



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Transcona	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): On House business.

The Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

MLA Fontaine: Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to allow for the consideration of a condolence motion for Nello Altomare this afternoon at the beginning of orders of the day, with the following debate provisions to apply:

(1) Speaking times for all members will be five minutes, with the Speaker allowing discretion for members to conclude;

(2) The debate rotation will be the following repeating sequence: Government member; official opposition member; independent member.

I am also requesting for leave to have a photo of Nello on display in the Chamber as an exhibit during orders of the day this afternoon.

The Speaker: Is there leave to allow for the consideration of a condolence motion for

Nello Altomare this afternoon at the beginning of orders of the day, with the debate provisions as described by the Government House Leader to apply, and to also allow his photo to be on display in the Chamber during orders of the day? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? Tabling of reports? Committee reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Seven Oaks Community Garden

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): Honourable Speaker, the Seven Oaks community garden in Chochinov Park has emerged as a hub in the McPhillips constituency for people to come together and enjoy gardening.

While the community garden was formed in 2008, the space has transformed under the watch of its new board who has since doubled the green space and cleaned up the overgrown plants to create a beautiful space for everyone to enjoy.

Through the WRHA together now grant to help prevent chronic disease, participants have started a vegetable and berry patch for all patrons to enjoy. They grow a wide variety of produce, from cherries to raspberries to pumpkins to tomatoes and cucumbers. Everyone involved in the garden gets to enjoy healthy, fresh produce.

These gardeners are also a diverse group of people, with—a diverse group, with people from all different backgrounds and ages, ranging from ages seven to 80-plus, and they all come together for this labour of love.

The garden also provides an essential space for all community members to enjoy the outdoors, especially for those living in condos and apartments. It serves as a great outlet for folks to improve their mental health, to get out and exercise and to socialize with their neighbours.

Spaces previously unused are now filled with activity, with park growers commenting on how beautiful the space has become through the work of these volunteers.

Today, we have members of the Seven Oaks community garden in the gallery. To all of you, I say

thank you for creating a space and a community that is more inclusive, healthy and beautiful.

I ask that my colleagues join me in thanking them for their hard work in growing this amazing community garden, and their names be added to Hansard.

Thank you.

Heloise Buhler, Joe Cordeiro, Carole London, Monique Peel, Iris Yuzwa

Heart Health Research for Women

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Heart disease is the leading cause of premature death in women across Canada, yet it remains under-diagnosed, under-treated and under-researched.

For decades, heart disease research has primarily focused on men, leaving significant gaps in our understanding of how heart conditions affect women. The result is missed warning signs, delayed treatment and, sadly, preventable deaths.

One of the biggest problems is that women often experience heart attacks differently than men. While men typically report the classic symptom of crushing chest pain, women's symptoms can be much more subtle. Because of these differences, women's symptoms are frequently dismissed or misdiagnosed.

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, early warning signs are missed in up to 78 per cent of women, and they are less likely to receive life-saving treatment as quickly as men.

Thankfully, researchers right here in Manitoba are helping to close this gap. The Women's Heart Health research program at St. Boniface Hospital's Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences is studying the unique ways heart disease affects women, helping to improve early detection, treatment and survival rates.

It's crucial for women to be aware of their personal risk factors, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking and family history. Women also need to advocate for themselves in medical settings. If something doesn't feel right, push for answers. Delayed treatment can be the difference between life and death.

The solution, however, isn't just individual awareness. It demands systemic change. We need more investment in research specifically focused on women's heart health.

Health-care professionals need to have the education and tools necessary to recognize the unique ways heart disease presents in women. Most importantly,

women should receive the same level of urgency in treatment as men.

Heart disease doesn't discriminate. Working together, health-care providers, policymakers and researchers can address the disparities in women's heart health.

Recognizing Women in Sports

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): Just a few days ago, we celebrated International Women's Day, so I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate an aspect of womanhood that is often overlooked, but incredibly important—that is the contributions of women in sport.

I grew up in a time when there weren't as many opportunities for women in sport. Growing up, I couldn't play hockey on a team because of my gender, so I had to settle for Saturday pickup games at the local outdoor rink.

I could never have imagined that we would have a professional women's hockey league; a league that has six incredible women playing in it. Women have made incredible strides both on and off the ice.

Women like Leah Hextall and Jennifer Botterill, who have forged new paths for women in sports broadcasting, with Hextall being the first woman to ever perform play-by-play broadcasting on a nationally televised NHL game, and Botterill as an NHL analyst for Hockey Night in Canada.

Women's sports have long been underfunded and underestimated. However, that is changing. From college to professional leagues, women's sports are finally gaining the recognition, attention and financial support they deserve.

* (13:40)

I grew up playing basketball and only being able to watch men play, so my heroes were Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan. To see the growing success of the WNBA is nothing short of inspiring.

Athletes like Candace Parker and Diana Taurasi paved the way for the newest generation of superstars, like Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese, who put NCAA women's basketball in the spotlight. These exceptional women are now heroes to young women today and have shown young girls everywhere that women have a place on the court.

These women aren't just athletes, they are pioneers. They are showing us what is possible and what can happen when we provide equal opportunity and

resources for women in sports. Things have come a long way, but we have a long way to go.

I hope we can continue this momentum by supporting women in sport right here in Manitoba.

Rural Paramedic Shortage

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Regional paramedic shortages affecting towns like Erickson, Russell, Shoal Lake and Virden are leaving residents very unsettled.

Despite promises by this NDP government to increase staffing, rural communities are facing a critical decline in paramedics, leading to an increase in anxiety about response times and creating doubt when residents call 911 for medical assistance.

Recent data highlights alarming understaffing in key EMS stations. Shoal Lake has only one paramedic for 13 available positions; Virden often fills just nine out of their 17 positions; Russell can staff only five out of 13 positions; and Erickson struggles to operate with just four out of eight positions filled.

These staff shortages aren't just numbers; they are real threats to the safety of rural Manitobans. The NDP must act now before a tragedy happens and a life is lost.

The target time for an ambulance to respond to a call in Manitoba is under 30 minutes 90 per cent of the time. In the Prairie Mountain Health region, response times are hovering at a staggering 60 minutes or more.

The challenge is compounded by the partial or complete closure of emergency rooms. In December, only seven out of 30 emergency rooms in Prairie Mountain Health were fully operational. This left communities vulnerable, with hospitals in the region collectively closed for 89 days.

This isn't just a Prairie Mountain problem. The Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals say nearly one in three full- and part-time rural paramedic positions are vacant.

It is clear to rural Manitobans that the current NDP government must improve recruitment and retention strategies, ensure paramedics are paid competitive salaries and that accommodation is available for paramedics in rural communities.

The safety of rural Manitobans is paramount. The time for talk is over. It's time for the Health Minister to take action.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Master Corporal Alexandre Fortin

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): All of us MLAs were given the opportunity to identify individuals in our constituencies who have made 'significant' contributions to Canada or a particular province.

We were provided with King Charles coronation medals, along with a certificate to distribute to our recipients. In this case, the medal symbolizes the significant contributions made to our country.

Even though I could only make a member's statement—even though I could make a member's statement on each and every one of the 20 recipients that I was involved in, I wanted to highlight one individual in particular that I had nominated back in 2024 that has joined us today in the gallery.

Honourable Speaker, Master Corporal Alexandre Fortin is a constituent of Tyndall Park, and is a real hero. He is a Search and Rescue technician who has served two tours in Afghanistan.

Many of you will remember that back on December 27, 2023, Air Tindi chartered a flight where workers were to begin construction on the 2024 winter road connecting Yellowknife to isolated diamond mines. As the flight crew began circling over where they were planning to land, they didn't realize they had begun descending into near whiteout conditions.

Honourable Speaker, the plane hit a hill and came crashing down in the Northwest Territories. And this is where Master Corporal Fortin demonstrated true bravery. He, along with his teammates, Matthew Henry and Vincent Benoit, rescued 10 individuals from the wreckage.

His heroic actions exemplify unwavering valour and a steadfast commitment to both his community and our country.

In closing, Honourable Speaker, I would like to request that my colleagues join me in recognizing and thanking Master Corporal Fortin for his service.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions, there are some guests in the gallery I would like to introduce.

First, we have seated in the public gallery two youth from Eagle's Nest Indigenous youth group, under the direction of Shannon Shaw. The group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine). We welcome you here today.

Also in the public gallery, we have Raven Lacerte, Grace Park-Wawia; leadership team from the Moose Hide Campaign, and they are guests of the honourable member for Lagimodière (Mr. Blashko). We welcome you here today.

Also seated in the public gallery, we have with us Jill Verwey and the board of the Keystone Agricultural Producers, and they are guests of the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Kostyshyn). And we welcome you all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

US Tariffs on Canadian Goods Premier's Response

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, serious premiers like the Premier of Ontario and the Premier of Nova Scotia are standing up for all Canadians against US–Trump tariff threats.

Premier Houston is advancing interprovincial trade reform, while Doug Ford is getting direct meetings with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. Manitoba's Premier? Well, he's mocking President Trump on his TikTok for social media clicks and getting no attention from the US decision-makers who matter.

Can the Premier explain how he believes mocking President Trump will get us a meeting with Mr. Lutnick and a free trade deal for Manitoba workers and businesses?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, it's really something during this time of national unity for team Manitoba to be a leading voice as part of a united, strong team Canada.

We've been there knocking down interprovincial trade barriers. We've been there strengthening alliances across every region of the country. We were even right out there draping the biggest Canadian flag 'everyone' has ever seen outside of this esteemed, hallowed building.

Now there would have been nothing easier than for them to run out in front of the flag too, but I didn't see them out there a single day. And now you see the evidence why today: they're so tender-footed around offending Mr. President Trump. They can't even bear to offend him.

Well it's a good thing they're not in charge now. This is the—whole backbench of their operation wants to capitulate to Donald Trump; the other half are

rallying around somebody who thanked him for the tariffs. That's the establishment candidate in the PC leadership—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Premier's Trip to Washington Meeting with White House Staff

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, we all know that the Premier has now gone to Washington twice and returned with zero trade deals and zero new jobs.

Matter of fact, international press are highly commending the Premier from Ontario, but what's the international press saying about our Premier, Honourable Speaker? And I table the document for everyone in the House to see.

Unfortunately, the New York Post is not being so favourable to our Premier. But it comes to Manitoba's flight against these tariffs, all he can do—get are low-level—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —conversations with the White House director or the personnel. Manitobans are starting to ask if they're getting a return on investment with all the Premier's recent travel.

Can the Premier tell Manitobans why he was meeting with the White House director of personnel? Was this a self-serving trip, yes or no?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Why was I meeting with people at the White House? To do what I do every day: stand up for Manitoba and stand up for Canada.

Why did I do an interview with the New York Post? Why did the New York Times cover our booze ban? Why were we on CNN and NBC? To do the same thing we do every day: to stand up for you as Manitobans, to push back against the Trump tariffs and to protect our jobs in this country.

* (13:50)

The only jobs I won't stand up for are the jobs of the terrible PC leadership candidates, one of whom endorsed Donald Trump. The other one, the establishment candidate who is on Zoom right now, he thanked Donald Trump for the tariffs.

Again, we will never thank Donald Trump. We'll negotiate; we'll push back when it makes sense, but we put you, the people of Manitoba, first each and every single day.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And I would just remind members not to comment on a member's presence or absence.

Mr. Ewasko: The Premier, Honourable Speaker, seems to be like a cat with nine lives. The New York Post that he references—which is the document that I table and that I encourage all his backbench MLAs and ministers to read. And the New York Post, which is a 225-year post-newspaper, says, and I quote: An ex-con rapper-turned Canadian politician is playing tough guy in the trade war with US, mocking President Trump. End quote.

I encourage everyone to take a read since the Premier did an interview with that post—that paper.

After all, Honourable Speaker, it's been members of his own caucus tearing down our flag and disrespecting our country since he was elected NDP leader.

But can he please explain to Manitobans why he was also wrapping our beautiful Legislature in yellow made-in-America caution tape, Honourable Speaker? And I table some examples of that for the members here—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order. Order, please. Order.

I would strongly caution the Leader of the Official Opposition about waving around things. They could be interpreted as being a prop, which are not allowed. I get that he tabled it, but I would just caution him about how he goes about tabling such things in the future.

Mr. Kinew: Here's the difference between us and the PCs: We stand up for Canada; they try to divide Canada.

We will keep standing up for team Canada each and every day.

You know what? We did hang up a massive Canadian flag; it was a thing of beauty—a very beautiful, wonderful, amazing flag that we were all happy to see outside of the building here.

And you know what? While they were busy running around, trying to throw shade at the hard-working people who hung that flag up, as you saw evidenced by that shameful question, you know what

I did? You know what our team did? We went out to the people in hard hats, in the cold, we shook their hands, and we said thank you for powering our Canadian economy.

That's what we do on this side of the House. We stand up for the blue collar; we support blue collar. On the other side, they can't even bring—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Premier of Manitoba Travel Expenses

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, today, I'm tabling the Premier's expense report for this past September, which seems to reveal taxpayer dollars that were used to fund travel that has nothing to do with governing Manitoba.

Can the Premier explain why at a time when almost 50 per cent of Manitobans are struggling, what—that he thought it was appropriate to use their money to seemingly campaign for the BC NDP?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Yes, you know, one of the things is that winners win, losers lose.

You see that each and every day here in the Chamber. Every single day, they continue to plumb the depths, and they haven't hit rock bottom yet.

But here's the thing about being the leader of the province: We work with the other leaders of the other provinces. That's why earlier today, I was on the call with Premier Ford and Premier Smith and every other premier across this great country, putting a strategy together to stand up for you, to stand up for our ag industry, to ensure that people across the country recognize that this isn't just a showdown with the United States of America. Manitoba and Canada are now fighting a trade war on two fronts.

Now here is the thing: When we're in a situation like that, we absolutely have to stick together because unity is the greatest source of leverage. So I will never apologize for meeting with other premiers because that is what standing up for Manitobans is all about and—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, what's old is new again. This Premier stands in his place and triples down on anything that he—when he is painted into a corner. He will not apologize to anything.

But let's see. Let me draw the Premier's attention to a tweet we have which shows him door-knocking for BC NDP candidates in September of 2024.

How can the Premier defend his actions when he is seemingly caught using public money to campaign in a different province while Manitobans, who are struggling—almost 50 per cent of them are struggling on a day-to-day basis, Honourable Speaker.

He's tagging them for his bill of self-serving—as usual with this Premier. I table that today.

Mr. Kinew: Again, it's supposed to be question period; we're not hearing any questions amongst the rambling statements being made by the member opposite.

But if you're interested in what I was doing out in British Columbia, here's what I was doing out in British Columbia: I was meeting with Premier Eby to discuss their approach to Pharmacare, which has seen them extend hormone replacement therapy coverage to menopausal women in that province.

Do you know what we did? Just this past week, under the leadership of our Health Minister, while here in Manitoba we struck a deal to extend hormone replacement therapy to menopausal women and other people who need HRT in Manitoba. So kudos to the Health Minister.

And not only is this an important investment in affordability because it's taking away pharmacy costs for people, this is also about preventative medicine. The more HRT we provide today the fewer hip surgeries we hope to have to deliver tomorrow. We'll keep standing up for—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, it's interesting that when the Premier gets a little flustered, especially when we start questioning his self-serving, highly self-patting-on-the-back ego, that he loses track of the time clock, he loses track and he adjusts his tie. It's just unfortunate that he stands—he's just unbecoming of a premier.

Honourable Speaker, this doesn't seem to be an official trip for legitimate government business.

It looks like a personal trip to support his political friend's election campaign.

Will the Premier do the right thing today: apologize and refund the expenses he charged to taxpayers for his political party support in British Columbia, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: I'll never apologize for standing up for women's health care in Manitoba.

And I find it really peculiar that the PCs want to talk about campaign expenses in this Chamber when, in fact, they haven't answered the questions about—what was it again—an intimacy coach that was being paid for out of PC Party funds in the last election? I'll table the ads that show the establishment candidate in their leadership opposing the search of the Prairie Green landfill.

They spent their money that they raised for PC Party members on ads attacking the families of murder victims. They spent it in—on an intimacy coach. They spent it on a rental car for which no vehicle has ever been produced.

So the members opposite should go into the hallway and start to—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

* (14:00)

US Tariffs on Steel Industry Concern for Manitoba Industries

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Recently, US Donald Trump said he will impose an additional 25 per cent tariff on steel and aluminum, bringing that tariff to 50 per cent. With Selkirk having a large number of steel companies that provide good jobs for workers and their families, this will greatly impact my constituency.

I ask the minister: What is his plan to combat Trump's ever-changing tariffs on Manitoba, and in particular, how he will support the many steel companies in Selkirk?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable Speaker, unlike members opposite, we're not going to thank Donald Trump for any tariffs. We're going to stand up for workers right here in Manitoba.

Our government has already been working with people at Gerdau steel. I've had a conversation with Vin. We're in touch with the community there in Selkirk, and we're working with them and with people

right across the province to protect every job in the face of this tariff threat. And that's what it means to be a good government that listens to Manitobans, protecting their jobs, standing up for them, each and every day.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Perchotte: I'm very excited to see the minister found the name of the company out in Selkirk, Gerdau. The steel industry is important part of my constituency of Selkirk, employing over 800 workers and their families.

It's been over 500 days of the NDP government, and they still have no real plan for helping Manitoba workers and their families. Working in the steel and aluminum industries, confidence is not enough. They need a plan.

Again, what does this minister have for Gerdau and the other companies in Selkirk that depend on this industry?

Mr. Moses: Well, Honourable Speaker, my message to the folks in Selkirk and people who export right across the province is that your government has your back. We are working for you.

And let me be clear: we've already begun the work to work directly with people in Selkirk who are impacted. We are working directly with exporters who we know are going to be impacted by this 25 per cent tariff tax imposed by the Trump administration.

But let me be clear: we don't solve this problem by being divided, like members opposite, who would wish to become the 51st state or who would rather thank Trump for those tariffs. No, no. Instead of that, we actually work with Manitobans. We work with exporters, and we work with folks in the steel industry to make sure that they'll be strong today and well into their future.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Perchotte: The ND plea—NDP has no darn plan. Remember, failing to plan is planning to fail. Steel and aluminum companies in Manitoba need a plan: Ancast Industries, Russel Metals, Castle Metals, Monarch Industries, Griffin steel, Karrich Industries, Kinetic Group of Companies, Integra Castings, Canadian Tool & Die, WS Steel, Procast Technologies, Integra Castings, just to name a few in the province.

I can go on and on. Tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum imports into the US will be devastating to Manitoba's economy.

Again, I ask: What is the minister's plans, him and his government can produce to these companies and the employees in this industry?

Mr. Moses: We've already begun to roll out those plans, like the deferred ability to pay those payroll taxes on a deferred basis. This is helping give cash to companies who might need it in this difficult time.

But the reality is, Honourable Speaker, that, look, we would rather unite Manitobans around the idea that we can face these challenges together, and we've done that in a real and meaningful way, unlike members opposite.

But, Honourable Speaker, let me get to the point: that we will continue to work with businesses, we'll work with the steel industry, we'll work with manufacturers as we have been for many, many months, and ensure that we protect their jobs, we stand up for their jobs, and we'll fight on behalf of Manitobans.

Layoffs at Métis CFS Impact on Youth in Care

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): The loss of one-on-one support workers will tear apart the critical relationships that children in care rely on. This will have an immediate and devastating impact on their well-being. If no one steps in, kids in Manitoba will be worse off, right now, here, today.

With key preventative early intervention and cultural integration programs being eliminated, vulnerable youth are now at even greater risk.

Does the Families minister have any plan at all to lessen the impact on those CFS layoffs on children and youth in care?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): And once again, I'm very honoured to get up in the Chamber and just acknowledge all of those folks, those good, good folks, that are on the front lines of doing very sacred work of taking care of Manitoba's most vulnerable children.

That's why, as minister, as I've shared since I've become minister, we have a 6 per cent increase in annualized funding to the CFS system, which includes \$11.3 million to the CFS agencies, which includes operations and wages. I hope that folks, and I have faith that folks, and I—confidence in folks, that they're

going to get to the table and they're going to get back to bargaining.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Agassiz, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Byram: Programs like Skills for Life, Métis Spirit and Circle of Life provide essential support not just for children and youth but for their families and their communities. The professionals in these programs help the kids navigate through crisis and meet their unique needs.

Cutting these supports will only add pressure to our justice, our health care, our educational and social systems, leading to more placement breakdowns and worse outcomes for families.

How many front-line workers, if any, has the minister actually spoken with to understand the consequences of these CFS layoffs on children?

MLA Fontaine: I don't know where the member was just a little while ago. The folks that are working at Southeast Child and Family Services have been without a contract since 2022. That was under their failed, callous, cold government.

So I don't know where that member was, but I would ask her to look around, ask the members in her caucus who were in Cabinet what were they doing to stand up for children, the most vulnerable children in Manitoba? In fact, what they were doing was an attack of austerity across the system, of which now we are dealing with.

We are fixing the mess of that failed, failed government.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Agassiz, on a final supplementary question.

Ms. Byram: Over the past week I've spoken with direct support workers and social workers, and their message is clear: this is a crisis. The safety and well-being of children are at serious risk, yet the minister refuses to acknowledge just how severe this situation is.

The minister has had nine chances in this House to stand up and show she cares about these kids, yet she has to—she has yet to take a single one of my questions seriously.

Will she finally admit today that her cuts are putting vulnerable children in harm's way? And, more importantly, will she do something about it?

MLA Fontaine: I take my job incredibly serious as the Minister of Families. As I've said many, many times here in the Chamber and outside the Chamber, that this is a sacred responsibility to be responsible for children.

And what have I done about it? I have given \$2.4 million to Métis and Michif agencies, \$898,000 to southeast, and \$11.3 million increase over the system, just for agencies' operations and wages, on top of the \$33 million that I gave to the overall system.

This government cares about our children, and we're stepping up with real money, and I expect everybody else to do the same.

River East Transcona School Division School Taxes—Increase Concerns

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Due to significantly inadequate funding announced by this Kinew government, the River East Transcona School Division has decided to increase school taxes on hard-working blue collar families by over 15 per cent for the upcoming school year.

In a time of the ongoing threats of Trump tariffs and an increasing and inaffordability challenges, how does the Minister of Education feel that that's acceptable for families in Transcona and in the entire northeast corner of Winnipeg?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): And I thank the member opposite for the question, and I am so proud of our government's announcement this year on school funding. And what we're going to do on this side of the House, and what NDP governments have done for generations, is to continue to invest in schools, to invest in our communities and to invest in our kids.

* (14:10)

This year, Honourable Speaker, we have increased investments in public schools more than \$67 million—that is a 3.4 per cent lift—and we know that funding is going to help River East Transcona School Division and divisions all across our province support schools in the learning that they need to do.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Spruce Woods, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Jackson: Well, Transcona and River East Transcona School Division families should take no comfort from the minister saying that she's proud that they're forced to raise taxes by over 15 per cent in that school division at a time of the threat of Trump tariffs on

blue-collar hard-working families. This minister chose to leave education on the back burner of this government's priorities.

Will the minister step in and provide additional funding to this school division so they can reduce this tax increase on hard-working families, or is she content with property owners and people who are struggling to pay their mortgage paying more to keep this government afloat?

MLA Schmidt: No one cares more about affordability than members on this side of the House. *[interjection]* That's right.

Under the leadership of our excellent Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), who was able to hold inflation this year, 2024, at an average of 1 per cent here in Manitoba, the lowest across the country, we have come forward with a funding formula that has provided school divisions with a 3.4 per cent increase, in a year where inflation was only at 1 per cent.

In River East Transcona School Division last year, we gave them 6.7 per cent. This year, we gave them 3.4 per cent, which was a heck of a lot more than they got under the Tories, who did nothing but cut and underfund schools across Manitoba for seven and a half years.

Thank goodness the good people of Manitoba—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Spruce Woods, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Jackson: Well, I understand that the minister is angry about this situation, and so are we, and so are hard-working families. It's an unfair position that the Finance Minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) have put her in, with respect to miniscule increases to school divisions and forcing major tax hikes on hard-working blue-collar families in the River East Transcona school division and in school divisions across the province.

Will the Finance Minister step in today and provide some additional funding to support school divisions properly and reduce these tax increases on people struggling to pay their mortgage, or is this government content to make sure that Manitobans continue to struggle to make their mortgage payments for the rest of this school year?

MLA Schmidt: This government prioritizes and values the funding of schools. And when we're talking about

funding schools here in Manitoba, we're really talking about values.

And so I question the values of the member opposite, from Spruce Woods, who has endorsed the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) in his leadership campaign. The member from Spruce Woods likes to stand up and he likes to speak about Trump tariffs while he actively endorses a member of his party who has thanked Donald Trump for putting tariffs on the backs of Canadians and Manitobans.

I will take absolutely no lessons from the member from 'suce' woods—from Spruce Woods unless and until he renounces his endorsement of the member from Fort Whyte—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

MLA Schmidt: Well, the member from Spruce Woods needs to talk to the Winnipeg Free Press—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order.

River East Transcona School Division School Taxes—Increase Concerns

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, our team has been sounding the alarm for over a year that property taxes would increase as a result of this NDP's poor fiscal decisions. Manitobans are paying attention, and now they're paying the price.

Families in the River East Transcona School Division will be getting slapped with a 15 and a half per cent tax increase as a result of their decisions. It was a trustee and former NDP candidate that said it was a lack of funding that is leading them to do more with less. This is on top of the largest fuel increase tax that Manitoba has ever seen; this is on top of the highest MPI rate increase in decades, and this is on top of economic uncertainty that families across Manitoban are facing.

Will this minister stand up today and immediately reverse these property tax hikes on Manitoba families, yes or no?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, we know when it comes to affordability, they made life more expensive; we're making life more affordable.

One of the first things we did, one of the very first things we did when we came into government was we brought in a fuel tax holiday for an entire year, Honourable Speaker, that saved Manitobans hundreds and hundreds of dollars in every corner of the province.

What did they do for seven and a half years? They charged those costs to Manitobans; every single day they were in office.

In our last budget, we brought forward 21 new ways to save, including a homeowner affordability tax credit worth \$1,500 that's reducing school taxes for Manitobans across the entire province. We will take no lessons from the members opposite when it comes to affordability.

We're fighting to make Manitoba more affordable every single day.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: The NDP abandoned an equitable fair-funding model for school divisions in Manitoba. The result is Manitobans are paying more when they are already stretched.

If this minister isn't going to stand up for Manitobans, then perhaps the member for Seine River (MLA Cross) will, and I will table an 11 per cent tax hike for Seine River—in Seine River School Division.

If this minister is not going to stand up for their constituents, will they stand up for their own constituents and immediately reverse these property tax hikes on Manitoba families?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, the level of hypocrisy here is off the charts. For years, the members opposite cut funding to schools, creating worse outcomes for our students. What are we doing? We're actually investing in education under the leadership of our incredible Minister of Education, Minister Schmidt.

We're going to keep investing in education because we know that's one of the best things we can do to support our economy.

Again, coming back to affordability, they may like more expensive, year over year. They applied the fuel tax, they increased—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would just remind members not to use members' names; to either use their constituency name or their ministerial title.

Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: For over a year, we have been warning that these property tax hikes were going to come. The result is Manitobans are paying more. They are already stretched. River East Transcona trustees blamed inequitable education funding as a result of proposing this 15 and a half per cent tax increase.

If the minister won't stand up for those families, and the member for Seine River won't stand up for their families, then maybe the member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) will stand up for their families and their constituency.

And I table for that member a 6.78 per cent increase on their constituents; I table a 15.5 per cent rate increase on River East Transcona trustees; and the Seine River member already has theirs. These are tax increases that are occurring across the province as a result of this NDP's decisions.

Will those members stand up today for—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Sala: Again, Honourable Speaker, we're proud to finally be funding education above the rate of CPI and we know that that's important after many years of cuts under the members opposite.

Again, when it comes to affordability, the members opposite don't have a leg to stand on. They applied the fuel tax every day they were in office. They increased costs for renters; some of those folks in our society are the most vulnerable. They increased hydro rates in every single new creative, novel way they could find. And, of course, they raised costs on farmers with their constant raise of Crown lease rates.

We're making life more affordable. We're going to continue to do that because we know that's incredibly important to support Manitobans; a top priority for our government. They make life more expensive. We're going to keep making life more affordable.

Emergency Room Wait Times ER and PCH Bed Shortages

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, this government is considering hiring unit assistants to ensure reassessments of patients who are having to wait long hours in emergency waiting rooms; however, experts have said that this does not address the underlying problem. There's a bottleneck in ERs and urgent-care centres because of a shortage of hospital beds and personal-care-home beds.

What is this government doing to get to the root of the problem to ensure all Manitobans receive the necessary care that they need?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for Tyndall for that really important question. And I want to thank the health-care aides and UAs who have put their names forward to get additional training and provide really essential care in our emergency rooms. They're really making a difference on the front lines, and I want to thank those folks for skilling up and joining the teams.

* (14:20)

I would also add that for seven and a half years, two terms of a previous failed PC government, they cut hundreds—over 500 beds from across our hospitals in Manitoba. They closed, obviously, major emergency rooms and they fired staff. They also caused a net loss of personal-care-home beds—over 200 lost—in our health-care system.

We're adding beds back to the system. We're adding personal-care homes, including building the personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet, and I think that there's the member opposite—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired. *[interjection]*

Order.

ER Wait Time Reduction Plan Request to Release

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): A 49-year-old man died on January 7 at HSC after waiting approximately eight hours for care in the hospital's ER. According to media reports, this tragedy could have been avoided; however, the ER was over capacity, which is often the case for our hospitals.

Honourable Speaker, the Health Minister stated on January 28 that there is a plan, but they have yet to share the plan publicly or with nurses.

Will the minister share the plan with us here today?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for that really important question and, again, I would express my condolences to this gentleman's family and his community.

Our government has taken a number of steps to address concerns, and we've followed a number of recommendations that were brought forward as a result of the critical incident report and the review that was done, including training UAs and health-care aides to be skilled up and provide greater care in emergency rooms, including making sure that the public trustee can notify a next of kin without barrier; including making sure that we have additional resources in those spaces.

There's a number of additional steps as well. I'd be more than happy to meet with that member to provide that information beyond what I've said previously in this House.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary question.

Emergency Room Patient Death Call for Independent Investigation

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): According to Shared Health's annual report, HSC now has fewer licensed beds in 2023 to '24 than it did in 2020 to '21, and bed occupancy has jumped from 83 per cent to a dangerous 98 per cent, leaving no beds for any patients.

Honourable Speaker, these stats are under this NDP government.

I would like to table Hansard from March 7, 2023, where the now-Premier (Mr. Kinew) suggested a call for an independent investigation when a patient dies under similar circumstances.

Will the Premier take his own suggestion and call for an independent investigation?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I just want to clarify some information for the member for Tyndall Park.

So under the previous PC government, they cut hundreds of beds from the health-care system and they also refused to fund beds that remained.

On this side of the House, what we've done is add more net-new beds to the health-care system, and we've funded the beds that existed that were unfunded by the previous PC failed administration.

So there's actually a net gain of almost 300 beds across the health-care system, dozens of those beds at Health Sciences Centre.

And we're doing the work of making sure that it's not just beds. It's much harder—much easier, rather, to cut a bed than it is to add it, but we're adding beds and we're adding, most importantly, people. People at the bedside to provide care to Manitobans each and every day.

And that work continues on behalf of all Manitobans.

US and Chinese Tariffs Support for Agricultural Producers

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Honourable Speaker, tariffs from America and China are an attack on Manitoba's ag industry.

Almost half of our agriculture products are sold to the US, and China is one of the top markets for Manitoban canola. Manitoba producers are worried and rapidly seeking solutions.

Fortunately, our government and Keystone Ag Producers have been working together and proactive in preparing responses to these tariffs. As a listening government, we are glad to have them at the table with us.

Can our Minister of Agriculture please tell the House about the actions our government is taking alongside our partners at KAP?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Thank you to my close friend from—the MLA from Burrows for the question that is near and dear to all of us in the province of Manitoba and across the world.

Honourable Speaker, I'd like to welcome partners at the—KAP to be here today of an important event.

The world depends on Manitoba agriculture producers that are having a difficult job and having even harder because of the threats of the tariffs.

We want to protect and support our producers. Working with KAP, Keystone Agriculture Producers, we are responding to these tariffs with action.

We will urge the federal government to engage with our trading partners, including China, to find a fast solution, align with other provinces to be more competitive—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Yearly Rent Increases Request for Legislation to Address

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Last year, Manitoba had the shameful distinction of having the fastest

growing rent in Canada. This is one of the main drivers of the cost-of-living crisis in this province, and despite being a rent control province, our laws have a loophole that allowed landlords to increase rent above the yearly cap.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) promised during election he would close this loophole. He broke that promise last year, and Manitobans paid the price.

With only three more sitting days until the guaranteed bill deadline, there has been no legislation tabled to close the loophole. That means Manitobans face a second year of the fastest growing rent in Canada.

Why is this Premier breaking his promise, and why is he making life less affordable for 40 per cent of Manitobans who rent?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, we are making life more affordable for renters, and we did that by bringing back some of the tax benefits to renters that the former government cut.

We know that during their tenure, they raised taxes on renters by about \$175. That was shameful, because we know folks in our rental units across Manitoba are seniors, folks who are struggling more than others.

In response to that, with our last budget, we brought in a Renters Tax Credit restore; we brought in a credit that will see renters keep more money in their pocket. And we're excited to show the way forward in our upcoming budget, when we release that on March 20, about work we're going to do to support renters further.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired. However, I made a mistake in my timing, so if the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) wishes to finish his answer, I will allow that.

US and Chinese Tariffs Support for Agricultural Producers

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): That's the best news I've heard today as far as talking about agriculture in the province of Manitoba.

The Speaker: Unfortunately, the member's time has expired.

Order, please. Order, please.

Petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you canvass the House to see if we can just take a five-minute recess with a two-minute bell ringing.

The Speaker: Is there leave of the House to take a five-minute recess with a two-minute warning bell?
[Agreed]

The House recessed at 2:28 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:35 p.m.

MOTIONS OF CONDOLENCE

Nello Altomare

The Speaker: Order, please.

As announced earlier, as previously agreed, the House will now consider a condolence motion honouring the late Nello Altomare.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we do that, I would like to introduce, in the Speaker's Gallery, some of Nello's family: Kira Altomare, Aidan Altomare, Vanda Altomare-Postello, Jason Postello and Carmine Vizza.

* * *

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that this House convey to the family of the late Nello Altomare, who served as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, its sincere sympathy in their bereavement and its appreciation of his devotion to duty in a useful life of active community and public service, and that the Speaker be requested to forward a copy of this resolution to the family.

Je, avec l'appui de chef de le gouvernement dans la Chambre, propose que l'Assemblée transmette à la famille de feu Nello Altomare, qui a été député à l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba, ses sincères condoléances et sa gratitude pour le dévouement dont il a su faire preuve dans son travail au service de sa collectivité et de la population du Manitoba, et que le Président fasse parvenir une copie de la présente motion à la famille du défunt.

Translation

I, with the support of the Government House Leader, move that the Assembly convey to the family of the late Nello Altomare, who was a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, its sincere condolences and gratitude for his dedicated service to his community

and to the people of Manitoba, and that the Speaker forward a copy of this motion to the family of the deceased.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kinew: I want to welcome Nello's family to the Speaker's gallery here today, and to say, on behalf of the province of Manitoba, we send you our sincere condolences for the loss of one of the best, the late, great Nello Altomare.

I want to say to Kira and Aidan: We see your dad in you, and we also see the best of him in the work that you do in the community. You're both such great people, even at a young age, and we know that Nello is going to be living on through your actions over the rest of your lives, and we're just so happy that we get to know you and watch you on your journeys as you get to express that.

Please pass on our best to Barb, and thank her for everything that she's done over the years to support Nello and to, you know, be that shoulder and rock for him during the difficult moments so that he could come here and in other places where we worked together and do that really amazing work that he did. It was all because of your mom and because of you and because of your extended family as well, too.

To Nello's sister and in-laws and friends who are also present and have joined us at, you know, the various events that we've had to pay tribute, I just want to thank you so much for being that family that really helped to define Nello. Everywhere Nello went, he's this larger than life personality. He made people laugh, he made people feel welcome, he made people feel encouraged when they went through a difficult moment.

And I know that it's because you are such an amazing family, a tight-knit family, that Nello had that ability to go out in the world and be that way. You know, you can only imagine what it was like for him growing up and seeing the way that he treated other people, and that gift must have been one that he received from you all. And seeing how you've come together over this past, I guess, few months now, really, really helps to articulate that; and us just being able to see you supporting one another, just reassures us that everything's going to be okay.

So thank you so much for giving us that gift of a wonderful, loving example of a family here in Manitoba.

* (14:40)

Honourable Speaker, I can say that Nello and I were friends for real. We spent ups and downs

together. We ate together a ton of times. We laughed together, deep, sincere, hearty laughs. We talked about the Jets; we texted late at night. We had challenging moments where we were going through opposition in the way into government together. We had the personal side, with the health challenges and the, you know, ups and downs that each and every one of us experience.

But most of all, we were just positive and just appreciated one another. And we had a good vibe back and forth. When we would get together and spend time, I always knew that I was going to be smiling, and I always knew that I was going to be laughing, and I never had my guard up, and I never had to worry. Because the one thing about Nello, beyond the huge personality, the one thing beyond Nello, behind his contributions to the community that I want to share, is that he was a fiercely loyal person.

And part of the love and admiration that all of us feel is because you knew that no matter what, whether he was fired up and passionate, maybe even a little angry, or whether he was big-belly laughing, Nello slapping you on the back, positive, happy-go-lucky Nello, you knew that he was going to be who he was. He was going to wear his heart on his sleeve. And that is a testament to character. And that is what being a straight-up person is all about.

And when we think about all those things together, he was the perfect personification of Transcona: Heart on his sleeve, hard-working, people-oriented, people first.

And so Nello, I know he felt lucky to represent the community and to work for the education system, but I hope that Transcona and all the province feels lucky to have had Nello as well too.

And so we've had some time to think about our grief and to encourage the family as they process their loss. And as we go forward, I just want to keep those positive things in my mind about Nello: the school food program, the going to bat for kids who are being bullied in the classroom. Even as the Education minister, he heard in one of our meetings in this building that a small child was being bullied in the classroom, and he left this building and drove to northeast Winnipeg and talked to the school leader to make sure that that kid was going to be defended in class. That's who Nello was: true champion—a people's champion—the way that all of us should aspire to be.

And so going forward, how am I going to keep him in our heart and our mind? I'm going to picture

him with a pink flamingo on his golf shirt. I'm going to picture him clapping his hands at the end of a winning buzzer for the Jets, and I'm—I picture him going door to door in northeast Winnipeg on that scooter.

So thank you so much, to his family. We're so very sorry for your loss.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): To Kira and Aidan, please pass along, from our side of this Chamber, Progressive Conservative side, all the condolences and heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to not only you and, of course, Vanda and sister, Teresa. Please pass along to your mom, wholeheartedly.

Nello was—I got to know Nello a little bit better once we got into this political arena and from both of us being educators and, I think, both of us sort of being asked if we had ever considered being part of this great honour and privilege and that being an MLA in the Manitoba legislator—Legislature.

I know Nello, you know, started teaching in Springfield-Transcona, and then—and I started teaching in Agassiz. And so when the amalgamations happened in 2002, Nello went on and continued teaching in Transcona-Springfield—or Transcona River East. And of course Springfield joined Agassiz and became Sunrise School Division.

And so we've had many conversations over the last number of years in regards to the fact that Manitoba is a 16th degree of separation. And I say 16th because as a teacher and as you work in the school system in this great province of ours, you make many friends and, truly, across all party lines.

And Nello—as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has mentioned, Nello was a very straight shooter—absolutely. He was the critic of Education when I was minister. And then I had the—I'm not sure if it's—if I'm going to say the honour, but I had the honour of being the critic for the short time as Nello became Education minister.

And I know that we spoke together about his trip to Italy, where he got to represent Canada at the G7. And the year prior—it's sort of pretty cool—in 2023, I was chosen to represent Canada in Japan on the G7 on education. And we talked about the reality of going from teaching and school leadership into this incredible building where we're then serving, you know, at times almost 1.5-million people. And I think that's that humble side of coming into this role and bringing in that experience from teaching and working with kids, with children.

I'm going to miss Nello, because we did have many conversations in regard to the absolute—at the end of the day, across party lines, the main goal is the education for our youth and children in this province.

And I know that Nello spent a majority of his career sort of on that early-years side of education, and I was more middle years and high school, but I think that's what got us together, because we got a chance to sort of talk about some of those challenges, but also successes that we saw in kids and supports to students all across the whole spectrum.

And then when—I thought it was great that when Nello became Education minister as a teacher himself, where they held on to early childhood education as well, because I think we both strongly agreed that that foundational time from birth to, say, age five to kindergarten, didn't stop there; it continued all the way to K to 12.

I know that Nello absolutely loved his family and I know that Nello really enjoyed his community of Transcona and absolutely cherished where he was living and teaching. And I know that he loved the Jets, too. We had many conversations about that.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, I know that due to—for whatever reason, we're limited to the amount of time today and not everybody in the Chamber is going to have a chance to speak, but I do want to share with all of you, the family, that our hearts and prayers go out to each and every one of you and to know that our PC team is thinking of Nello and you guys on a day-to-day basis.

And so with that, thank you for sharing Nello with us and God bless.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I just want to say miigwech to Nello's family for sharing him with us, particularly when he could have, you know, retired and spent time—more time at home.

But, as you know, that's not who he was. He wanted to do more and he wanted to make transformative change in the lives, particularly, of Manitoba children. And he did just that.

* (14:50)

Most people will know it takes me an incredibly long time to open up and to trust men for very complex reasons. And it took me—I don't know, two weeks, maybe, with Nello, because Nello was just so kind and loving and so gregarious. Like, I felt safe with Nello. I felt that he truly was gentle and respectful, and in that, when I was able to open up to Nello

we had such a special friendship. Nello and I are kind of like among the oldest in the crew here, and we would talk about all the shows that we liked and say sayings that only he and I would get. Nobody else knew what we were talking about, and we would just laugh on our own; just have so many good, good laughs.

But the other thing was that he was, you know, he—and as I said at the funeral, he lived reconciliation. He lived reconciliation, and we often talked about, you know, his role, as he would say, as an old white man in this era of reconciliation and what his responsibility was. And I honour him for that.

And it wasn't just words. It wasn't just words. He lived that in everything that he did. He, you know, he was anti-racist. He hated misogyny. He hated bullying. And I have an enormous amount of respect for him. I have an enormous amount of respect for you and your family and for your mom.

I feel so blessed. There's so many friendships that we develop in this Chamber, in this caucus, in this role that actually only those of us that have that privilege to be here will truly appreciate. And he's one of the most special relationships that I have the honour of had—I would have never met him had it not been for this role. I would have never met him had he not chose to run and to serve Manitobans, and I'm so blessed to have been able to spend years with him.

And so I just want to say that we often talked about our families, our boys and his kids, and he just loved you so, so very much and was so proud of you and would sometimes say swear words that I can't say in this Chamber about how much he loved you and how proud he was of you. And I know you know that already. That's your dad. I know you know that, but I just wanted you to know that in these—this very Chamber, we sat often talking about you and how much he loved you.

So thank you so much for sharing him. I'm a better person for knowing him and I'm so blessed that he was in my life.

Miigwech. Thank you so much.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): To those of you who don't know me, I haven't met you. It's very nice to meet you. I'm relatively new to this place as the new member for Spruce Woods, but I wanted to get up and put a few words on the record today because Nello was certainly someone who has made an impact and made an impact to a number of us across the aisle who are new members in this place.

And I just want to share a little bit about the impacts that I feel he had on me.

In my short time here it feels like there's, with some exceptions, about three kinds of people in this place from time to time. Ones who, you know, sometimes a very few of us make it clear they want really nothing to do with knowing you personally, and that's okay. And then there's, you know, a larger group of us who—say outside of work, we talk about, oh, maybe we should get together and have a coffee and I'd like to know a little bit more about you: you personally and what your story is and where you come from, but we never follow through on that. And you know, shamefully, to be quite open, I find myself in that category too often. And Nello is certainly a call to do better.

Because the third group of people are very rare, and they are the people that, regardless of political affiliation, they say those things about getting together and getting to know you on a personal level, but they actually mean it and they follow through on it.

And those are the people who truly make this place better. They elevate the process and the discussions that we have here and how we interact with each other because you know each other as human beings in addition to being a political label or a commodity, as we often talk about ourselves publicly.

And so, I just have to say on the record as a Progressive Conservative, Nello was certainly one of that rare third group of people, and he made a significant effort with me when I was first appointed Education critic.

And so, I thank him for that and I thank you all for that and for sharing him, as many other members have shared here.

You know, I come from a political family. My dad was a mayor as long as I can remember of my hometown, and you know, sometimes you have doubts about whether all the time they're spending away at meetings and community events and all that time of stuff, you know, you feel, gosh, you know, we've missed a lot of time together, missed a lot of sports games or music recitals or whatever it is that is your hobbies and your pastimes. But it's so important for them to be supported, as I know he was by all of you, in what he was doing to make Manitoba a better place.

And, you know, as a passionate educator, it seems so unfair to me that his time as Education minister was cut so short. Despite us having, you know, disagreements on policy, I find that so cruel.

But I will say this: he made an impact in his time as Education minister; there can be no doubt about that, and his passion for children and the future of Manitoba youth shone through every day that he was in here.

And so, I know you will do this anyway, but I encourage you to follow his example. He was one of the better people that I have met in this experience since I was elected, no doubt. And his last discussion with me was right on those chairs back there, and he said, we've got lots of disagreements and that's okay. I've got to go away for a little while, but you have an important job to do, so keep doing your job whether I'm here or not, and I'll be back and we'll continue on from there.

And so, that meant a lot to me that, despite everything he was facing, that he wanted to reassure me that we had important tasks here at hand, lots of challenges to solve, and his focus was always on others and on making education in Manitoba better.

So with that, thank you very much for sharing him with us, and God bless Nello Altomare.

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures): Thank you for joining us today. It's—it was,—it was, it is, and it will continue to always be an honour to walk this path with Nello, because we're still on this path together. He's still here with us today.

After question period, I left the Chamber and I went down to 132D, which was our offices for four years in opposition, and that's where I really got to know Nello. And we had many conversations about everything. And I'm also not one of the younger ones here as well, too, so we talked a lot about things that nobody would understand, to be quite honest, when it comes down to it, including what Transcona and what EK looked like over these decades and how things have changed.

But in particular, I wanted to go down to 132, and in that room I just went and said a little prayer, and I also spoke to Nello in that room saying this journey's going to be for you. And I left that room and I came up the grand staircase, because that is something Nello insisted on doing every time. He said there's just something about that, about us having that ability to do that and we should cherish that.

* (15:00)

So I made that little journey with him, from 132D, up the grand staircase, into this Chamber. And his seat

right here in the front of me and his seat right across, previously, was some places where I learned a lot of things. I learned a lot of who he was, but also what he brings to the table. When you hear people talk about tools in their toolbox, or on their toolbelt, Nello had such a vast experience, a 'vax' wealth of knowledge that brought all of that to the table.

And one of the first conversations I had, which led to many conversations which started almost the same way, is—especially when it came time to, the discovery and the residential schools and Orange Shirt Day and all that conversation, he would just say, I'm a white guy, what can I do?

And he didn't mean that in throwing his hands up in the air saying there's nothing I can do. It was a how can I help, how could I advocate, how could I do better? How can we do better as society? And not just Manitoba, not just Canada, but the world.

And that's the lens he always took, and the conversation he always wanted to have, and he was always open to that. Let's do better.

So I took great pride in being able to do that, and leaned on him a lot of times. There was a lot of times there was, you know, 10 of us or so in our office bank; but a lot of times earlier in the—early in the mornings and later in the evenings, you know, there was just him and there was just me there. So we had just simple conversations about a lot of different things, and I really got a sense of who he was as a person, and who he was as an individual, and the skills that he brought and the knowledge that he brought.

And as a First Nations person, there's a lot of cultural beliefs that we have as well, too, in being able to, kind of, really embrace that and be very sharing with our knowledge as well, too, and our culture. So I had the opportunity and I shared this, and I apologize if I'm being repetitive, because I did—and thank you so much for the opportunity to share a few words at the service in Transcona.

But we—I gifted—there was a time a couple years ago when he was first sick, and he was also very reluctant to, kind of, share that with a lot of people as well, too, because he was very close in that way. But I had dreams about a star blanket for him, and it never came to fruition, you know, years ago. And then, over these last year or so, it became more and more of a reality. And I shared that with him, and I said, Nello, you know, there's something I want to be able to give you.

And I didn't tell him what it was. We met here, we met in his office downstairs, and I showed it with him. And usually you're gifted in ceremony, your colours as a traditional person. So I didn't have any of that conversation with the person that I asked to make the blanket. But then when I seen the blanket, you know, it was in the colours of Italy, which was news to me, but it was also news to Nello.

So he was very taken aback by it, and there was a moment there where there was literally no words shared; we were just looking at each other in his office. And I wrapped him in the blanket and I told him about the—what it means, what it meant for me, what it means for him, what it means for his journey, what it means for the input and the impact that he has overall.

And I was honoured to see that at his service as well, too. And what he took, and he took that to heart. He was very, bring it in, bring it in. I'll share that. I'll take this knowledge as well, too, and I'll take this gift with me as well. And he accepted it with such gratitude. It was fantastic to be able to see that.

So I'm glad I was—had the opportunity to share that. I'm glad I had the opportunity to know Nello. And I will leave—we had also had a lot of laughs, so I'm just going to kind of say this last part, because in this Chamber and let alone on this side of the Chamber, you know, I always have a lot of snacks in my office, and Nello would literally come up and say: Where's the Eat-More bars? So, gave him a whole bunch of Eat-More bars, and he loved it.

So, thank you so much for sharing with me, and I look forward to continued conversations as we go on.

Miigwech.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I want to extend, on behalf of the residents of my constituency, my condolences to the family and the friends of Nello. And I also want to extend condolences to the NDP caucus, who has experienced more loss than a caucus should experience over relatively recent times.

When Nello was elected, I always felt that he probably should have been elected in a different era, almost 25 years ago, when this was a bit of a different place; when there was more collegiality between members of different political parties than there is today.

Now, politics has always been rough-and-tumble, and that's true here in the Chamber as well, but Nello really hearkened back to a time when members would

speak to each other in different ways: publicly, politically and personally.

At one time, I remember, sometimes we give each other nicknames in this Chamber, usually out of affection. And we would sometimes refer to mellow–Nello as mellow Nello, mostly because it rhymed, but also because he was a bit of a gentle spirit.

And he came to me at one point and he said, you know, Kelvin, I actually do like to really engage in a strong way sometimes. But I think his voice was failing a little bit because of treatments at that time.

And over time, we came to hear the bellow of Nello as he engaged more strongly in some of the debates. But what I remember, and I will always remember about Nello, is it was partisan, for sure, because he engaged in a partisan way, but it was never personal. And that is a remarkable thing that has been lost a little bit in this Chamber. And I think he hearkened back to a different time.

We went for coffee one time on Broadway avenue. He asked when I was minister of Education if we could go for a coffee somewhere. So we talked about whether we should go into a sort of a dark, secluded place so nobody would see us because it wasn't usual for ministers and critics to sort of go out. And I said, well, I don't think so; no, let's go wherever.

So we went on Broadway and some people saw us, and we got a little bit of internal criticism, I think probably from both sides of our parties. But I heard him at that time how passionate he was about education. He didn't care if people saw us talking about it because he just wanted to make a difference.

And it's been talked a bit about before, but one of the things that struck me is speaking to the character of the individual who you knew as a father, who I knew as a colleague, was when I would see him in the Legislature, even when he was going through his illness, there was a tendency to want to say, how are you doing? And before I could ever get that out, he would say something to me like, how's your son? Is he still in high school? How's he doing? Is he getting ready to go to university?

He would always intercede first with a question about how my family was doing. Some of that might be because, you know, he probably was tired of people asking him how he was doing. But I think, mostly, it's because of the nature of the individual; he cared about other people, and that is something that I'll always remember and be thankful for that.

It's one of the reasons why, when we lost government in the last election and Nello was appointed as Education minister, I reached out to him, and I said, you know, I'm actually—of course, we weren't happy about losing government; that's the partisan side of this. But I was really happy that he was appointed Education minister because I knew he cared so much about the portfolio. I knew it was something that was very, very important to him. And I said, you know, Nello, I'm just glad for you; like, I'm glad for you, personally, that you're going to have this opportunity to serve in a role that you care so much about.

And in the too short of a time that he was able to serve in that office, he did distinguish himself for the passion that he had for the portfolio, the passion that he had for young people and the passion that he had for leaving something in Manitoba that is better than he found it.

And I think all of us will agree that he challenged us to do that, to leave this place better than we found it. I think he challenged us to hearken back to a time when there was strong partisan feelings, but maybe less personal, more collegiality, caring more about the individuals. And in a time of great division, I think that's one of the things that Nello left all of us—and I said this publicly—that we can all be better, and that will be a great legacy, if we can do that in the name of Nello Altomare.

Thank you so much.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I first met Nello at my daughter's school. It was the end of the school day. It was long after the bell had rang. And Nello was coming out of the—one of the classrooms.

And this was after he had retired from a full career as a—first, a teacher in the Transcona school division and then, of course, became vice-principal and principal and had a long, fulfilling education career. And I ran into him coming out of a class that he was subbing, after his long career. And again, not right after class ended, after a long day, well after the bell had rang.

That's who Nello was; he was a teacher. He was a teacher to his absolute core. It was in his blood. He never stopped teaching, and that includes when he came to this place, when he became an MLA.

* (15:10)

He continued to teach, and I can be very proud to say that I was one of his students in this place. He was new to politics, but he had a wealth of knowledge, a

wealth of perspective, a wealth of wisdom that I think all of us benefitted from.

One of those ways that he taught me and taught many of us as settlers, he was unapologetic in his explicit support for reconciliation. We've heard it here from others. He never shied away from that question: what can I do? How can I play that role? How can I have a bigger voice as an ally? And I think he taught me a lot.

He was also somebody that never shied away from making a mistake. He learned from that mistake, he corrected himself, but he was always willing to put himself out there, to say what he really felt or what he really believed and then to take that and move forward in a way that was constructive for everyone. He did wear his heart on his sleeve.

He had such a large impact, not just on people here in this Chamber, but on kids and former students of his, right across the city, but certainly in the northeast part of the city. I had so many people after he passed reach out to me to send me their condolences, but to say he was my teacher back in, you know, 1990 or in two-thousand-whatever.

And I can tell you from my—in my household, my kids got to know him. He was a teacher, he was a principal in my daughter's school, you know, before she got there. But he would often come back to visit the teachers that were still there that he knew and so he would come in, where's Anna Wiebe, he would say, and he would go classroom to classroom to find her and make sure that she felt seen and loved. And he did that with my son, too.

And when we broke the news about Nello's illness, which was a time that he didn't, you know, he wanted to keep things fairly private, and it was a difficult time. It was a difficult time for many of us, but for those—all those kids and all those students, it was a really difficult time. Because they needed the time to grieve too.

I also wanted to just take a moment, as many others have done, to just talk about the good times too, because Nello sat right here and there were a lot of times we had a lot of good laughs. We had a lot of good discussions, you know, disagreements about what the best Coen brothers movie is or, you know, talk about some of his eclectic taste in music.

But he always brought it back to the family. That's what he wanted to talk about. He wanted to talk about his love for Barb and for his kids. He wanted to talk about his parents and his time growing up in

Transcona. And he wanted to always bring it back to who we are as people, who we are as human beings in this place, rather than just politicians.

And so to the family, to the entire community of Transcona, to everyone who Nello touched, my condolences on behalf of me and my family, my constituents and all of us in this Chamber. We love Nello; we love you.

Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): To the family of Nello Altomare, I know how much courage it takes to come, especially with it being as raw as it is the first year after you lose somebody as special as Nello Altomare. The first anniversaries, the first holidays, the first major events are always the tough ones. So to be here today, we appreciate how tough this must be.

And I do want to talk a little bit about the fact that both Nello Altomare and I were big boosters of then-River East school division. He as a teacher, vice-principal and principal, myself as a trustee and chair of the board, and later on it became River East Transcona.

And upon being elected here, he found out that one of his former staff members, one of his teaching assistants or individuals who helped out in the school, was my sister. And he came right up to me and he said, Margaret Lutzer used to work for me.

And I said, yes, that's my sister. And he said, oh, wonderful person. He said, great person. He told me everything about her and how great she was. And called up my sister and I said, you know, Nello Altomare bumped into me and he said all these things about you. She said, you know, he was just one of the nicest people you could ever want to work for or with.

Couple days later, I bumped into him again; says, how's your sister doing? Like, how's she doing? And I said, oh, really good; you know, she said a lot of really nice things about you. And then he said, well, you know, make sure you tell her I say hi. So I called her again and I said, listen, he said this and, you know, said to say hi.

So every time he would bump into me, you know, always ask me how my sister was doing, and would I please say hi to her?

So one day I called my sister and I said, you know, you'll be surprised; for the thirtieth time, Nello Altomare bumped into me and said, how's your sister Margaret Lutzer doing? How's she keeping up? And, you know, and then he would tell me stories about school and

how things were going, and it's just the kind of person he was. He cared.

So I mentioned to my sister we were going to have this special moment, and so she asked me if I would just give a little message to the family. Please bear with me; my sister, Margaret Lutzer texted it to me so these are her words: My condolences. He was a very caring vice-principal to the students and staff at the middle school where we worked together. Yes, a very caring and kind individual.

So I'd like to say to the family here: From my family to you, our heartfelt condolences. There were a lot of staff, a lot of individuals from River East Transcona who were at the funeral, who couldn't get up to speak. It was far too large and there just wasn't the time. But I think these words about what kind of a caring, wonderful person he was would have been expressed over and over and over again, probably hundreds and thousands of times.

So on behalf of my family to you, our condolences. And, yes, we miss him in this Chamber.

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I'm honoured and, of course, deeply saddened to stand in the House today to put some words on the record about the incomparable Nello Altomare.

I first met Nello during the 2019 election campaign. I remember meeting his sister at the same time, sitting at a fundraising dinner together. And he was just so outgoing and friendly and welcoming, both to me and to everyone that came anywhere near our table.

I remember our very first conversation, and I remember our very last conversation with so much clarity. And, in between, we shared a lot of laughter; on more than one occasion, we shared some tears.

Nello and I had a lot in common in many ways. He spent his life as an educator; I spent some time as a school trustee, but also, my career—working with young people—and we had that in common.

I was—as Matt had mentioned, there's—I just made a little note here, too. We also spent a lot of time teasing each other. He—I was sometimes, like, fake offended at his musical tastes, and he'd be, kind of, fake offended at how little I knew about Transcona. But it was a thing we just kept going for years and it was a lot of fun.

Nello and I were also very close in age, and our children are very close in age. So we have that in common, and as others have discussed here, those

were the things we talked about on the day-to-day: the personal parts of our lives; the parts of our lives that gave us meaning.

In reflecting on who Nello was to me and to our team in the short time I had the pleasure of knowing him, I thought of some lines from my favourite poet, Mary Oliver. This is a long poem—I'm not going to read it—but there's an excerpt from this longer poem called *When Death Comes*.

Oliver writes: When it's over I want to say: all my life / I was a bride married to amazement. / I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms / When it's over, I don't want to wonder / If I made of my life something particular, and real / I don't want to find myself sighing or frightened, / Or full of argument. / I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

* (15:20)

Honourable Speaker, Nello was not just a visitor to this world. He was always full of amazement. Nello was my friend. I loved him. He was funny, fun to be with, smart, thoughtful and passionate, deeply loyal to his team. He changed the world through his role as an educator and also as an MLA, as a critic on education and finally as Education Minister. He made something very, very real and extraordinary of his life.

We also all recognize that his early death changed the world for his wife Barb, for their children and to their extended family. To them, I again offer my condolences and my gratitude for sharing Nello with us and all Manitobans for a time.

The deeply honourable Nello Altomire [*phonetic*]-Altomare, former MLA for Transcona and former minister of education and child care, has left a legacy. He will long, long be remembered in this building and in this province.

Thank you.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I'm the MLA for Morden-Winkler, a newer MLA in the Chamber.

Today we honour the life and legacy of Nello Altomare, formal-former Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning of Manitoba. Nello was dedicated public servant who gave his all to the betterment of our communities, especially the children and families of Manitoba. As a leader, Nello was not only known for his intelligence and dedication, but also for his kindness, integrity and the respect he showed everyone he met.

He believed in the power of education to transform lives, and his efforts to improve early childhood learning in Manitoba were heartfelt. He was an advocate for the betterment of the education system and for ensuring that every child had the access to resources and opportunities that they needed to succeed.

Beyond his work as a minister, Nello was a friend, a mentor and a compassionate soul who touched the lives of many—everybody who knew him. His legacy goes far beyond the role in politics. It is in the countless lives he helped shape and the positive changes he brought to our society.

Nello was a special person to me specifically. I don't know how it happened, but we would meet in the hallways of this building—this beautiful building—almost every day. I always laughed because it was so expected that I would see him every day, and every time we met in the hallways he would always check in on me. We grew a friendship and a respect for each other, talked about our families, communities and how our day was going. He'd stop in at my constituency office whenever he was in town and I would let him know when my husband was playing live music at The George to see if he wanted to join me for a beer.

This building can be a hard place to work sometimes, but Nello always brought a smile to my face and was always an encouragement for me. Please remember that we are people first and politicians second. He was so good at that. His kindness and respect was rare, and I encourage each one of us to take a look at how we can live and strive to be more like him.

He sent me a private message in December. He was not well, but he said something that I will cherish forever to me, and he encouraged me. I will always remember him for that.

Though Nello is no longer with us, his impact remains. Let us remember—not him—not only for his work that he did but for his kindness, dedication that he brought to everything he did.

I extend my deepest condolences to the family and to his friends and to all who had the privilege of working alongside him, to all of my colleagues across the aisle. I will miss hearing your bellowing voice calling out to me in the hallway of building.

Rest in peace, Nello. Your legacy will live on in many lives that you touched.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to begin by sending my heartfelt condolences to the friends, family, colleagues of Nello.

Nello made a true impact here in these Chambers, as you can tell from all the testimony that is being shared here. He made such significant changes to, whether it be legislation, the lives of so many within politics or within education here in the province.

Anyone who knows Nello knows he was very good at a lot of things, and one of the things that particularly stood out to me, especially in a career of politics, is he was very good at explaining things. He was very good at articulating a message that he was trying to get across. And I suspect this comes from his days as being a teacher and a vice-principal, but he always articulated himself with kindness. He was very genuine and sincere. He took an interest in people's personal lives and you felt this in your interactions with Nello.

My last interaction with Nello was a panel I was sitting on with him, as well as the member from Spruce Woods, and often we're sitting on panels where we're against each other. But this was a panel where we were actually all on the same team and we got to speak with teachers from across the province.

And it felt incredible to be part of a partisan panel, in front of many teachers, and work together explaining about the progress that has been made in the province of Manitoba, talking about what can still be changed in the province of Manitoba.

And you can tell, whenever he spoke, he spoke with such passion and elegance. And he truly knew what he was talking about, which is—again, I think speaks to his character and his ability to articulate himself so well.

He had this serenity, or a sense of calmness to him, which we could all take a big page out of, Honourable Speaker. When you spoke with Nello, there was a grounded feeling. You didn't feel rushed. You didn't feel he was putting pressure on you. It was very much a reciprocal, back-and-forth conversation that allowed space to try and say what you wanted to say, to be receptive to learning. And he created that space for so many of us here, and I want to thank him for that.

Just in the last couple of weeks, I actually ran into a couple of people who told me that he taught their grandchildren. And I thought that was kind of neat, too; he's being remembered in our eyes as a politician but he's being remembered in so many others' eyes as a teacher, as a vice-principal. He served such a big role here in the province, and that's why he is missed so much and so dearly.

Honourable Speaker, Nello is very missed. He was taken to us—taken from us way too soon. And my hope, again, is for the family to know that he is resting in peace. And thank you for allowing him to share so much of his time here with us.

Thank you.

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I first met your dad campaigning in Transcona, and I thought, wow, this guy's got lots of energy. I remember his smile, like this, lit up the room.

I remember knocking on doors with him and everyone knew him, like, every door we went to. He either taught them, worked with them, or knew their grandparents. He was connected to everyone in Transcona and it was just like, that was his town—this little village. And he had such a big personality, and I just felt so connected to Nello.

When we got elected, I was very fortunate to share a bank of offices with him, with a lot of our colleagues. And we were right beside each other. And there was some rough times. I mean, it was—we had—we were in opposition and we were fellow educators so we immediately, you know, had that in common. So we'd often talk.

And I remember him saying—like, he's very naive, as I was coming in, thinking that you're going to bring people together and work across aisles and he's—I remember him saying to me, how do you do it, Bertie [*phonetic*]? How do you—like, because teachers are so used to working and bringing and being collaborative and working together.

And I just—I remember saying to him, you got to remember who you are doing it for and focus on the people.

* (15:30)

And that's what Nello did; Nello always did that. Always focused on the people. He always focused on the kids, and he did it with such integrity. He did it with such heart.

And he was always—I looked at him as like a protector. He was very much a protector. Any time—I don't know, there's lots of heckling that goes on in this House and particularly, I think, for our Indigenous women at some point, and I remember him always protecting us and trying to stand up and, you know, really taking care of us.

I remember having conversations about his kids, because, well, my kids are 34 and 32, and talking

about the amount of food that you ate and the food bill at home. He would often talk about that, and we'd just have good conversations.

And I was getting tattoos at the time. So, Kira, he would talk about the gumball tattoos and how these—he would turn the gumball and the tattoo would come out and that's the tattoo you would get. And so he was, like, what is this new thing? So I had lots of conversations.

I remember going to Hi Neighbour and seeing Vanda. And he promised me—he's like, the band's in my office, and if you come and you wear your leather pants and your six-inch heels and you put your hair up, I'll make sure you get backstage and meet the band. I was like, all right, I will do that for you, Nello, because I love you.

And Nello always called me—he's like, if I—he would always say, if I was 20 years younger, Bernie [*phonetic*] I was the 20-years-younger Bernie [*phonetic*]. So I said I would do that for him.

Well, you know Hi Neighbour; there's nowhere to park. So I ended up parking like 20 blocks away, and I'm not a six-inch girl. And Nahanni can wear those all day, but—so I wore these six-inch heels, these boots, and I was parked 20 blocks away, and I walked to the—and you were there, Vanda—I walked; there comes Nello meeting me.

Well, by the end of the concert, because we were dancing, we were having a good time and, sure enough, got to go meet the band. By then I was, like, done, because Nello introduced you to everyone. You couldn't walk anywhere with someone saying, hey, Nello, so you stopped and talked. And I had to take my boots off and walk back to my car, and he carried my boots and walked me back to my car.

And, like, that was just the person that Nello was. Nello was so kind-hearted. He was so loving. He was so caring. And my partner was a newcomer, and he just wanted me to send his condolences to you, too, because he made him feel so special, so seen and so included. He wasn't involved in politics. His first time coming out, knew no one, and your dad always made an effort to, you know, make sure everyone was seen, was heard, was valued and included.

So he's going to be sorely missed. He is sorely missed. And we love your dad, and we'll continue to work on his behalf. So we love you. Sending you all lots of love.

Miigwech.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I want to begin by offering my sincere condolences to Barb, Kira, Aidan, the entire family, Transcona, for your loss.

I love Nello. I thought this was going to be hard, but I'm going to try to hold it together here.

We connected on music and family. I have a deep interest and love for music and, as you, of course, know well, so did Nello. He had very eclectic interests, from Public Enemy to punk bands. He'd always surprise me when we'd be in a car together and I'd offer him deejay responsibilities, and he'd play music I'd never heard before. Always blew me away. So we were strongly connected around music and family.

I had the great pleasure of hearing stories about Kira and Aidan: specifically Kira, who was attending U of W when—shortly after we were first elected in 2019. And my wife teaches there and knew Kira through her work as a student, and would always reference how she was viewed as being unquestionably one of the superstars of that department and in a sort of sociology criminal justice area within the arts at U of W. And enjoyed talking about that.

And he always enjoyed asking about my girls and loved to see them when we were out in public. And any time he would see my girls, he would always tease them and pretend that he didn't remember their name. He would offer my daughter's name—my youngest is Ellie—and he would make up a variety of names and then she would laugh and giggle and finally he'd of course call her by her proper name. So he always loved to tease them, and they loved seeing him and they miss him, too.

He was hilarious. His nickname for me was Big Boy. Anytime I saw him: How's it going, Big Boy; what's happening, Big Boy; slap on the back. And he—I'll miss him calling me that. *[interjection]*

And yes, I'm sure he had a nickname for all of us. Maybe he called many of us Big Boy, I'm not sure.

And one of my favourite memories of Nello, since we came into government, was in Treasury Board. And those of—those who've shared time in Treasury Board with our team will know, when Nello would come, it was a little bit different.

Typically, when folks would come into Treasury Board it was, you know, it was a bit of nerves, is a—there's some, you know, it's a high-stakes environment. Nello would come in and say: What's going on here? And he'd clap, and then he'd hit the backs of the TV analysts who had no idea what was going on:

What's going on today? And everybody felt at ease. And he made that environment that much more fun. And I'll miss what he brought to Treasury Board as well.

Nello had, as everyone here knows, an incredible love for education. He was a teacher through and through, as so many people have spoken to, but he just loved education so much—everything about it. And one thing I'll always appreciate, that he helped me gain an appreciation for, is the role of the teacher. The importance of the teacher. How much we need to trust teachers. How teachers have children's interests at heart, and how hard they work to support our kids. And he had just such an incredible confidence in their role, their importance in society, and in helping kids achieve their best.

He had an unbelievable moral clarity about him that I also learned from. He was never afraid to speak his truth. And he always spoke his mind and spoke what he thought was right and wrong; and he had a very clear sense of that. And I think that's something that we all appreciated and that was needed, and especially needed in this building.

Nello appreciated being here so much. I think he recognized the importance of these roles and just how fortunate we are, everyone here, to be able to breathe this air in this building and to be one of 57 people serving in this capacity. He had a deep love of service. And he shared that with us.

And every day he came here, he always made a point of walking up the Grand Staircase, because that reminded him of how lucky he was and how lucky we were to be here. So I honour that by every time I come to this Chamber, by walking up that same staircase, and I will do that—and every time I do that, I'm going to remember Nello.

Love you, Nello.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I offer my deepest condolences to Nello's family, sisters, friends and his colleagues.

Since 2019, we have known each other. And after a few months, I stopped calling Nello, Nello; I actually started calling him Brother Nello. And I continued calling him Brother Nello in person, as well as in text.

* (15:40)

And I would say: Hello, Brother Nello. Hope you're doing good. I'm good. Diljeet.

It's a work in progress. Thanks for asking—was the last text I received from Brother Nello.

I kept saying Brother Nello for a couple of years, and then he showed his love for cross-cultural ties. And he wanted to know more about my language, my culture, my community. He was very much connected to the Punjabi community in Manitoba. And out of those conversations about cross-cultural ties, I started calling him Nello Bai Ji, which means big brother. And at the same time, he decided to call me Diljeet Bai, which is younger brother. And we continued doing so for long.

Nello was a leader, not a politician. When we got into this system of democracy we had to be politicians, but Nello showed leadership in this Chamber, in our democratic institutions, in education and as a class teacher.

And I want to talk about Nello's non-verbal communication. Whenever I shook Nello's hand, he shook me. He would be so strong—like, shaking me, not my hand. And, to me, that was not just a fun part; I thought that Nello wanted to say a thousand words through that expression.

And when Nello—when I would see Nello on his scooter, I can see him; I can close my eyes and I can see him now on his scooter. That says a thousand words about his energy, about his speed, about his willingness to see so many people in a short time.

And when Nello would wear a ribbon shirt, I can close my eyes and see him right now. And when I see Nello participating in the Pride parade, in the Sikh parade, I could feel the vibes he would send out.

I feel blessed to have him here with me and having this chance of working with him briefly over these years. I feel blessed, and I think all of the people around him feel in a similar manner. People like Nello are rare, and I think he made a great decision to offer himself for Manitoba after retirement. He would be known; he would be remembered forever by all of us, and the schoolchildren and all Manitobans who would remember Nello forever through Nello's law.

Love you, Nello. Brother Nello, love you.

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Dear Nello, it's a bit surreal doing condolence motion speeches for you today.

Not too long ago, you were still in the thick of it with us, watching us on TV from home and from the hospital. We would get texts from you, cheering us on

and giving us your hot takes on what goes on in this Chamber.

And not too long before that, you were in the front bench of our NDP caucus, close to the Speaker. Whether we were in opposition or in government, you took up your spot in the front benches, in close proximity to the Speaker, close enough to be heard clearly when you were heckling, and then chastised for all the heckling you would engage in.

You were a live wire and loved being raucous in the Chamber. You brought so much positive energy, not only in this place, but to our caucus, to all the events you would attend. It's only been a few months since we lost you, so I can still clearly remember what your voice sounded like, how welcoming and funny your greetings were like. And I can still remember what your hugs felt like.

You clearly appreciated every minute of your time here as our NDP colleague, as the MLA for Transcona and as the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning. Nello, you made your time here on earth count, and you made all of us around you feel like we counted, too.

I just wanted to spend some time to thank you, Nello, for the friendship, guidance and support you gave me personally over our time here together. I remember in the early days when we were in opposition and I was struggling to fill the 30-minute requirement for the speeches we were doing to block more than 80 very bad bills brought forward by the PCs. I marveled at how you seemed to effortlessly, day after day, get up and speak for 30 minutes, no matter what the bill was. And what you said to me when I was feeling down, you were very gentle when you said getting up and speaking like this takes time. You said you've been doing this for years as a teacher and a principal. Don't worry; it takes time to develop, and that I would get there, too.

I also want to thank you, Nello, for the clear vision you shared with us on the central role public education has in our province. I still remember your voice: schools are the safest places for kids. They are a central part of any community. The level of expertise that teachers, administrators, school staff have, is incredible.

That was what you would always say. And this past summer in Notre Dame, my community was experiencing kids as young as nine years old setting fires and committing property damage. And because of what I learned from you, our community has begun to mobilize to address what these children and families

need to thrive, by making sure that the school community is at the centre of planning and implementing any sustained response for what these kids and families need.

Nello, when we both became Cabinet ministers, our families were sitting with one another for the swearing-in ceremony, and my family really appreciated sitting with yours for that very special day.

As ministers, we shared a hallway on the first floor of the Legislature, and me and you would often walk together to meetings and back to our offices. You would always want to take what I deemed to be the long way to a meeting and back. You always wanted to take the Grand Staircase there and back. And sometimes that would be too long for me and I'd go my own way, because I would literally save 30 seconds taking the Leg. side stairs.

And you didn't care if it was the long way; you said to me, with a slow, certain smile, I always take the main way. It's the Grand Staircase, Malaya, we made it. We take the Grand Staircase.

I just wanted to unpack that a bit for folks, because on the surface it might just seem like something trivial, but first, for both of us, and for many of us in this Chamber, it took a lot for us to get here to be MLAs. Not just the hard work of campaigns, not just the hard work of getting an education or the careers that we've had or the sacrifices, but the daily grind of work that our parents before us, that our grandparents before us did to survive here in Manitoba, and to help us be where we are today.

And Nello, with all that Grand Staircase talk, you were acknowledging all that hard work and difficult labour and working conditions that our families had, your family had, working in the train yards, how you came to elementary school for the first day not knowing a word of English, and that now we are here at the seat of government.

And, yes, we are taking the Grand Staircase to that meeting. And how, because when you were taking the Grand Staircase, you were somehow savouring and fully appreciating your time here with each bounce on each step.

* (15:50)

Nello, this Saturday coming up is the sons and daughters of Italy event. You and Minister of Families were regular attendees at that event and you'd always be her date. So I'm going to go for the first time to the sons of Italy event to be the Minister of Families' date

to honour you and to help fill, somehow, your absence there. And I heard that the sons and daughters of Italy are honouring your life on Saturday night.

Nello, session is back up and we're back in the thing of things—thick of things. We're introducing bills; we're back at QP; we're doing all of this, somehow without you physically here with us. I just imagine now that you're just watching us from home, and we know that, just like Danielle, you're here with us as we continue to fight this good fight together for a better Manitoba.

I tell my kids and I tell myself that death is a normal part of life and that death is just as natural a part of life as a baby being born. I also believe that God never told us we'd live forever, but that He did promise us that He would always be with us. All of this helps me with my grieving process as we work towards accepting your daily loss, Nello, from our lives.

Nello, you made each day of your life here on Earth count, and you made all those around you feel like they counted too, and that was the best lesson that you could give us all.

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): My sincere condolence to the family—*[interjection]* I don't think so; I can able to do a couple minutes.

Nello was a special person. He helped so many people, you probably in the Chamber know that I'm kind of a quiet person. He was out there helping me out every single day. Whenever we were in the banks of 132, he would come and ask about the family first: How's the family, how are the kids? And always, when my daughter was—is here—go talk to her as well.

Even outside, wherever we go, to community meetings, he was talking to kids: How's your education? Education was the No. 1 thing he was thinking every single time.

Each Christmastime, we would spend time at my house. That was a special time with my colleagues. Couldn't do it this year; he didn't have the energy.

Still got together in January this year, but we will keep on going; I'll remember Nello. You know, we will talk about what a good thing, like, he did for Manitoba, what he left behind that we still have to finish.

And also my daughter's in university because of him. I still remember she came in December and I was telling, you know what, this is time to come back home.

And she said, you know what? Dad, let me call Nello. He was the person that told me, you know, this is the No. 1 university to go to.

I said, I know, but you're costing me too much money.

She said, no; this is the best university. Otherwise, I have to call Nello.

And I couldn't share with her, even to this day, that Nello is not with us. I had no energy. He will be missed.

We loved you, Nello. There's lots of work need to be do, and we will definitely carry on your work without you. Thank you, thank you for sharing Nello with us, with Manitobans. He did so much, and is there so much to do.

Thank you.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): My condolences for your loss and for all of our loss, and thank you for sharing Nello with us and with the people of Manitoba.

There's so much good experiences I've had with my dear friend Nello over the many years I've gotten a chance to know him, but I want to just share with you all today just one story, one experience I have, one memory that's pierced into my mind of a couple days I spent with Nello. And I think this really encapsulates who Nello was to me, and I know who he was to so many people.

And so in 2023, Nello and I went to the royal winter fair in Brandon. And I picked him up in my car, and we—picked him up from his home in Transcona, and we drove there. And we spent the drive talking, having one of those wonderful conversations that I know so many of us have had with Nello.

We talked politics; we talked education; we talked about our lives; we talked about family; we talked about being in this Chamber and we talked about challenging each other to raise the level of debate here and to always speak with integrity. That's something that I'm going to do every day I'm in here to honour his work, to honour his words. And everything that he did, he did as an educator, and I'm so honoured to be educated by him.

So we made it there; we had a great time at the fair. And before we left to go home, we were in the concourse and there was a group of—you know, there's lots of school kids there. There's a group of high school boys who were there, kind of hanging out and

chatting, and we were on our way back to drive back to Winnipeg.

And Nello, being Nello, connected with these high school kids, you know. Being the educator, being the open, kind, generous guy that he is—in his own Nello way, connected with these students and started chatting with them and talked about what they had seen at the winter fair, and had a good time with them.

He also spotted one of the guys who had this amazing leather jacket on. And he pointed out and said, I love that jacket. So Nello befriended this guy and said, that jacket looks really good. Do you think it could fit on me?

And so, Nello asked this kid for his jacket and tried it on, you know? And it fit perfectly. It was perfect fit on Nello. And, you know, it wasn't just because it was—it made him look like the coolest guy in the world, like some sort of a Fonz out of Happy Days or something like that, but it was because of the connection that Nello naturally had.

He walked into a room and he made you feel like you were his friend; like you were someone who he had already understood; like you could talk to him and that, you know, he was someone who made you feel like you were as close to him as anyone in the world.

And so he looked amazing in that jacket, and whenever I think of this photo I will always think of Nello. I'll always think of the way he's—and his ability to connect with people.

And so, for the record, I want to actually table that photo. I'm going to table that photo for posterity so it can go into the Hansard record: the photo of my friend Nello in his amazing jacket at the royal winter fair in Brandon as he connected with young people—and I'll share a copy and just pass it around if any colleagues want to see it in the Chamber here, so that everyone knows that Nello had a unique and special way to connect with people, to bring people together.

He did that in his life as a lifelong educator. I was lucky to be one of those people to be educated by Nello. He brought people together and connected with his students every day as a teacher and principal. He did that time and time again for the people of Transcona. He did it as the Education minister, changing lives of people across the province. And he did it every day in our caucus with our team.

And so I'm incredibly lucky to have known my good friend Nello. And one thing I've learned with—from him that I will carry on each day that I'm in this Chamber—that I'm honoured to be in this Chamber—is

that I'm going to speak with integrity and raise the level of debate. I'm going to do that for you, Nello.

* (16:00)

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I'd like to start by extending my condolences to Nello's family. I know that you're as proud of him as we are and as proud as he was of all of you.

I had the privilege of getting to know Nello about 19 years ago. In 2006, I applied for a half-time position at John Gunn Middle School to become an educational assistant. Nello was in my interview along with the principal, and that was my first interaction.

I was nervous. I didn't go the standard route a lot of EAs go through now to get into a position like that. I took a WEVAS course. I had experience coaching. I was a mother. But it was enough for Nello. He saw something in me and he shared that with me after I was hired. He saw, I think, the leader in me that I didn't know I was yet.

And so, I was really lucky to be hired in that afternoon position. And on the very first day I started—imagine going into this building. You have no experience. It's filled with 400 children, with teachers running around, EAs. I'm not quite sure what to do, how to handle it, because it's spirit week.

Nello's—I went into the office, signed in, I'm here for my shift. Nello right away: Come with me, Billie. Took me down the hall and he and I went and started doing some dishes from a lunch event. But it was a really important moment for us, because in that moment as we stood there and I was drying dishes—he was actually washing them and we had people putting them away—he shared with me what I needed to know to do the job that I was given.

The most important thing he said that I needed to do was build a relationship with the students that I would be working with. And that's a lesson that I've carried with me throughout my career as a teacher, as an MLA. It's something I do with my friends because nothing else matters if you don't have relationships with people.

And he said that because he knew that I was so nervous that I was going to suddenly work with this grade 8 male student that had behaviour problems. I never had one problem with that student because of what Nello told me to do: get to know him. Let him get to know you. Spend time talking with him.

Later that afternoon after he'd given me all that advice, we had to go back in the gym. It was sort of the

last day; things were wrapping up. A lot of activities—there was races in the gym.

Nello's like, hey, just stand here and I'll be right back. And the next thing you know, he's on a scooter going across the floor competing in a relay race with the kids, because that's who he was. He wasn't a vice-principal that was a top-down, heavy type of leader. He walked beside you. He walked beside, not just the staff, but the students.

Working with students as an EA, sometimes you spend a lot of time in a vice-principal's office, and so I was really fortunate to be able to do that. I would often have to bring my student down because the teacher would send him out of the class, and we'd have to go visit.

Nello never once yelled at that student or any student that I ever saw. He talked to him, and he said, you know, I think you got a lot of energy to burn. Come on, let's go to the weight room. And we went down to the weight room and he let that student get rid of that energy that he needed, and that meant a lot.

Those students that I worked with in those five years alongside Nello are students we continued to talk about, even in this Chamber. We would often reminisce about them. We would run into them or they would send us messages. That's how important he was to the kids that he worked with.

We were at an event earlier—or early in 2024. We were part of a grand entry, went in to our separate tables. There was a young woman that had gone to John Gunn Middle School, and I had run into her at our safety summit. And I didn't recognize her at first, and she's like, Ms. Cross, you coached me. And then I was like, oh my goodness, I recognize you.

That young woman had a lot of difficulties in middle school. She had a lot going on. And when I ran into her, she was now one of the directors at Candace House. I was so incredibly proud.

And when she saw Nello and I at this event, she came running up to me and she said, Ms. Cross—because she still called me Ms. Cross—can you please tell Mr. Altomare I really need to talk to him. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be where I am today. And so, Nello went up and I went and grabbed him and we had a conversation.

She said, I wanted you to know that when I had all those hard times at John Gunn, I made it through because you were understanding, because you listened to me and you helped me. You didn't judge me.

Nello has inspired a lot of people. I wouldn't be in this place if it wasn't for him, for him giving me that opportunity, hiring me in that first job, advocating for me at the end of that first year so that I could become a full-time EA, and when the opportunity came for me to get into an access program to become a teacher and keep my job, he pushed me to do it.

And so I thank you, Nello. I love you from the bottom of my heart, and I know that I'm here because of you, and I will fight every day and work incredibly hard to do the things you would want us to do.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): I can already hear Nello's voice in my head, telling me to breathe, telling me to take my time.

Like many people had—he had nicknames for, he called me kid. Not in a demeaning way, in a way of endearment, and I always—like, from the moment that I met him, I felt like he was instantly, like a political dad. I know many of our team members have seen him through the highest highs and the lowest lows. Up until recently I only knew him as this invincible, strong, untouchable man, and that's how I'll keep him forever.

This political journey has taught me so much in such a short period of time, the way that Nello has. I couldn't imagine doing this without him. I'm really thankful that because of the guy that he was, none of us ever have to. Because he's in everything.

I still remember the first time that I ever met him, before I was even seeking the nomination for Radisson. We were actually both invited by the MLA for Burrows to the Seven Oaks Performing Arts for a Punjabi film shoot, and I remember I was so, like, nervous about it. I was trying to figure out what to wear. They told us all to be like muted audience members, and so I arrived there with the federal candidate in Winnipeg North and a couple of other volunteers, and I'm like, okay, what do we do? We just, like, sit and watch the people on stage that are performing for the cameras?

And then there's this dude that shows up late. Thankfully, like, nobody wanted to sit in the front row. He marches straight up to the front row. We're all wearing grey, we're all wearing black, very muted colours. He shows up in a bright orange golf shirt. And I just remember, like, who is this guy? Somebody afterwards, we were talking, and somebody was like, orange, hey? Orange? And then he goes, heck yeah, man. I bleed orange. Bleed orange.

The first time I visited him in his constituency office, I remember, like, there was so much yelling going on and I was very confused at what was happening. I was like, is every constituency office like this? And he's saying things like, no, I care about you, man, I don't want you reading that garbage. I don't want you reading all this stuff. It's poisoning your brain. What is going on?

And so I'm sitting there looking at Devon, like, who is he talking to right now? He goes, it's Bill from the corner. You know, the guy that stands with the—those signs that are always all over the Facebook groups? And I'm like, oh. How long has he been in there with him? Oh, like two or three hours.

* (16:10)

And that's the kind of guy he was. He sat down with anybody, no matter, like, how different their beliefs were. And he talked to them about their stories, about what they needed, and he was always game for a teachable moment. He always turned the temperature down and sometimes turned it up like in that moment. But there are so many things that I could possibly say.

I gave Nello a lot of credit for how good he was with names but also how bad he was at times. And I remember the very first time he met my family at the Philippine Independence Ball. It was actually Minister Bushie who gave us his tickets to be there. He marches up to the table. He goes, Jelynn. Well, no, actually, he said my name wrong at that time: Jaylynn [*phonetic*], what are you doing here? I'm like, oh, am I not allowed to be here? It's the Philippine Independence Ball. He goes, ah, right.

And then he goes, Look at this. Do you think this is cool? And he just points at his barong [*embroidered shirt for men*]. And, like, yes, you look great. You want to meet my family? And they're, like, staring, wondering who this man is.

And then introduced them, and they've met countless times. We shared a campaign office in 2023. Like, he's met everyone, really—all of my titas [*aunts*], all of my cousins—to the point where I can imagine our families have been enmeshed. And like I have said many times, is it's family forever.

I still remember my dad singing when Nello would walk into the office: They call him mellow Nello. And Nello would just completely ignore him and be like, Ricky, how's it going? And then he'd turn to my mom and go, Jenny [*phonetic*]. Her name's Jean.

There is a time too, probably like the first or second time we went canvassing with my now-fiancé, and

he-like, he's known his name; he said it right many, many times. But he goes, don't tell me—it's Nico, by the way—Blake. And from that point forward, he was always Blake to Nello.

Anyway, you know, it's not just about the people who worked with Nello every single day. Transcona, the air is different now. And I told my mom when I had my last coffee with Nello before he went on leave, Mom, this is going to be the hardest thing that I do as an MLA, face our community without him.

And now, during the by-election, it's so evident. No matter who you talk to, there's nothing but good things to say about him.

And I remember I was lucky enough to be invited to visit him in his last few weeks. And I remember how watchful Aidan was over what the heck his dad was doing while I was there, because he was darting all over the place. As soon as the door opened, he goes, Jelynn, sit down. Oh, okay. He's awake. Sit right there. Don't move.

And one of the last things that he does is he takes his wedding ring out. He goes and shuffles, tries to find his wedding ring, sits back down next to me, then tries to put it on. And we just sat there in silence—oh my gosh—and he said, this family, it all starts here. It all ends here. This is all that matters.

And I'm so grateful to have been just one of the young people that he was—he spent so much time lifting up, and I'm so grateful to have met two of the incredible young people that he's raised and brought into this world. And I'll always remember him with his hat on at Pride. Straight out of the closet, is what it said.

I'll always remember him, with the sun setting, in his backyard, saying this land used to belong to the wolves. Bernie Wolfe, and his family. I'll always remember him smiling in that photo in our campaign office, with Evelyn chuckling in the background. Remember him riding away on his scooter, and now, I guess I have to, you know, with the rest of us, imagine that he's still screaming at the PCs through his TV in heaven.

I love you, Nello.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): What a privilege it is to get up and rise today and put a few words on the record. And what a privilege it is to share this moment with all of you, mostly with Nello's family. Thank you so much for being here and sharing in this grief process with us. I can only—I really can't imagine what you've been through, but your family has been an in-

credible support for us, and I hope we've been that same support for you.

So thank you for being here and my condolences to your family. And love to you. And I really wish condolences to everyone on the team and to everyone in the Chamber. And it feels like a really great privilege to be here today and to share in this moment with all of you and to share this love with you.

So I didn't get to know—I didn't have the pleasure of working with Nello as long as some people in the Chamber have, as a relatively newly elected MLA in 2023. But long before I was Nello's friend, I was certainly a fan. As someone who also bleeds orange and is a true New Democrat, while many members of his team were in opposition, I was just a huge fan.

Nello was one of those folks that I really paid a lot of attention to. I, too, like the member who spoke just previous, am a member of the north-east Winnipeg community, and Nello is a giant in that community. And I was so in awe of him before I ever got to meet him, this man who dedicated his life to his family, dedicated his career as a teacher, and as a principal, to his students and the families in northeast Winnipeg, and then in his retirement, when most people should be putting their feet up and going to the beach or going to a Jets game, Nello put in the incredibly hard work that it took to serve as an MLA in this Chamber and then as a minister.

But I did have the great privilege of then becoming elected—or I guess even as a candidate, even before getting elected, getting to know Nello. And I, too, had a nickname. It wasn't Big Boy, but it was Trace. Nello called me Trace. And if you know me, that's about, like, the one thing I don't like being called. It's about, like, the one I don't—I don't like Trace.

That being said, it never bothered me a lick when Nello called me that. I was reflecting on this. I was thinking about what I was going to talk about today, when the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) got up and talked about his nickname. I thought, yes, he called me Trace. I'm like, I hate that normally, but it didn't bother me when he called me that. And, in fact, I would trade just about anything to hear Nello call me that again.

So, again, I was reflecting, like many of us have, on what we were going to speak about today, and, again, thank you so much to everyone for sharing your thoughts and your memories. It was so powerful. And a lot of the same reflections that I had about Nello have been shared already here today. About his smile,

his incredible handshake. That's something I reflected on a lot. He had really just a unique and unforgettable handshake.

And about how he made you feel. A lot of people have talked about that. And it's true. Nello is one of those people that really had a gift for making people feel seen and heard. And as I was reflecting about what I wanted to speak about today, and when I was reflecting about my memories of Nello, I realized that most of the memories that were—most of the memories that came up most readily in my mind, were memories of Nello and my children.

As a New Democrat and as a candidate and as an MLA, we go to a lot of events, we go to marches and parades and dinners and I often bring my kids and Nello gravitated, always, towards my kids and my kids naturally gravitated towards Nello. And we've heard other people in the Chamber talk about that today.

* (16:20)

And before they knew his name, they knew him as the scooter guy. They would say things—like, if we were going somewhere, they'd say, is the scooter guy going to be there? If you ever saw Nello on his scooter, it was just unforgettable.

But the way that Nello impacted all of us, but as—particularly kids, I think just shows what a lovely person he was and what a kind spirit that he had, the way kids gravitated towards him. But I think it also speaks to what it really means to be a good educator, which is what he was. He was an educator in the classroom; he educated all of us here. And that ability—you know, there's a lot of teachers in this caucus. I'm not one of them. But I think teaching is a lot more than pedagogy and assessments and things like that. I think it's really about seeing kids.

And I reflect, and I'm sure—I hope folks are reflecting right now about those experiences that we had as kids. I hope all of us—I know I can certainly think of one or two teachers. It's really a transformative moment in kids' lives when you have that first teacher that really sees you and really hears you and really speaks to you—again, not about a math test or not about band class, but really sees you as a human. And Nello had a particularly—a particular gift for that. He was really a true leader. He made sure that all of his students were seen, that his colleagues were seen, that his constituents were seen.

I'm very, very grateful for the time that I had with Nello. But I do have one regret that I wanted to share

here today, and that was—the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Jackson) alluded to, in his comments, about the fact your last conversation with Nello back there and how he had something to do and go away, but that he'd be back.

And we all know that when Nello first left this space, that was really the intention, right? He had to go away and get better, and he was going to come back. And I had the great privilege of being asked to help out in his absence, which I was glad to do, and I know that anyone on this team would've done and would've done well. But I had some advice when Nello went away, and that was, you should call Nello and ask him about what's going on, get some advice; what's going on in education; what's going on in K to 12.

And I thought, no. He's sick, and he needs to heal and think about himself, and he'll be back. So I got to answer a couple of questions in question period; I got to sign a couple of documents. We'll be fine; we can leave it alone.

And then it got to a point where that path started to change, and I thought about the fact that I needed to call—and don't get me wrong; we texted a lot. As someone mentioned, he would text during question period; he would text during debate; he would give me tips and tricks and ideas.

But I was never able to—I would sometimes think about—I should call Nello and get that—download that information from his brain, you know—have that conversation with him, sort of the hand-off. But I could never bring myself to do it because I could never accept that he was not coming back to this place. And I still feel that way today, and I think a lot of people are still feeling that way, which is why today is so important.

So I thank everyone so much for allowing me to put a few words on the record.

Again, Nello was a educator and a principal and a colleague, but he was—first, he was a son and a brother and a dad and a husband, and he was a fantastic husband.

This is the last little anecdote I will leave you with because there's another thing I think about about Nello. I remember it was—we were getting ready for a Sunday. There were some northeast candidates, I believe, who were going to gurdwara, I think it was. We were planning a Sunday visit to a gurdwara, and so I called Nello and see if he wanted to join. And he said, Sunday. He said, Sunday's the day I clean the house

for Barb. So I—no, I hold Sundays—I clean the house for Barb—for Barb, is the way he put it.

And so, again, he meant many things to many people, but I know how much he meant to your family, and thank you so much for being here.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): First and foremost, I obviously want to say hello and extend my condolences and my love to Nello's family. Family was the most important thing to Nello. It was something that he and I had in common. Family is the most important thing in my life, full stop. And he and I had that understanding of one another in a very, very deep way. And so I can't thank you enough.

I know our team has thanked you and I just extend that again. Thank you for sharing Nello with all of us. We have all recognized in these jobs, in these roles, that our families actually make a lot of sacrifices in supporting us to do this work. Our families give up a lot of time with us, a lot of important moments with us to support and allow us to do the work that we do.

Nello's—we talked about it often—his greatest source of pride wasn't what he was able to do in opposition, wasn't all the things he's done in communities. Very, very proud of all of those things, but his greatest source of pride was his family, and so I can't thank you folks enough for supporting him and allowing him to be a part of this team and to contribute to our province in a way that will be remembered and cherished forever. Forever.

Nello—and I think about the relationship that Nello and I had—it's not lost on me and it wasn't lost on me when we first met—how unbelievably different we are from one another. And he made a point of highlighting that when we first started getting to know each other. He'd always say to me, for all the years we knew each other, who am I? Old white guy, you know, old white guy. Who am I, you know, taking up space and, you know, but I'm a guy who wants to make a difference.

He always talked about, in this really interesting and genuine way, the differences that we had, but he did it in a way that I think set an incredible example for so many other people. He did it in a way that highlighted that our differences were what actually what brought us together and connected us so deeply.

Nello, as minister, has already stated, and I'm sure others have, he had this ability to genuinely see people, not just the kids that he taught and served in community and in schools, but he had this desire, this drive

to really see people for who they were and what made them them, and to embrace that.

And it was something that I think in the time that we're in right now, I really feel his absence because I think the world really needs more Nellos. We need more people who are able to look at folks who, maybe on the surface, you don't think you have much in common with, and then you do the work of understanding that, you know, what makes you different is actually what can make your relationship and your connection so strong.

And, you know, Nello, he really taught me some things. He really taught me what it means to, you know, take a moment—take a moment to reach across differences and sit down and have those conversations and build from there. And, you know, Nello was somebody who—I know he valued that in education so much, he was an ally to so many communities, and he took a lot of pride in that.

And he wasn't just an ally; he was a legitimate accomplice. This is a guy who would speak up in meetings. This is a guy who would speak up in community. If he saw something happening that wasn't right he would say something right away, and he would nudge people around him and he would encourage them to do the same.

And that is a characteristic and a trait that, again, we need to see more of, and I'll keep saying it: the world needs more Nellos right now.

I've already said the most important thing to me in my life is my family. And we were at an event, Nello and I, a Nigerian event a couple summers ago, and I showed up. He was there and I think the MLA for Radisson was there too maybe, and I brought my mom. And my mom is a pretty shy person, and Nello kind of got that. He would—every time he saw her he would just meet her with, like, a ton of energy, which really she loved. Like, she kind of would play like, oh, Nello, but she just loved it—just loved it. Ate it up. And he knew that.

And so she was thrilled to see him at this Nigerian event, and it was Nigerians from all across Canada and the United States, and I showed up there—I don't know how I did this, but I wasn't wearing traditional. I wasn't in my traditional clothing. And immediately, I was like, oh my gosh; what have I done? I need to go home. I have to change.

* (16:30)

Nello understood right away. He was like, you got—I was like, I have to go, but I can't take my mom with me. It's going to take too long. She's—she needs to stay. And he looked at me, and he said, go. He's like, I've got her. And for someone like—you could trust Nello with the most important parts of your life, and he would respect the most important parts of your life, and he would treat them as though they were his own.

And so I was able to leave and go home and change and come back, and Nello spent the entire time I was away at my mother's side, making all kinds of jokes, some of which she got, some she didn't get. It didn't matter. She was having the time of her life. And, you know, Nello was like that for so many people—really, for everybody.

And so, you know, I hope that as we move forward, I hope that folks will see Nello's example and apply that to not only the way that we do our jobs, but I hope that people will apply it to the way they live their lives, that taking that moment to really see people and embrace them and understand what makes you different and use that as a way to connect deeply and to lift other people up and to be that ally and to be that person who treats their neighbour, someone else's most important person, as their own is a value that I will carry with me forever. It's an example that I think everyone should aspire to.

And Nello was able to walk this way in our world because he had so much love in his life.

And so, again, I can't thank his family enough for surrounding him with that kind of love and support and affirmation and for sharing that with the rest of us. I can't thank Nello enough for everything that he gave to our team and to our province and to me personally. I will always cherish our friendship. I will always cherish the example that he has set for myself as a legislator and as a public servant.

A life of service is not something that everybody gets to pursue or engage in, and it is one of the highest

and most sacred roles I think someone can have. And Nello served as a shining example of how you can use a life of service to affect generations and generations to come.

So Nello, I love you. I miss you greatly. My family loves you. My mother loves you and misses you as well. And she wanted me to make sure that I said that. And so you are with us always. You are with me always. And our province is a much, much better place having had you serve within it.

The Speaker: There are no other speakers. I would ask all members to rise to show their support for the condolence motion for the honourable member for Transcona, Nello Altomare.

And a moment of silence, please.

A moment of silence was observed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

* * *

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister for Education, that the House now do adjourn and, as a tribute to the memory of Nello Altomare, late honourable member for the constituency of Transcona, the House do stand adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Families, the honourable Government House Leader, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt), that the House do now adjourn.

And as a tribute to the memory of Nello Altomare, the late member for the constituency of Transcona, that the House do stand adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

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

As such, this House is adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

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