focused on responding to this out-of-control above-guideline rent increase issue which we flagged over a year ago.

* (10:20)

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Yes, I'm quite surprised to hear from the member that he hasn't spoken with even a single landlord, and he talks about balancing the interests of tenants with the interests of landlords. You'd think he could at least talk to one.

And I, like, I know that the members of the NDP caucus don't seem to like each other very much but I'm pretty sure he's got a landlord in caucus. I believe the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has a considerable stable of properties.

So my question is, can the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) at least commit to speaking with his own caucus members or some landlords about a landlord's perspective on the Residential Tenancies Board and how maybe the member for Elmwood decides if and when to apply for above-guideline increases on his own properties?

Mr. Sala: Yes, first of all, I just want to say it's a shame that the members opposite are more focused on partisanship here than talking about actually resolving the problem that I've referenced here.

Look, it will, of course, I think, be of use to understand what a landlord would consider to be appropriate types of expenditures, and that would be of benefit. But I would say that right now the balance is massively tipped in favour of landlords and the issue is that renters are not prioritized under our current legislation.

They're the ones who are suffering, as things are written and, frankly, the problem is clear: it's that we have a massive issue with allowing landlords to submit far too many expenditures in applying for AGIs—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time is up.

Ms. Naylor: I'd like to ask the member for St. James if you could mention some of the specific ways that

Bill 227 would specifically benefit low-income Manitobans and seniors.

Mr. Sala: Yes, I thank the member for the question.

So first of all, it limits what can be counted towards an AGI application, as we've already outlined.

It also ensures that a rent increase cannot be applied until an actual order is given by the RTB, which will ensure that low-income renters aren't forced to pay a rent increase even before it's approved.

And, really importantly, in the event where an AGI is required because there's expenditures that are—that have been submitted that are allowable and that should go forward, it allows the RTB to spread that rent increase over a longer period of time, protecting lower income renters, protecting seniors and ensuring that, at least to some degree, the impacts of those rent increases are mitigated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield)—oh, the honourable member for Waverley.

Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley): Why did the member's party filibuster and vote against a bill which would have brought a rent freeze in for Manitobans for the next two years?

Mr. Sala: Well, I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

The reality is is that again we're distracting from the bill at hand here. It is more partisanship and more avoiding the topic at hand.

We're bringing forward a real solution that this government should honestly consider as a means of controlling our affordability problem that they're creating in this province.

So instead of focusing on partisanship here, it would be wonderful to see them actually open up to the amendments that have been put forward and to actually consider how this would make life better for constituents in their own communities.

Mr. Nesbitt: How was the criteria for applying a rent increase above the maximum under this proposed bill determined?

Mr. Sala: I appreciate the question and I think that's a good question.

So, in order to determine that, we did consult with some expert stakeholders here in the province about what would be appropriate and we also looked to other

jurisdictions across Canada, specifically BC and Ontario, to look at what they've done to control out-of-control above-guideline increase issues in those provinces.

So we looked to them for inspiration. We consulted with some stakeholder experts here in the province and that's how we landed on these specific expenditures that are allowed under this bill.

Mr. Brar: Can the member kindly share how will Bill 227 help keep rent affordable for Manitobans?

Mr. Sala: Thanks so much to my colleague for the question. As we already mentioned, when we did that FIPPA and we learned that there were 20,400 units in this province that's above-guideline increases, about 2,700 of those were 15 per cent increases or greater. That's reflective of an out-of-control problem we have here.

This bill proposes amendments that will bring that problem under control and that's—those are improvements to affordability that would impact every single community across this entire province, including communities that are represented by PC members across the way. This is essentially a set of amendments that will be guaranteed to reduce costs of living for Manitobans going forward, and I hope they'll support the amendments because of that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Yes, good morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is indeed a beautiful Manitoba morning: the sun is shining, the birds are singing and the farmers are in the fields. The only thing better would be a couple inches of rain in the forecast.

This morning we are debating Bill 227, an amendment to The Residential Tenancies Act, moved by the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala).

Before I get too far into my allotted time, I want to fully disclose to the House that I have been a landlord for the past 23 years in my home town of Shoal Lake. I own a commercial building with two rental suites.

I've been lucky to have had many great tenants over the years with whom I've had a very good relationship. I am proud to say that not once did I make an application for an above-the-guideline rent

increase to the Residential Tenancies Branch. I'm also proud to say that none of my tenants ever had cause to complain to the RTB either.

I believe Bill 227 is politically motivated and does absolutely nothing to change above-guideline applications by landlords. However, this bill would have a chilling effect on the rental supply in Manitoba, taking away options for renters and reducing competition amongst landlords.

The clause in this bill saying that landlords would be prevented from removing or reducing rent discounts for one year after an application for a larger rent increase is made and from applying for a larger rent increase within one year after removing or reducing a rent discount is not well-thought-out. This clause creates a disincentive for landlords to offer new discounts to renters while also discouraging new investment in units with existing discounts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 227 is based on the flawed premise that the Residential Tenancies Board staff and appointees are operating in bad faith and not applying the existing rules to any above-guideline applications. This is dismissive and insulting to those hard-working people.

Our government recognizes the immense challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on everyone, including renters, in this province. This is why we took steps to protect renters, such as freezing rent increases for the next two years through Bill 71, which finally passed second reading last week after many days of filibustering by the NDP in their ideological opposition to giving tax relief to Manitobans.

When Bill 71 did finally come to a second reading vote—every member of the NDP voted against Bill 71, which gives Manitobans a tax break during a pandemic and freezes rent increases. It's truly ironic that the member for St. James would introduce Bill 227 today, saying it will protect renters from increases, when they fought against Bill 71 which did exactly that.

We all know the NDP is a party of higher taxes and their members support those increases faithfully. This is similar to when the NDP was focused on delaying the 2020 budget last March, right at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the middle of the third wave of the pandemic here in Manitoba, they again delayed legislation to get critical funds out to Manitobans through a tax break, and now have introduced Bill 227 trying to cover up

this fact and pretending that they are on the side of renters.

Our government has taken the steps to bring benefits to renters during this difficult time. It is a shame the NDP continues to oppose support to Manitobans due to their ideological beliefs.

I have a couple of gems here from the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), who somehow managed to become the Finance critic for the opposition. This quote by the member comes directly from Hansard during the debate on Bill 71.

He said commercial buildings only get 10 per cent, so there's no way somebody can classify a 300-unit apartment building as residential and not a commercial operation and, by doing that, that is a huge gift to corporate landlords. On April 21st, the member for Fort Garry called it obscene that apartment blocks are taxed as residential properties and not commercial.

What the NDP's Finance critic chooses to overlook or fails to understand is the implication of a 20 per cent tax increase on landlords and how that would play into rental rates that would have to be charged to tenants to cover additional costs.

*(10:30)

In the member for Fort Garry's defence, it's been almost two years since he was a member of the Residential Tenancies Board. He clearly misses that power to make lives tougher for Manitobans and has instead started advocating against the phasing out of education tax on properties.

The member for Fort Garry has plenty of expertise in making life tougher for the residents of his own city. He spent several years as chair of the Winnipeg School Division, where he and his board increased education property tax on homeowners by nearly 40 per cent. So the NDP have a Finance critic whose life mission so far has been to make housing more expensive for Manitobans.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he's in the right party for sure. It is interesting that the NDP continue to claim they are on the side of Manitoba renters when their past actions have only made life less affordable for them. The irony is that while the NDP want to look like they have the backs of Manitobans, this legislation and their past actions speak volumes.

We all know the member for Fort Garry's disastrous time as a school trustee in the Winnipeg School Division but, just to recap: over a seven-year

period, from 2012 to '19, property taxes increased over 36 per cent. Inflation was only pegged at 10.8 per cent during this time. Along with these increases came luxurious trips and a salary of— increase of 15 per cent for Winnipeg School Division trustees.

Now, you may be wondering what this has to do with rent increases and Bill 227. Well, these stark increases in property tax show a trend with the member for Fort Garry. While the member was on the Residential Tenancies Board for 10 years, every single above-guideline rent increase application was approved—every one of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The member for Fort Garry loves increasing taxes and he certainly loves increasing rents on Manitobans, as well. There were a total of 2,079 rent increase applications approved from 2010 to 2015. From 2010 to 2019, there was a 10-year average of 351 buildings that received approval for above average above-the-guideline rent increases, amounting to an average rent of \$878. Nearly a 10 per cent increase was granted.

The NDP like to talk about helping vulnerable Manitobans, yet they sit in this Chamber today with a member whose legacy is higher taxes, higher rent and making life much less affordable for those who need a break. It's almost laughable that they bring this legislation, Bill 227, forward when they have been increasing rent and taxes on Manitobans for the past decade.

As well, the NDP had plenty of time in their 17 years in government to make any changes they wanted to residential tenancy legislation. The member for Fort Garry's record on these issues shouldn't bring much confidence to Manitobans.

In contrast, our government has been working hard to protect Manitobans through this incredibly difficult time and we will continue to do so. Bill 71 will bring much needed relief by eliminating education property taxes and bringing in a rent freeze for the next two years.

Where the members across the way want to increase the rents of Manitobans, we know that our citizens deserve a break. It's unfortunate that the members opposite play partisan games and let their ideology get in the way of swift passage of Bill 71. However, we will continue to push for tax relief for Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the NDP and their Finance critic, the member for Fort Garry, are focused on raising taxes and making life less affordable for

Manitobans, our party has been focused on supporting Manitobans through the following programs: we are providing \$22 million in Rent Assist for many low-income Manitobans, bringing the total program to \$54 million, quadrupling what the previous NDP government ever spent.

We are partnering with the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association to deliver a new \$5.6-million rent bank program that will support stable housing for low-to-moderate-income families. This is an interest-free loan to help vulnerable Manitobans in a time of immense need. This will provide interest-free loans to tenants who are behind in their rent or need to move to housing that is more suitable.

We will also be providing \$12 million in grant funding to 10 municipalities throughout the province to address affordable housing needs.

Finally, we put forward legislation to freeze rent increases for the next two years. Unfortunately, the NDP chose to do their best to deny Manitobans this relief. They finally caved in when they knew they were on the wrong side of this issue.

Well, Mr. Deputy, Speaker, they—on the wrong side of the issue with Bill 227 as well. Despite the opposition clearly not wanting Manitobans to keep more of their hard-earned money, on this side of the House we will continue to work to ensure more money remains in the hands of Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, your mic is muted.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): My apologies.

I want to thank my colleague, the honourable member from St. James, for bringing forward Bill 227 to amend The Residential Tenancies Act. The act currently establishes a process to set the maximum rent increase that may be charged for most rental units and allows landlords to apply for an order that authorizes rent increases above this amount.

This bill prevents landlords from applying for a larger rent increase, unless the landlord has incurred eligible capital expenditures or there has been an extraordinary increase in taxes, utilities or security service costs. And this bill would ensure that larger rent increases cannot be charged until an order has been made that authorizes the increased rent.

Further, this bill would prevent landlords from removing or reducing rent discounts for one year after an application for a larger rent increase is made and

from applying for a larger rent increase within one year after removing or reducing a rent discount.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, housing is a right and all Manitobans should have access to affordable, safe and quality housing. I speak about this with some experience, as I started renting my first apartment at the age of 17 and I continued to rent for 18 years, living in a variety of housing situations. I had wonderful landlords and terrible ones, so I do have personal knowledge of what it means to rent and why it matters for rent to stay affordable, especially in order to prevent people from having to frequently move in order to keep their life affordable.

Unfortunately, the Pallister government is not working towards the goal of affordable, safe, quality housing. They've demonstrated this by approving all 310 above-guideline rent increase applications in the 2019-2020 year alone, and now above-guideline rent increases are contributing significantly to the housing affordability crisis in Manitoba.

Manitobans who are renting are generally the same people who have been hit the hardest by the pandemic: women; seniors; Black, Indigenous, people of colour; young people; people with disabilities; and low-income Manitobans. The government has even stated that, generally, all above-guideline increases are approved. This is indicative of a broken system that doesn't give renters a fair chance to fight rising rent costs.

Currently, landlords can apply for above-guideline rent increases for reasons as minute as operating expenses, which is simply ongoing maintenance. During the pandemic, many of these increases came immediately after the rent freeze was lifted and were as high as 30 to 50 per cent.

In November of 2020, I sent a letter to the then-minister of Housing on behalf of several tenants in the Wolseley constituency who had their rent raised by 27.9 and 29.9 per cent. One tenant had lost her job at the start of the pandemic and suddenly found at the end of the year that her rent was being increased by \$306 a month. I saw photographs of her apartment and the serious amount of work that should have been done in her unit but was not.

Another tenant, a full-time student in the same building who also lost her part-time job due to the pandemic, had her \$300-per-month increase take effect in November 1st—on November 1st, 2000. Like many students, she is accumulating debt in order to continue studying, and this increase in rent would

mean an additional \$3,200 a year in housing costs will be added to the total student debt she will owe.

Many students are in similar situations, and this will force students into even more debt than they are currently incurring. Ultimately, both of these young women were forced to move, even though they were happily settled into their community prior to these ridiculous rent increases.

Housing stability positively affects the economy, as well as the health, safety and well-being of Manitobans. Rent increases of this nature have meant families have to move, which affects the stability of their children's schooling as well.

I'm not sure if all members in this House can conceive of how dramatic a \$3,200 annual rent increase is, especially when it doesn't accompany any unit renovations or upgrades. I was struck by that number when looking at today's news, and I thought about how the Premier (Mr. Pallister) of our province, someone with an income at least six to eight times more than the tenants I mentioned, worked so hard to avoid paying \$4,000 in property taxes on a Costa Rican vacation home—property taxes that were, by the way, earmarked to help build affordable housing in Costa Rica. Oh, the irony of that, Mr. Speaker.

* (10:40)

But I digress. We aren't talking about premiers or other community leaders with multiple properties, big incomes, investments and general pension plans—generous pension plans. We are talking about renters, many of whom are low-income or on a fixed income, meaning that any increase in rent is hard for them to deal with, not to mention increases as exorbitantly high as 30 to 50 per cent.

Many Manitobans have lost their jobs during the pandemic and simply can't afford an increase in rent. Higher housing costs and less support mean families and seniors living below the poverty line will have to make difficult decisions between housing, food and medication. Between rent increases, hydro increases and more, this government is making 'laff'—life less affordable for Manitobans.

And now this government has pledged to freeze rents for two years. It's unlikely this will mean much for tenants whose landlords apply for above-guideline increases, given that the Residential Tenancies Board approves them all. Landlords are therefore still able to increase rents, as long as they do so by applying for an AGI.

This bill prevents landlords from applying for a larger rent increase unless the landlord has incurred eligible capital expenditures or there's been an extraordinary increase in taxes, utilities or security service costs.

Currently, landlords need to argue that material improvements they made to the property are significant enough to warrant a rent increase. However, the guidelines are too vague and allow large corporate landlords to unfairly abuse the system and increase rents for expenses that are a part of ongoing maintenance, leading to what is widely known in my community as 'renovictions.'

Bill 227 removes the ability for operating expenses to be used to increase rent, thereby protecting renters from increases based on ongoing maintenance expenses. This bill also makes it clear that renters cannot be charged the AGI until after the order is issued.

Bill 227 also clarifies language to ensure that tenants are protected. This bill allows the residential commission to consider the affordability of rent for renters. This could mean that, for example, instead of rents increasing dramatically, very quickly due to an AGI, the increase could be spread out over three years so that it's more affordable.

Bill 227 prevents landlords from removing or reducing rent discounts for one year after an application for a larger rent increase is made and from applying for a larger rent increase within one year after removing or reducing a rent discount. And this ensures that rent is more stable and affordable for tenants and that discounts are not abused to provide a financial security blanket to large corporate landlords.

Bill 227 has been made more necessary following the government introduction of Bill 71, to ensure renters are greater protected from above-guideline rent increases in conjunction with the two-year rent freeze.

Additionally, Bill 227 is necessary to provide great financial protection for renters, who will be losing a key credit that helped them cover their expenses, all as a result of Bill 71. Bill 71 hurts renters because renters currently get a \$700 tax credit, but Bill 71 will reduce this by 25 per cent right now and ultimately will phase it out completely, meaning that renters will simply have less money in their pockets.

At the same time, landlords will benefit from that same 25 per cent rebate on their property taxes. So landlords get more benefits, renters lose the few

benefits that they have, all of the rents get jacked up through above-'guided' approvals.

This government only cares about helping themselves and their wealthy friends. If there was ever any doubt, just look at which side of the House happily pays our taxes to support health care, education and to help mitigate the impact of poverty in this province, and then look at which side of the House asks for amnesty to avoid paying taxes and late penalties on their vacation properties.

The Tory Cabinet has ensured that Bill 71 will benefit wealthy Manitobans. And who will ultimately benefit the most? Bill 71 will benefit landlords and people who own more than one property much more than renters, regardless of income. How is this fair? While rents to up unabated by The Residential Tenancies Act, the Pallister government has failed to build a single unit of social or affordable housing and has instead sold off units and cut the maintenance budget while raising rents.

The Pallister government has not built a single new social or affordable housing unit to date, and the budget for the repair, maintenance, modernization and improvement of existing social housing has been cut by nearly \$100 million annually.

There are so many ways this government's making life less affordable for renters; for students; for Black, Indigenous and people of colour; for women; for trans and non-binary people and people of all background who live in poverty or on a fixed income.

Bill 227 would go a long way to mitigate some of the damage and protect renters from unfair and impossible rent increases, and help to keep renters in their homes and to help them become established community members in their neighbourhoods.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): Good morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise virtually in the Manitoba Legislature this morning. I did—you will note that I remembered to 'briden' my headcast-headset, and I apologize to Hansard the other day for any difficulty in hearing. But this is the world that we live in as we debate legislation here this morning as part of our democratic process, even if it is virtually.

So it is with great interest that I listened to the member for St. James' (Mr. Sala) comments and his analysis about the legislation that is being brought

forward for consideration this morning. And the comment that struck me most was in response to the query of whether or not the NDP had actually consulted the actual landlords who may be impacted by this legislation. And the member for St. James said—and I am quoting directly—it would be—it would, of course, be of use.

So, here you have the NDP member bringing, again, literally a half-baked piece of legislation; it's akin to the member for the—the member bringing or baking a cake or forgetting the eggs, because he's forgetting literally half the ingredients when it comes to this legislation. But you know what? Half-baked legislation is something you'd get used to with the NDP and members opposite.

So you're bringing forward a piece of legislation that is designed to take a look and help us do an analysis of Manitoba's rent regulation program and the impact it has on the rental housing market, which is something that this member has failed to do in—when he has done his comparison, his cross-jurisdictional comparison of the analysis on the impact of rent guidelines and the trajectory of open, available, affordable rental units here in the province of Manitoba.

So the member's inability to connect the two pieces—the issue being rent increases and construction and the affordability of multiple housing units for Manitobans, as well as the other issue, and that is the complete inattention—or involvement, for that matter—of a key partner within this dynamic: you have the renter and you have the landlord.

But again, the member opposite and the NDP are willing to ignore half the equation—which on a side note, may explain why our students did so poorly under the NDP if this is how they do most of their math equations.

What's also interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to this legislation is, when we talk about rental increases, when we talk about increasing the guidelines of which it is applicable, I think it is worth remembering—because granted, not all members will have been in the House for a considerable amount of time. But I do hope that all of us remember the—for lack of a better word—the antics of the NDP when they were in office.

So, for those who don't 'requal,' they may remember back in 2005, the NDP actually saw a situation here in Manitoba where there was almost no new construction of apartment buildings. It was a

significant issue. It was a significant issue for our post-secondary students, who needed housing in order to participate in their post-secondary education. It was a significant issue for newcomers here in Manitoba that come to our province, literally, by the thousands and thousands every year.

So what did the NDP do? Well, they literally exempted all new properties after 2005 from any rent guidelines, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (10:50)

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, today we have the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) arguing that we need to put exemptions and we need to put limits on landlords' ability to increase rents without ever mentioning or acknowledging that his own government brought in legislation that literally exempted all properties from that rental increase.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP, in 2005, also brought in another amendment that exempted all properties over a certain amount, in terms of monthly rental costs, from similar rent increases. So one has to wonder whether or not the member opposite has really done their homework when it comes to this legislation.

So I would hope that the member takes a look at the issue of inter-tenancy deregulation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when he's taking a look at the housing and the apartment situation, when he takes a look at why landlords may be required to make those increases.

And while, you know what, I will give the member credit: section 123(2.2)(b) I think actually is a valid component of this proposed legislation because the legislation in that section actually exempts landlords from this legislation and from any kind of cap on rental properties if the replacement of the system actually has to do with energy or water conservation.

So I will give the member for St. James credit for ensuring that incentivizing component is included in the legislation because I think all of us, as legislatures—as individuals here, sharing the same planet, I think we're all in this together. So, incentivizing residential property owners to take steps to reduce their energy use, to reduce their water use I think is something that is well considered.

So, on that note, I do sincerely appreciate the member's inclusion of that component within this proposed legislation. But it is—again, the member for St. James, and again, it's worth saying again,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, failed completely to include or have any conversation with any landlords, so half the equation.

Now, I had the fortune of residing in a number of apartments over the years, and I remember when I was residing in Brandon, going to Brandon University, and living in a small rental unit. I think it had maybe six units in total, so I got to know the landlords. And in this instance, it was an older couple—Bill was his name and Eva.

Originally they had emigrated here from Hungary in the 1950s and they had literally come here with next to nothing in their pockets. And yet, through hard work and perseverance, they made an effort to live the Canadian dream and they were able to buy this property. And this property was literally, it was their income property.

They would attend this property on a daily basis. They would check on the tenants. They would make sure that everything was up and working, and at times, yes, there were increases above the guideline, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But lo and behold, during this timeframe, the NDP were in office and they allowed these guidelines—increased guidelines to go forward. But I did not begrudge my landlords because I knew, in talking to them, that this was indeed, their nest egg, their retirement.

So what the member opposite is doing is actually attacking, in some instances, individuals and Manitoba's entrepreneurs who have risked their own income in order to create an income-generating property, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, I see the time is winding down, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and unfortunately we can't even get into the situation about when landlords have to face tenants who are less than ideal.

And I'm not suggesting that all tenants are bad tenants, absolutely not. But on the same hand, the NDP like to indicate that all landlords are somehow evil landlords. Nothing could be further from the truth.

So I applaud the member for his bill and I wish him the best of luck this morning—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I'm almost reluctant to say thank you, Mr. Deputy

Speaker. We've heard Mr. Deputy Speaker so much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I will briefly speak to the merits of the bill. I think this bill has merits, so I will say that right away. We do have far too loose of a regulatory situation when it comes to landlords and tenants. I will give a shout-out to the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) for his spirited defence of the—of our oppressed landlords in Manitoba.

I know that it's a—but I will say this: he makes a point—one—which is that there is a difference, and an important difference, between, you know, small landlords who have a very different situation, as opposed to landlords or real estate investment trusts who may own hundreds of thousands of properties.

There is a very, very serious problem in Manitoba with what are called 'renovictions' where people are using easy money. They can obtain—they can buy an apartment building or a so-called investment property with a minimal amount of money down.

They can put a minimal amount of money into improving it—it's not really being improved in any significant way—and they are able to use loopholes in The Residential Tenancies Act to drive up rent 50 or 70 per cent.

And that is the sort of thing that is going to—it breaks families and it breaks renters and it is terrible. It is—I actually—we specifically flagged this with the Finance Minister in our budget submission because it is a—this is the sort of thing that ruins the economy because you end up evicting a whole bunch of people who were able to afford rent.

All of a sudden you have a series of apartments that people will struggle to afford, and at a time of pandemic, when people's incomes have often not risen for a very long period of time.

This is something that happened under the PCs and the NDP. The fact that it happened under the PCs and the NDP doesn't matter as—when it comes to the merits of this bill.

This merit—bill does deserve very serious consideration because we have a very serious problem that is going to—and it's—ultimately, it's not good for anyone. It's not good for landlords or renters when renters can't pay their rent and landlords can't pay their mortgages. You end up with an unbroken wave of a risk of defaults.

So I will cede the rest of my time. Thank you very much. We will support this bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe)? No?

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I know I don't have much time, but I thank the absent-minded professor for giving me at least a few seconds.

The NDP election strategy has three pillars. The first is fear and division; second, fear and division; and—you guessed it—fear and division also coming up at third. If those don't work, they always do seem to be up for a little smear and derision, though. They like to pit renters against landlords, they like to pit employees against employers, workers against management, and this bill's more of the same from the NDP.

They like to smear the work of the members of the Residential Tenancies Board, presumably including the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw). They like to deride the efforts of landlords to improve housing stock.

Now, as it happens, I do know quite a few landlords. For the most part, I wouldn't call them wealthy. They're typically hard-working, fair-minded young families who were hoping to use their starter home as a source of extra income.

Or they buy one down, decrepit housing stock—perhaps currently owned by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway)—and then they invest tens of thousands of their own—dollars of their own money taking these dumps and turning them into beautiful modern homes that they can either sell or continue renting.

So what's the message the NDP wants to give to these people? Oh, don't do that. Don't invest in Manitoba.

Well, I'm here to tell Manitobans not to be afraid, not to give in to the NDP's constant attempts to divide them against each other. Know we—they need to know that we're stronger when we all stick together and we're all better off with the NDP stuck in opposition—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Radisson will have nine minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

I am concluding the private members' bill business.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 23—Inclusion of a Land Acknowledgement in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We're going on to private resolution business. The resolution today is in the honourable member for Keewatinook, inclusions of land acknowledgement in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine),

WHEREAS the Manitoba Legislature and people across this province reside on the Traditional Territories of the Anishinaabe, Dakota, Cree, Anishinew, Dene and Inuit peoples and the Homeland of the Métis; and

WHEREAS as stewards of the land, Indigenous people willingly shared knowledge with people from around the world on how to live and survive in their ancestral territories; and

WHEREAS in an era of reconciliation, it is imperative for the Legislature to acknowledge and honour the lives of Indigenous communities who have resided on these lands since time immemorial; and

WHEREAS many organizations and institutions across the world, including the Winnipeg Jets, rightfully recognize Indigenous communities when they are opening ceremonies, meetings, and events and the Legislature should be a champion of similar efforts; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Legislature convenes each day of a Session with an opening prayer but does not acknowledge the traditional land upon which it is located; and

WHEREAS many Indigenous community members and non-Indigenous allies have requested a land acknowledgement prior to the House beginning its proceedings; and

WHEREAS a land acknowledgement should be designed in collaboration with Manitoba Keewatinowí Okimakanak, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Manitoba Inuit Association, and the Southern Chiefs Organization.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to begin each day in the Chamber with a land acknowledgement designed in collaboration with

Indigenous leadership, in addition to the opening prayer.

Motion presented.

Mr. Bushie: Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are on Treaty 1 territory, home of the Ojibwe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dene, Inuit and homeland of the Métis nation.

I myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I come from Treaty 5, and yesterday I offered tobacco on Mother Earth on the shores of Lake Winnipeg in my Treaty 5 territory to ask for clarity and in support for today, and be able to bring this resolution forward with the best interests of heart and the best interests of Indigenous people.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, reconciliation—reconciliation seems to be the word of the day used by the governments, not just here in Manitoba but across the country, and it's something that needs to be held with the utmost respect and be able to be done in a clear and concise way. And I believe beginning our day with a land acknowledgement and respecting where we are, where we sit, where we reside, where we conduct business of this Legislature, of this Chamber—whether it be remote, whether it be Zoom or whether it be sitting here in the Chamber—to be able to bring that forward and be able to do it in a really concise way.

I have listened for some time now across the way and I've heard on a number of occasions the word reconciliation, the word respect, when it comes time to referring to Indigenous peoples as the true stewards and the first stewards of this land.

So I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker—Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, that we have had this time to be able to consider what this means and what this does for not only ourselves here in the Chamber but what this does for Indigenous people across the province of Manitoba.

Here in Manitoba, we have a very strong, a very vibrant Indigenous culture, Indigenous population, and we are represented now in this Chamber and in this House, in government—in all levels of government, in all levels of and aspects of government and businesses across this country, across this province and across the city of Winnipeg.

So I believe that being able to and bringing this resolution forward is just and it is—if we can put it in its most—in simplistic terms, it is the right thing to do.

It is the right thing to do on the path to reconciliation of Indigenous peoples.

If you've had the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be able to go and see and hear various land acknowledgements, wherever you may be—and it's become commonplace, not only here in the city of Winnipeg but across all territories and all treaty territories—and it's something that's done out of respect.

And it's an acknowledgement that's being able to now begin that conversation that people may have and people want to continue to have, to be able to go and talk about and reflect on and become informed about Indigenous culture, Indigenous peoples, where we come from, where we are today and where we want to be and where we want to go on this path to reconciliation.

And I feel that there are certain aspects of this Legislature that are left behind. We had talked just yesterday about Manitoba Day and Manitoba Day being May the 12th, and even with the anniversary of Manitoba being 150 years, anniversary of the Legislature being 100 years, but we're still adhering to 150-year-old or 100-year-old traditions.

So I think in the spirit of reconciliation and the spirit of the true representation of our province, and even of our Legislature, even of our members here in this Chamber, we need to bring an up-to-date version of exactly what it means to begin our day, to begin our daily proceedings.

Yesterday, the Deputy Speaker had referred to the mace and what the mace brings to the tradition, but in that time the Deputy Speaker also referenced the star blanket cushion and the beautiful star blanket cushion that now it's beaded, and the mace runner that was given to the Assembly by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and it's to honour Indigenous heritage.

And in that—and also during that time the—today's Speaker also spoke about—and I'll quote this out of Hansard: This artifact also serves as a reminder that the Assembly Chamber and the Legislative Building are on Treaty 1 territory and the traditional lands of the Anishinabe and the home of the Métis people.

And I would encourage members to reflect on the solemn responsibility we all share to serve our constituents and Assembly, and our call whenever heats and—heated debates we may have that we are all part of one legacy to serve the citizens of this province. Which is exactly true, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be able

to go and have that respect, to be able to bring those kind of things forward.

When we talk about the uniqueness of Manitoba and exactly what Manitoba and—specifically brings to this resolution, and we go on a bigger scale when we talk about Canada and the origins of the root name Canada has Anishinabe roots and Indigenous roots. The name Manitoba has Anishinabe roots. Even the name Winnipeg has Anishinabe roots. So why not be—and try and complete that cycle and truly have the representation and the roots of where this Legislature sits reflect the roots of Indigenous people and be able to bring that tradition forward and be able to bring that acknowledgement and that recognition.

And it will then have a profound affect on not only the people that are sitting in this Chamber today, but for future generations, and to be able to have our young people and young children and young Anishinabe children and young Indigenous children be able to say, hey, I'm now a part of this process.

Our members of our caucus, and I'm sure there's members have been—other parts of government have had Anishinabe roots and Indigenous roots, and perhaps at their point in time and even today, you know, you feel like you have to almost try and force your way into being able to see your culture represented in this Chamber.

And I think it's very important to be able to go, and with a sense of pride, and say this is—now I really, really feel included, and the inclusiveness is wholesome and it's wholehearted and it really encompasses exactly where we are, because prior to a hundred years of the Legislature, prior to 150 years of Manitoba, Indigenous people were the first stewards of this land, of this territory, of this very spot where we sit today. So why not go back to do that?

This is not a resolution that's asking for budget. It's not asking for a huge line item by any means. It's not asking for monetary value. It's asking for the recognition and the respect and the path to reconciliation towards society, towards Government of Canada, government of Manitoba, the reconciliation towards Indigenous people.

We—you've—we've heard time and time again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about UNDRIP, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. And there's a number of calls to action in there that also refer to lands, that also refer to trying and asking governments to adopt various strategies and various things to implement, to reconcile, and to

create and mend that bond and mend that disconnect that these governments have had with Indigenous communities and Indigenous peoples. And I think it's important to be able to bring this legislation forward and have that go.

For those of you that have had the chance to perhaps go to a Winnipeg Jets game, I remember the first time that I'd heard that; it actually choked me up to be able to hear my community's and my people's recognition on that stage, on that forum. And quite honestly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it really raised an eyebrow to other people, and they started asking questions, and asking questions in a concise way so that they can come forward and have those opinions and ask those questions of Indigenous people in a nonbiased way. Because we know a lot of issues are done biased, whether it be a social media or in the media in general or just in society. So why not have that discussion and why not have somebody and people and younger people ask questions about Indigenous people and exactly what this means in the Legislature.

The representation now in this Chamber is very important and it's becoming more and more inclusive of exactly what Manitoba represents, and Manitoba represents a large Indigenous population. And I'm proud to say that we have a number of members in our caucus that are of Indigenous heritage and proudly represent that every single day.

* (11:10)

So in bringing this resolution forward the—it's the hopes that across all party lines, that this is a non-partisan issue and it's not something that we can divide on. It's something that's—let's speak, let's practice what we're talking about, let's talk the talk, walk the walk. We talk about reconciliation and let's do that. Let's do this reconciliation for Indigenous people, for our people, for the people that are the true stewards of the land, the first owners of this land, the first residents of this land.

And let's have that respect and pay that respect forward. And let's do that by passing this resolution and having this Chamber and this Legislative Assembly and this government—whatever the government of the day may be, today, tomorrow or for generations to come—be able to have that acknowledgement and have that respect and have that dialogue to say, this is exactly where we go, and this is our appreciation and this is our path to reconciliation. And this is exactly the respect that is needed and the respect that is due and the respect that should

be paid to Indigenous people to be able to bring this acknowledgement forward.

Miigwech, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): 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. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): I was wondering if the member could advise of us—advise of other ways to advance reconciliation with Indigenous and First Nations peoples, in addition to land acknowledgement.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I thank the member from Selkirk for the question.

And I think the land acknowledgement is a way, and it's a step. And it's—it may be a small token, but it is a step in the right direction. So I believe in being able to reconcile and have those discussions. It's to include Indigenous communities in the discussions where land, where language, where their inherent rights are being talked about or discussed or affected.

So I think it's important to be able to have that dialogue—open-ended—between communities.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I just want to, first and foremost, begin by saying miigwech to our colleague, the member for Keewatinook, for bringing forward this very important resolution. It's an honour to work with him and to sit in this Chamber with him and I lift him up today.

Could the member share with the House how the land acknowledgement would help Manitoba see this space as situated on Treaty 1 territory?

Mr. Bushie: I thank the member for that question.

To be able to bring this acknowledgement forward, I think, and in this space and where we are in particular, the Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Métis nation and Oji and Oji-Cree and Cree, as—to be able to bring that forward and have a sense of pride as to the first stewards of the land, and this is where we are, this is where we come from and this is—I don't want to say our territory, because our people have inherently shared and with—what we have, shared our

knowledge, shared our lands in good conscience and good spirit.

So I think being able to do this pays that respect back to our communities.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I really want to thank the member for bringing forward this resolution and for your wonderful introduction to it. We're very happy to be able to support the resolution.

And just thinking about the process of this, I was wondering if the member had the opportunity to ask the House leader to call for a meeting of the rules committee to discuss this?

And, ultimately, I'm very grateful for the way it was, in fact, introduced, because it's sparking more conversation on it. Just curious about the process.

Mr. Bushie: I thank the member for the question and the comments.

In regards to our caucus and our caucus discussions, I know prior to—even prior to myself being as an MLA for Keewatinook, those discussions have happened time and time again within our caucus and including our honourable House leader, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), being able from day one to have this as an issue that's first and foremost on his agenda. And it's something that's collaborative, we worked together with and again, people ask—sometimes ask the question, why now? How does it start?

And to me this is the start. This is the dialogue that's happened over the years, and now we're taking it forward and being able to bring this resolution to the table.

Ms. Fontaine: I'd like the member to, kind of, maybe elaborate on that this is the beginning stages of a discussion that actually has been occurring across the country for, obviously, the last couple of years, certainly, but maybe in that elaboration as well, the member could also share whether or not he knows if there are any legislatures across the country that also are doing land acknowledgements.

Mr. Bushie: I thank my colleague for the question. In regards to land acknowledgements, it's almost something that you've heard of over the last number of years. And whether it's something that's formally adopted in other jurisdictions, other territories, is something that I'm totally not unsure on in terms of a formal piece of legislation.

But I know those acknowledgements exist. They exist within governments; they exist within departments; they exist within meetings and they exist within corporations. And it's something that's very strong, and in Manitoba specifically, because we have such a strong and vibrant Indigenous community, it's important to be able to bring this forward and be able to do this and look at ourselves as leads. And let's take that lead and have other jurisdictions come along board and be able to say this is—

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

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Are there any groups that the member consulted with that were opposed or may have brought up any concerns that the House should be aware of?

Mr. Bushie: I thank my colleague for the question.

In regards to opposition to this, I have not spoken to one person that's opposed to exactly what this legislation attempts to do and what's—what this resolution wants to do, to be able to bring forward in its acknowledgement of the treaty lands and Indigenous communities. I have not spoken to one person that has spoken against it. Everybody I've spoke to has spoken in favour, and they all say that it's long-needed and is long-outstanding and overdue.

Ms. Fontaine: Could the member share—and again, just to follow up on his last answer—share with the House, folks that he has spoken to and maybe share some of the discussions on how they see this as important to the Manitoba Legislature but also, more importantly, to Indigenous peoples as a whole?

Mr. Bushie: So it is important and we have reached out to all Indigenous communities here in Manitoba, First Nation communities, Métis communities and, just, the First Nation Indigenous population in general. And to be able to bring that forward—and when this was first discussed, and we had discussed for a number of months now and it goes back years prior to my time even, the sense of pride and the importance that Indigenous people feel this resolution and this acknowledgement would bring to them and to their young people to know that the inclusiveness is there, the inclusiveness is respected and represented in this Chamber and in this House.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Land acknowledgements have become common in public gatherings and spaces before an event. I'm wondering if the member opposite could share how these public

land acknowledgements have advanced reconciliation in Manitoba.

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

Being able to bring a land acknowledgement brings a sense of respect and inclusiveness and it begins that dialogue with Indigenous communities. Whether it be a corporation, whether it be a municipality or whether it be a provincial or federal government department or body, it brings that discussion and it begins that discussion towards land acknowledgement.

Because I'm sure if you've heard a land acknowledgement at various events, you've had somebody ask questions about exactly what that means. Why does it include this group? Why does it include Treaty 1? Why does it include Ojibwe, Oji-Cree, Métis people?

So it begins that dialogue and that's—the dialogue is truly what begins the path to reconciliation.

* (11:20)

Ms. Fontaine: Would the member be so kind as to share with the House how he feels that the PC government, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Cabinet could begin to repair their broken relationship with Indigenous peoples in Manitoba?

Mr. Bushie: Straight out, first answer is pass this resolution today. That's absolutely the one way to be able to begin that path and repair that relationship because it is a—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order.

The member for Keewatinook, continue.

Mr. Bushie: It is a damaged relationship, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and something that this resolution hopes to help mend. And it's a path to—it's a path and the righteous area. It's also a path to reconciliation.

So I believe if this government was to pass this resolution today, this vastly improves and it's an absolute step in the right direction. *[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I would like a little bit of order in the Chamber. It's difficult to hear what is going on. So just—I'd like to remind everybody to please.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): I thank the member for introducing this resolution.

I'm just curious, in more of a procedures question, if other legislatures across the country have introduced something similar through means of legislation or by some kind of rules committee.

Mr. Bushie: As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can't speak to other jurisdictions—how their legislatures and what they're attempting to do or at what stage they may be at, but I know with the increase Indigenous representations in various areas, the—it's greatly improving, and this discussion is happening over and over again.

And I must say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the—to answer the question about how this PC government can bring this forward, it's about having this discussion, being able to bring this forward and I'm hoping that—I was actually really hoping for a question or comment from the Indigenous relations minister to be able to support this piece of legislation and its resolution bringing forward.

So I think this is the right way to—thing to do, and it's on the right path and it's a token of reconciliation—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Time has expired for questions. The member's time is also up.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): The member is bringing forward a resolution asking this House to add a procedure to the House where we will start each day acknowledging that we are gathered on ancestral lands and traditional territory. I would like to thank the member from Keewatinook for bringing this resolution forward to the Chamber for discussion.

I will discuss this today. However, before I start, I want to place on the record that I am disappointed, disappointed because the member and their party should know that a resolution is not the proper method to bring about changes to House procedures, and this request should be going through the rules committee.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I believe, as legislators, it is important we acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past, that we dedicate ourselves and move forward in workable partnerships with Indigenous communities, in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration. And as legislators, we need to acknowledge and respect the treaties that were made on these territories. Part of this process begins by acknowledging the land on which we gather is historical Indigenous territory and ancestral land.

A traditional territory includes a physical geographic area identified by a First Nation or Nations, as the land they and/or their ancestors traditionally occupied or used. Whether the members and Manitobans know it or not, all Manitobans and all Canadians, for that, live and work on traditional Indigenous territory. For the past years, many members in this House and most Manitobans will have heard some acknowledge—someone acknowledging traditional Indigenous territory but may not understand the importance or background behind this acknowledgement.

In fact, on one occasion, I was yelled at by some attendees at a function while I was acknowledging the traditional territory we were meeting on. They yelled at me to give it up, what's in the past is past. They went on to state that Indigenous people had lost the land in a war. This outburst came as a result of lack of knowledge and from misunderstanding.

Indigenous peoples of Canada agreed through treaties to share the land with newcomers. They worked with and taught those new to the land the traditional skills needed to survive in their new homeland. The European side of my family arrived here in western Canada in the late 1700s. Without the acceptance, help, support and teachings of those Indigenous people living on the land when they arrived, they would've surely perished.

When we acknowledge we are on Treaty 1 territory in this House, I often wonder how many members in the House and in government know why it is important and exactly what the intent of this acknowledgement is. Acknowledgements are not meant to be simple, superficial platitudes that give the illusion of honour and respect for Indigenous land and nations. After all, people cannot live together without mutual respect.

A territorial or land acknowledgement is an act of reconciliation that involves making a statement recognizing the traditional territory of the Indigenous people who called the land home before the arrival of settlers, and in many cases still call the land their home.

It is acknowledging rich Indigenous governances existed in the past, still exist today and will continue to exist into the future.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, territorial recognition is an act of traditional diplomacy that stems from an old Indigenous diplomatic custom. Territorial

acknowledgments existed for hundreds of years as part of many Indigenous cultures. The significance of acknowledging the Indigenous land we stand on is a tradition that has dated back centuries for Indigenous people, but for many non-Indigenous Canadians, officially recognizing that territory or lands we stand on is a fairly new concept. It's one that many Indigenous people say marks a small but essential step towards reconciliation.

In Indigenous customs, when an Indigenous person found themselves on another nation's territory, even when only passing through, they would announce their presence by acknowledging that they knew they were on the traditional territory of the peoples whose territory they found themselves on. This custom was a way of recognizing and respecting the nation responsible for preserving this territory and, above all, to let those whose territory they were on know they come in peace.

Today, in times of reconciliation, this custom is reiterated in formal and informal meetings to acknowledge the Indigenous nation or nations that occupied the territory on which the meetings are taking place. Acknowledging territories shows recognition of and respect for Indigenous peoples. It is a recognition of their presence, both in the past and the present, recognition of their rights on the land and their history on the land. Paying these respects are essential elements of establishing healthy relations. These relationships are key to reconciliation.

Some Manitobans may be asking themselves what is the purpose of continuing this Indigenous tradition? Its purpose is quite simple: it recognizes that settlers and people who are not part of First Nations or Indigenous groups are here on shared Indigenous land. This is especially important since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its 94 calls to action in 2015. The TRC calls to action are asking all Canadians to think about what happened in the past and what changes can be made going forward in order to further the reconciliation process.

As with those who reacted to my acknowledging that we were meeting on traditional territory, a lot of people are unaware of Canada's true history and actual history. Acknowledging traditional territory gets people talking and conversations started. It allows us all to have a conversation about who we are as Canadians, where we are from and how we can work together in the spirit of co-operation to build a better Canada, a better Manitoba.

Territorial acknowledgements are not new and they have existed for hundreds of years and are part of many Indigenous cultures.

Some people have asked me how did he—how should they determine who should they acknowledge, especially since we know there have been many Indigenous peoples who have lived here, called this territory home or passed through here. This is a complicated question. The importance to me is the act itself being personal in nature and coming from the heart of those acknowledging the territory. An Indigenous friend of mine once told me the intent of the acknowledgement is more important than the words used in the delivery.

To those Indigenous people I've spoken to, acknowledgement means we acknowledge we are all accountable to our mutual relationships and to remind us every day of our promise to share the land and our responsibilities to each other. It shows that people are willing to learn and understand others' history and culture and they recognize that individuals' cultures and histories are different, are important and need to be celebrated.

*(11:30)

For non-Indigenous individuals, this is the beginning of a learning process. For those wanting to take steps to reconciliation, the acknowledgement should lead to more questions about who the people listed in the acknowledgement are and how their land came to be possessed by settlers.

They should be asking themselves how their ancestors and how they have benefitted from being allowed to share traditional territory with Indigenous people.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, this is important for our children to be taught the correct history of the province and our country. It is important that they are taught about Indigenous traditions and history such as territorial acknowledgement and the meaning and intent of treaties made in Canada. These teachings will ensure our young Manitobans become an 'integreble' part of the reconciliation process.

Today, I see it is a positive step when I hear children in our education system are learning the importance of the traditional territory they're on. As acknowledgements are used increasingly by Manitobans, it is important we do not forget why we give them and work to ensure they do not become seen or sound like lip service.

As legislators, it is important for us to know and understand what we mean when we continually acknowledge we are gathering on Indigenous territory.

In conclusion, let me say, once again: a resolution is not the proper channel to discuss changes to House procedures and members opposite know this. Territorial acknowledgements are not meant to be used as political platforms or platitudes that give the illusion of honour and respect for Indigenous lands and nations. They need to be from the heart.

As legislators, it is important to respect those whose ancestors occupied the lands on which we live. The land on which we gather was never ceded nor did First Nations ever sign away their lands to the Crown or to Canada. Treaties were made on these territories: agreements allowing us all to share the territories and live in peace.

In the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration, it is important we acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past and dedicate ourselves as legislators to move forward in partnerships with Indigenous peoples.

Miigwech. Thank you. Merci.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm pleased to get up on—this morning to put some words on the record in respect of my colleague's resolution on land acknowledgement.

Before I do, though, I want to just take a couple of minutes, because I don't have any other opportunity to do so in the House, to acknowledge Ted Fontaine, who passed this past week. Ted Fontaine is a relative. I believe that he and I would be third cousins. There's many, many Fontaines, so I was speaking with my uncle and we were trying to figure out who his dad was and all of this. So I believe that we're third cousins.

And I just wanted to take an opportunity to put on the record my condolences to his wife, Morgan, and to his children. I think that it is a testament to the life that Ted left—or lived on the acknowledgements of what a beautiful human being Ted Fontaine was this whole past week. And I just wanted to put a couple of words on the record in respect to Ted.

Ted Fontaine went to the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School, which is in our—which was in our community of Sagkeeng First Nation. He went there from 1948 to 1958, and then from 1958 to 1960, he went to the Assiniboia Indian Residential School. He graduated with a civil engineering degree program.

He's an author of *Broken Circle, The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*. He was once the chief of our First Nation community from 1979 to 1981.

He was staunchly proud of being Indigenous. He was staunchly proud of our Indigenous languages and tried to highlight our Indigenous languages every opportunity that he could. He highlighted and honoured our culture and our traditions, and our—beauty in our peoples. He did that no matter where he went, consistently for so many years.

What I want to share about Ted is, if you had the opportunity to know him, he made you feel so valued and so worthy and so loved. He always just had this smile on his face, and he even—he was just so kind and gentle in the way that he spoke with you and the way that he interacted with you.

And as most folks know, I don't have a relationship with my father and, you know, even the few times that I had an opportunity to spend time with him, he immediately—he felt like a father figure. And so I will always cherish that and honour that.

And I just wanted to take a quick moment: several years back here in the House, he sat in the Chamber up there when we were debating the bill for Orange Shirt Day by our Leader of the NDP, who brought that forward, and he presented to the standing committee. And I want to just quickly share the words that he put on the record that day.

And I quote: I remember my first year in residential school. I was locked up, incarcerated for 10 months straight, without ever seeing my home. Seven years old, I was not yet eight years old, and I went home for the first holiday I experienced. And you know what happened that first 10—after my first 10 months? I hated my mom and dad.

After coming in from my first stage in life—to a wonderful life of love and respect and—with my mom and my dad and my kokum and my mushum and my extended family, I didn't like them. You know why? They were Indian. That's the tragedy of what they tried to do to us.

And I have to apologize to my own children, and I've done this before, but I also apologize to second and third and fourth generations from my communities—that's the biggest legacy that we're left with. And the cycle went on for another 12 years, and you can imagine from my time sitting on the shores of the Great Slave Lake, contemplating walking through that sand and were—there was pebbles, and not coming back from that walk.

Sorry.

You know, he was such an extraordinary human being. He was raw and truthful and blunt about the history of residential schools and what our children went through when they were torn apart from our families and our communities. And despite all of that, he had so much love for everybody. He is the quintessential example of how good Indigenous people are and how forgiving and how generous our people are, and I'm proud to be able to say that in some small way, that I was able to spend some time with him.

And so, again, my condolences to his family, to our community and to the extended Fontaine family. Know that we on this side of the House honour your father and your grandfather today.

I just want to go back in the context of this conversation this morning on land acknowledgments and why land—a land acknowledgement when we start our day in this Chamber legislating—pursuing legislation in the name of all Manitobans, you know, land acknowledgement in this space, on Treaty 1 territory, on our territories, is so important because of and in honour of folks like Ted Fontaine, in honour of all of our children that went to residential schools, in honour of all of our children who never made it back from residential schools, in honour of all of our children who were scooped up in the '60s scoop, in the '70s and in the '80s, in honour of all of our children who are stolen from their families even today in the CFS system.

You know, it may not seem like a big deal to a lot of folks to have a land acknowledgment in this Chamber, but it goes a long way to acknowledge and situate the history, the colonial history of this province. And it goes a long way to situate us on a path to reconciliation.

* (11:40)

And a land acknowledgement is actually just a small step in this huge path to reconciliation. And I know that the member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere) said that this wasn't the procedure, this wasn't the way. But in fact, I disabuse him of that.

In fact, we started this conversation back in 2018, with conversations with the Government House Leader and with the Speaker. The Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader, the Liberal House leader and the Speaker can, if there is the political will, institute a land acknowledgement today or tomorrow. But what it requires is that political will.

What it requires is that we come to this space in an equitable way, where all of our histories and cultures are acknowledged, and the basic thing that we can do today is to start with a land acknowledgement.

And so it's important to put that on the record, that when we do that, when we acknowledge the land, when we acknowledge the ancestral territory, we are intrinsically acknowledging those histories, but what we're also doing is we're situating each other, no matter where we sit on this—in this Chamber, we're situating each other as relatives, as family, in this province, on these territories.

It is that very tangible step in bridging the gap and the divide between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples, and it is a very simple thing that we can do today. And so I acknowledge my colleague, the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) for bringing forward this resolution.

I hope that this will re-engage the conversations that we started having back in 2018, which just died off, but I have faith that we can do this. I have faith that there is the political will to move forward together in this Chamber in a good way.

Miigwech.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): To the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), my heartfelt condolences to her and her family, who has clearly lost a significant member of her family. Also, to the member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere), through his meaningful and well-thought-out speech, has taught me a little bit more, and a better understanding, of the acknowledgement and its history and its meaning.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I would like to begin acknowledging that we are on Treaty 1 territory and that the land we are gathered in and on is the traditional territory of the 'anishesh'-'anishiee'—sorry, forgive me—'anishiabee,' Cree, Ojibwe Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples and the homeland of the Métis nation.

I'm pleased today to share with the House a few words on the record about how our government is advancing reconciliation with Indigenous and First Nations people, in addition to the land acknowledgement. A territorial or acknowledgement is an act of reconciliation that involves making a statement in recognizing the traditions of Indigenous people who called the land home before the arrival of settlers and, in many cases, still do it at home.

Land acknowledgements have become common in public gathering in spaces before an event. Treaty land entitlement is a priority for government of Manitoba, as well as a constitutional obligation. There are nine treaty land entitlement agreements in Manitoba, covering 29 entitlement First Nations, for a total of 1.4 million acres of land of the Crown in acquisition land. Through a continuous progress on treaty land entitlements, we will pursue reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, continued progress on treaty land entitlement is only one way in which we are pursuing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. We remain committed to advancing reconciliation through concrete and tangible initiatives that build on meaningful engagement with Indigenous nations and peoples. Through new and ongoing initiatives we continue to address the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation here in Manitoba.

Our work is guided by the calls to action outlined in the 2015 report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and we'll continue to implement and support initiatives that further reconciliation outside of these calls.

Not only have we made continued progress on treaty land entitlements in Manitoba to pursue reconciliation, but out of—our government has also taken many other steps to pursue reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Manitoba.

Our government has many achievements within Indigenous and Northern Relations. Safe drinking water, home nutrition programs, Operation Return Home, Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, northern COVID-19 response, creation of the duty-to-consult framework, forestry management and licences, trade, First Nations airport authority and the completion of lake 40 Freedom Road are just some of the achievements the Manitoba government has supported.

Our government will continue to support the establishment of the Indigenous-led partnerships and ventures that will increase Indigenous participation and economic benefits to Indigenous communities and to Manitoba's economy as a whole.

Access to safe drinking water is a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for good personal and public health. Since April 1st, 2020 there have been 45 temporary boil watery advisories and seven long-term boil water advisories among Manitoba's

50 Northern Affairs communities. Since this time, actions were undertaken by the department to address this issue. These efforts have resulted in 'recidiment' of 42 boil water advisories, with three remaining in effect.

In June 2020, the government of Manitoba announced a pilot project to provide fresh, healthy foods to families with school-age children in multiple sites throughout the province. Learning resources were included with the food to facilitate nutritional education to families. In December 2020, the Department of Families announced an additional investment of \$1.2 million to extend the program until the end of March 2021.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, the Manitoba government partnered in Operation Return Home program to rebuild damaged housing and infrastructure in the communities that had flooding damage in the 2011 flood. It cost-shared with the federal government. As a result of this, August 30th, 2020 we have funded \$113 million to build 530 new housing units, two new schools, two water and waste projects and five infrastructure projects, including new roads, telecommunications and solid waste management.

The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative support local and regional projects that contribute to the development of culturally relevant healthy food systems while improving the health and well-being—while improving their health and well-being. The program goal is to increase access to food by working with communities in co-ordinated efforts aligned with the program's goals and objectives. This program has supplied approximately 200,488,236 pounds of healthy food since 2010-2011.

When record-keeping began, the project has accessed over \$8.8 million in funds from external sources to support and complement activities. In-kind support from other stakeholders has been valued at approximately \$3.5 million.

The department remains committed to supporting the implementation of various public health measures amid—aimed at flattening the curve with respect to COVID-19. We continue to work in partnership to monitor COVID-19 activities affecting northern communities while working with northern stakeholders to ensure the safety and well-being of those living in the region impacted by COVID-19.

* (11:50)

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, we are extremely pleased to note that all Northern Affairs and First

Nation communities have received first doses of the vaccine and residents are expected to receive their second dose of the vaccine by June 7, 2021.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, the Province has also worked in partnership with First Nations immunization vaccine operations centre, to ensure that all 63 First Nation communities in Manitoba will have completed their 18-plus vaccine campaign of both first and second doses by June 7, 2021.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, Manitoba has now administered over 43,388 COVID-19 vaccinations to First Nations people on-reserve, and to date, 5,293 doses have been administered through Manitoba's urban Indigenous vaccine clinics.

Our government is committed to facilitation, the developments of dialogue and partnerships needed to attract new companies, assist entrepreneurs and facilitate expansions of existing businesses to provide quality jobs and develop a strong and sustainable economy in the North.

Our government is committed to advancing reconciliation through concrete and tangible initiatives that build on meaningful engagements with Indigenous nations and peoples.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker—sorry, one sec, there's a train passing and I don't know if you can hear the horn—our government has committed to establishing a revised framework for respectful and productive Crown-Indigenous consultations.

As of February 2021, the new framework is near completion. A key outcome will include improved understanding of Crown-Indigenous consultation processes for all parties, as well as a—more timely consultation approaches that support the aspirations and objectives of all the parties, reinforced by early and respectful engagement with Indigenous communities across the province.

There are significant numbers of communities that are underserved by high speed competitive and reliable telecommunications—

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

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Again, I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this well-written resolution that we're very happy to be able to support here today.

I think that, procedurally, this should have been brought to the rules committee, however, in thinking

a little bit more about this and hearing what others have had to say this morning, I'm actually really glad that the member chose to bring this resolution forward on this platform as a way to also generate this conversation that we need to be having here in these Chambers.

This resolution is incredibly important because we need to recognize—and properly recognize—that we are residing on the traditional territories of the Anishinabe, Dakota, Cree, Anishinew, Dene and Inuit people and the homeland of the Métis—or Métis nation.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm also glad that the member included in this resolution how Indigenous people shared their knowledge with us, and in this time of reconciliation it is imperative that we acknowledge and honour the lives of Indigenous communities, and this resolution is just one way we can be doing that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to keep my remarks short here, as I want to make sure we can pass this resolution this morning. I'm hopeful and I'm hoping to have further discussion on other proceedings here in this House, as well, as it's important to stay up-to-date and be inclusive. And I hope that we, as legislators, can strive to do more to acknowledge and honour the lives of Indigenous communities.

Thank you, merci and miigwech.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I just wanted to take a moment to thank our honourable colleague, the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie), for bringing this important resolution forward.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I want to thank the member for Keewatinook for his passion and for his words in the debate today, as well as the members for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere) and Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé) for their contributions to our caucus and for their perspectives and for sharing a little bit more about the impact of the land acknowledgement and what it means to Indigenous peoples and to furthering the process of reconciliation in our province and across our country.

And so I appreciate very much the debate and I feel I've learned something. And of course, I'm someone with a Mennonite background, and my forebears came here from Russia, fleeing persecution as they often did, but they came here in 1874.

And I think the relationship with—between Mennonites in southern Manitoba, between Mennonites and the Métis and Indigenous people who were here before we came here, is something, I think, that should be explored further.

And so I've been very pleased in my constituency to see, for instance, Border Land School Division with a—include the treaty land acknowledgement in their—at all their events and in their ceremonies and things like that.

So it's been helpful, I think, for people in my area as well to understand and explore this—these—this history further and obviously to be a part of the 'protest' of reconciliation as we all have a role to play in living together peacefully and in a spirit of mutual understanding and respect.

And so I do think, however, as the member for Selkirk outlined as well, I share his concern that there is a well-laid-out process in the Legislature rules and procedures and there's an opportunity for House leaders to get together, and so I think that's the appropriate way to do this, and so I just encourage that process to happen.

I think, you know, that it's perhaps better to respect the integrity of that process and those rules and procedures. I think that's the appropriate way to do this.

So—but just reflecting a little further on the territorial or land acknowledgments and, you know, what that looks like in places that I represent in my communities, where, you know, there is an opportunity, as I said, for us to learn more about this history, just want to reflect a little bit more on that.

So a territorial or land acknowledgement is an act of reconciliation that involves making a statement recognizing the traditional territory of the Indigenous people who called the land home before the arrival of settlers, and in many cases still do call it home.

So the general protocol for an event is for the opening speaker of the day to acknowledge the land on which they gather. It's not mandatory for each speaker to then do the same unless the speaker feels particularly compelled to do so.

The recommended approach is: I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are on Treaty 1 territory and that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Anishinabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples and the homeland of the Métis nation. And this is actually the wording that, as

I said, Border Land School Division in my constituency has adopted and which I've used, as well, in announcements or when I've had the opportunity to emcee or to speak at local events—have used this wording as well.

So it's important that we get that—we get this right and that we have this in the forefront of our minds as a way of furthering the process of reconciliation.

I would like to note there was an important announcement today out of—from our government, and I think has a positive impact on—as we're talking about reconciliation and Indigenous—the Indigenous people, and it relates to—as my colleague for

Dawson Trail pointed out—broadband and cellular services in Manitoba.

And so the announcement is we're going to be providing broadband and—to 30 First Nations communities, which is incredibly important—125,000 households—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook) When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) will have five minutes, stand—member for—remaining will have five minutes.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 13, 2021

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