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**of the**

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
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
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	Ind.
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
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MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
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PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
ROBBINS, Colleen	Spruce Woods	PC
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
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WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

*The House met at 10 a.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 and 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. 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.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Tyndall Park. *[interjection]*

#### Speaker's Statement

**The Speaker:** So, as previously announced, I received a letter from the independent honourable member for Tyndall Park indicating that Bill 232, The Autism Strategy Act, will be their selected bill for this session. And, in accordance with this rule and—rule 25, the question will be put on second reading of Bill 232 today at 10:59 a.m.

#### SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

##### Bill 232—The Autism Strategy Act

**The Speaker:** So, the honourable member for Tyndall Park.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I move that Bill 232, The Autism Strategy Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

#### *Motion presented.*

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'm happy to rise this morning for second reading of Bill 232, The Autism Strategy Act.

I'm honoured to bring forward this legislation, and before I dive in, I want to thank those that I consulted with, many of whom who have joined us today in the galleries.

In the creation of this legislation, I consulted with constituents, members of PACE, parents of children—Parents of Autistic Children Everywhere, pediatricians, St. Amant, Autism Manitoba, Manitoba committee of the Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs, Autism Alliance of Canada, Level IT Up, Autism Learning Centre, child-care centres, Manitoba Possible, Asperger Manitoba, Children's Coalition, autism in Manitoba, a student researcher at Ongomiizwin, an Indigenous Institute of Health and Healing, Cerebral Palsy Association of Manitoba, Nova Scotia justice department, ending with Community Care Organization.

In 2023, the House of Commons unanimously passed the Federal Framework on Autism Spectrum Disorder. This mandates the Minister of Health to create a national framework to improve access to supports, research and services. Nova Scotia will be releasing an autism action plan very soon based off the government's commitment. This derived from an NDP MLA, Lisa Lachance, and her private member's bill in 2023. BC is currently discussing rolling out services and assessing differently, and Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan are all doing something through autism strategies, plans, committees and ongoing work. This brings us to Manitoba, where, unfortunately, over the last decade, there has been silence.

Honourable Speaker, the number of Manitobans diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, ASD, has increased significantly in recent decades. The needs of those diagnosed are diverse and evolve over the course of one's life. There needs to be accessible supports and services for people with autism and their families and caregivers in all areas of our province.

Currently, in Manitoba, there is no long-term co-ordinated strategy to provide the ongoing supports and services needed. Through consultation, I have learned there needs to be an integrated provincial strategy that would encompass several components.

The first is diagnosing. As mentioned, one of the biggest issues are the delays in diagnosing and then delays in accessing services. The legislation reads: timely access to screening and diagnosis of ASD. For example, what we are currently seeing with wait-lists for preschool assessments increasing are children aging out before getting assessed and therapeutic services and then having to start from scratch.

Early intervention makes all the difference in a child's life. It also means earlier access for therapeutic services, including behavioural, speech and occupational and physical therapies. The strategy would also address child care and educational needs. The legislation reads that supports and services be provided for autistic children in early learning and child-care facilities at all levels of their education. It is important to emphasize all levels of education, not just the early years.

Honourable Speaker, this legislation would also impact employment and housing. Specifically, the legislation reads: supports and services for autistic adults, including supports in relation to employment and housing. As people age, we all need purpose, meaning and independence, and right now supports are not in place to encourage this. The legislation also highlights the importance of supports and services for families and caregivers of autistic persons. An example where these services could be helpful is with the ability to access inclusion support funding.

Many people raise the importance of expanding eligibility. This would be a more equitable and accessible approach and cover a much larger geographical spread of our province. It further affects access to therapeutic services, resources up North and resources as people enter adulthood. An unfortunate ripple of the lack of investment over the years very much affects salaries and staffing levels and therefore results in a reduction of services.

Honourable Speaker, furthermore, the strategy specifically outlines identifying measures that would address research on autism spectrum disorder and comprehensive data collection and statistical analysis respecting autistic persons. As you can see, ASD is not exclusive to childhood. It is a lifelong experience and needs lifelong supports in place. The strategy

must reflect this. And that is why a critical piece of this legislation is working interdepartmentally.

\* (10:10)

In Nova Scotia, the departments working on their action plan includes addictions and mental health; community services; education and early childhood development; health and wellness; labour, skills and immigration; municipal affairs and housing; seniors and long-term care; justice and economic development. They have an integrated, co-ordinated, whole-of-government approach that is—for example, better allows children to thrive in school, reduces CFS involvement and supports working parents.

Honourable Speaker, through consultation I learned how some parents here in Manitoba have had to quit their jobs for reasons of having to literally wait outside in their cars when they drop their children off at school because on more days than not they receive a phone call 15 minutes into the school day to come and pick up their child. Many parents are having to use their holidays and sick days to stay home with their school-age children or have to leave work early or work separate shifts from their partners just so someone can always be with the child. I share these examples to highlight the importance of working interdepartmentally.

The government would further need to consider several specific points while creating the strategy, including ensuring measures apply across Manitoba, that there's a specific focus on the needs and circumstances of autistic persons and their families and caregivers and First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, that they consult with people with autism, their families and caregivers as well as the Autism Alliance of Canada and other organizations that advocate on behalf of autistic persons and their families and caregivers. Further, the government would be required to consult with physicians and research professionals who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of ASD and representatives from First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

Honourable Speaker, it was raised with me that there is concern that non-autistic people are the voice of research and that we could do a much better job at focusing on a strength-based perspective and to create a space for community to make a difference. For example, there could be a First Nations, Inuit and Métis base of autism. It would be inclusive and could be a strategy that creates environments to encourage and embrace the great strengths that come with autism and is led by strength-based cultural safety.

The last piece of this legislation highlights that the government has a responsibility with the strategy and will be held to account.

Firstly, the minister must finalize the provincial autism strategy—act and table it and make it public within two years after the act comes into force.

Secondly, there needs to be an annual report that outlines the measures identified in the strategy that have been implemented during the year, an analysis of the effectiveness of the measures that have been implemented in meeting the needs of autistic persons and their families and caregivers and measures in the strategy that have not yet been implemented, including an explanation as to why and a timeline for its implementation.

And, thirdly and lastly, the minister must conduct a review that includes consultation of the provincial autism strategy every five years after the act comes into force.

Honourable Speaker, as my time comes to an end, allow me to just share a few final thoughts. I, once again, want to express my gratitude for everyone who took the time to meet with me over the last eight months and for those who have taken the time out of their busy days to join us here today at the Manitoba Legislature.

I'd like to invite all of my colleagues out on April 2 at 6 p.m. There's an autism walk here at the Manitoba Legislature, and everyone is invited and encouraged to come out.

As well as following, hopefully, the passage of a second reading here of Bill 232, we will be taking a group photo in the Rotunda with all of our guests at 11:15, and all of my colleagues are welcome to join us.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I want to thank the member from Tyndall Park for bringing forward this

important legislation here today as well as welcome the guests in the gallery today as we discuss this important bill thirty—232.

I just want to ask the member, she shared with us the extensive list of consultations that she did during this process, and I'm just wondering if she can share with us here in the Chamber what some of the ideas were that she heard from the families, the organizations, as well as those living with autism, what she learned and what those ideas were?

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'd like to thank my colleague for a very good question, and I'm happy to be able to put on record just a few more of the ideas that were shared with me through all the consultation.

Some of the ideas range from, when receiving a diagnosis, having a package of navigational tools, details about disability tax credits, parent-led tools and so forth; everything from how, oftentimes, individuals are being denied for Community Living disABILITY Services, even when diagnosed with an intellectual development disorder—we could provide more resources for that; the idea that perhaps children's developmental services could be a mandated service, so it's protected by the law, it's in the budget line; ideas around how schools could have workshops for students and teachers to learn more about what ASD is and how there could be programs to transition into adulthood like buying groceries, paying taxes; and—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** I'd like to thank the member who introduced this bill, of course, for the labour that she put in, in consulting with community members who join us today.

One of the beautiful things about this Legislature is the diversity of lived experience that exists here. And I was privileged last spring to receive an adult diagnosis for my neurodivergence, understanding that every human being is incredibly different and the labour that individuals with autism and various streams of neurodivergence face includes things like masking, therapy, social stigma.

And so my question for the member opposite is, how does this bill ensure that the weight of labour doesn't fall on the autism community, who are already disproportionately barriered by the existing system?

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank my colleague from Radisson, not just for the question, but for

sharing a little bit about herself here in the House as well.

I think what's really critical with this legislation is that we don't want the weight of any legislation, frankly, to fall upon a specific group of people. And that's why I emphasize the importance of working interdepartmentally.

I think that the weight of the legislation should be the voices of those with ASD, the families and the caregivers and loved ones who experience ASD firsthand.

However, with working with the departments, the weight would be distributed. It would not just be, for example, the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine). It would also, I would imagine, include the Minister of Education, as an example, and arguably—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** I just want to thank the member from Tyndall Park for bringing this legislation forward. It's something very dear to my heart as well. I have somebody close to me that's also on the spectrum, and it's something that we really need more equitable services, I think, across the province.

And I did bring forward a petition in the last few weeks addressing that we need more equitable services, both rural and in northern Manitoba as well.

So I just wanted to ask the question, is it going to be more—how will you be keeping track of where the services are needed the most when there's situations where we have social workers or supports that won't leave the urban—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank my colleague from Morden-Winkler for the question. I know her and I have had the opportunity to speak about this legislation quite a bit over the last couple months, and it's an issue she keeps very close to heart. She's very passionate about it.

And that's why, in the legislation itself, it talks a lot about how the departments who would be doing the work for ASD here in the province of Manitoba, and the minister responsible for tabling the report, they have an obligation, it's actually written out in the legislation, to keep the House informed with an annual report of where things are being implemented, how many people are being diagnosed, where things that should have been implemented have not yet been implemented and the reasoning why it hasn't—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

\* (10:20)

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Like I'd previously mentioned in my recent question, there is a wealth of lived experience within this building, and we are putting that to work as government and making significant investments to support Manitobans with autism and their families, including a \$21.5-million investment this year in autism-specific supports and services.

So my question for the member opposite is: How does this bill build on those investments and programs that are already in place to support Manitobans living with autism?

**MLA Lamoureux:** Again I'd like to thank my colleague from Radisson for the very good question.

In order to make any investment work, we need to know what specifically we are investing in. And, currently, in Manitoba, there is no plan, no strategy—nothing that has been shared publicly, at least—as to what we can do to better the lives of those with ASD, or the loved ones of those who have someone in their family or friends with ASD.

I think that the Province needs to come together and work interdepartmentally, work with our national level as well, see what we can learn from the other provinces, to develop a strategy act that we can then pursue and hold ourselves to accountable, ensure that things are changing.

**Ms. Byram:** Can the MLA for Tyndall Park expand a little bit more on the particular reason she is promoting the need for The Autism Strategy Act here in the province of Manitoba?

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank my colleague from Agassiz for the question and I absolutely can expand on why I think we need the need—or we need this here in Manitoba.

For one, we see other provinces in Canada moving forward. We can see how the House of Commons brought something forward federally, how Nova Scotia is about to release an autism action plan, how BC is in current discussions, and how Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan have all done something within recent years as far as plans, committees, strategies and acts go.

Manitoba is starting to lag behind and from the research and the consultation that I've been honoured to be a part of over the last eight months; there is so

much that we could be doing. There are great ideas out there and a great need for services.

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Manitobans expect that proposals brought before this House, of course, are practical and sustainable for the communities that they're intended to serve and who rely on the supports being discussed today.

And so my question for the member opposite is: Did they examine what level of funding or resources would be required to implement the measures proposed in this bill through the strategy?

**MLA Lamoureux:** It is common practice and knowledge in this House that only Cabinet ministers can bring forward pieces of legislation that involve finances. I'm not in any way allowed to prescribe a certain dollar figure be put aside for anything, any form of legislation.

What I can do, though, is try my best to encourage the government to prioritize and to focus on some of the needs that many thousands of Manitobans are currently facing in the hopes that they will invest in it.

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Front-line workers, including educators, therapists and support staff play a critical role in helping children with autism succeed. Their experiences often provide the clearest picture of where supports are working and where improvements are needed.

I understand that the member has her own experience in the system as well, and so my question is if they can speak to the importance of, of course, listening to front-line staff, and ensuring that their experiences help guide improvements to autism services in Manitoba?

**MLA Lamoureux:** That's a great question.

I think that all of us here in the House could do very well—we could all benefit greatly—by listening to first-hand responders, to health-care professionals, whether that be mental health, physical health. And what we are hearing, and from those that I consulted with that I listed earlier in this morning's second reading presentation, Honourable Speaker, they have shared a wealth of knowledge of where we have desperate needs for those with ASD.

I think if we take what we are hearing and we come around and have a round table of sorts, I envision in my head all the ministers sitting around the table advocating for how their department—

**The Speaker:** The time has expired.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** I was hoping the member could explain how—why this legislation is important, even though the federal government is bringing forward legislation, how this goes above and beyond and what we can expect for results out of this legislation?

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank my colleague from the Interlake for the question.

It's extremely important that we implement something here in Manitoba because every single province, territory has their own unique needs based off many factors of population, geographical spacing within the province; and Manitoba, we're the only ones not talking about it right now.

The Autism Alliance of Canada has done a phenomenal job working across the country and the nation and trying to connect with the other provinces and territories and—to build something up that is much bigger than just the province of Manitoba. But Manitoba still has their own specific needs that, if we don't tackle, they're going to go unaddressed.

With the remaining time in my answer—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

And the time for questions has also expired.

### Debate

**The Speaker:** The floor is open for debate.

**MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona):** I want to begin by acknowledging the importance of the bill before us today and the broader conversation that it represents. Autism affects thousands of Manitobans and their families, and discussions like this give us the opportunity to deepen public understanding and strengthen the supports that families rely on every day.

Autism affects my family. My sister was diagnosed with an intellectual disability back in the '60s. Today, she would have been diagnosed with autism. My sister has faced her struggles throughout her life. The way folks were dealt with in the '60s was much different than how we are capable of dealing with things today.

The recommendation for my sister was for her to live at the Manitoba Developmental Centre in Portage. Today, we have come a long way, and we have the education and the ability to work with people where they are at, so that they can stay in their family home, attend their community school and thrive in their communities.

I've also had the opportunity to work with hundreds of students diagnosed with autism in my 30 years of working in education. Education continues to shift practices to best meet the needs of each child, and they will continue—we will continue to do better. We will continue to learn and grow overall so that everyone is able to live their best life.

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, is a neuro-developmental condition that affects how individuals communicate, interact socially and process information. The term spectrum is important because autism can look very different from person to person. And, as specialists say, when you have met one person with autism, you have met one person with autism.

What is clear is that autism is becoming increasingly common. Recent Manitoba research suggests that the prevalence of autism among children and youth rose from 0.58 per cent in 2011 to approximately 1.6 per cent in 2022. That means more families across our province are navigating autism diagnoses and seeking support.

Federal survey data tells a similar story. Nationally, around 2 per cent of children and youth in Canada are diagnosed with autism, and Manitoba's prevalence sits at roughly 1.7 per cent. These numbers represent thousands of Manitoban families who are working every day to support children with unique strengths, challenges and needs.

Parents and families often become advocates, co-ordinators and educators themselves. They may spend significant time navigating service systems, attending appointments and working with teachers and clinicians to ensure their child receives the appropriate supports.

Our government knows the importance of supporting children with autism and their families. We have already invested \$21.5 million this year for autism-specific services and supports to children and their families. And we're working with educators, health-care providers and communities to make sure that programs are practical, effective and available to all families.

\*(10:30)

In Manitoba, the central program supporting many children with autism is Children's disABILITY Services. Autism spectrum disorder is one of the conditions covered under this program, and, in 2023-24, 4,352 children diagnosed with autism were enrolled in CDS.

Through Children's disABILITY Services, families may receive case management, respite services, behavioural supports and connections to specialized therapies and community programming. These supports can help families maintain stability and ensure children are able to participate fully in their homes, schools and communities.

Importantly, our government has recognized that demand for these services is increasing. In Budget 2025, we added \$900,000 in funding to Children's disABILITY Services, specifically to address rising caseloads related to autism diagnoses.

And, as of February 2025, we took a new step by expanding eligibility for Children's disABILITY Services to families living on First Nations communities, something members opposite should have done years ago. Our expansion was also supported by a \$3-million investment and represents an important step to closing historical gaps—service gaps for First Nation families raising children with additional needs, including autism.

Our government also benefits from strong community and service partners. One of the most important is St. Amant, a long-standing Manitoba organization that provides early learning services for preschool children, case management support for families across the province and consultative support for schools working with students with autism. Our government has recognized the importance of these services by supporting St. Amant's work through provincial investments. We firmly believe every child matters, and our government will ensure that every child has the ability to reach their full potential.

For example, our education system includes specialized student services teams that work with teachers and families to develop individualized plans for students with autism and other learning needs. I was a member of such a team. I was a student services consultant for the River East Transcona School Division; I was a resource teacher; I was a guidance counsellor.

I worked with school teams, families, students, psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech-language pathologists and many others to ensure students with autism had appropriate programming. We met regularly to ensure we were continuing to meet the needs of every child. Professional development was ongoing and new strategies were shared with the teams. If one strategy didn't work, we would try something new. Individual education plans are not static documents. They are

fluid and adapted to best meet the needs of each child's needs. This work continues today.

The St. Amant School outreach team, for example, provides expert, intensive, multidisciplinary team mentorship to six to seven schools per year in Manitoba that require support programming for students with profound and complex needs, such as autism. This team helps ensure that students receive the accommodations and supports necessarily necessary in their home schools to succeed in the classroom. And, in 2025-26, our government provided \$526,000 to the St. Amant outreach school team, an increase of \$126,000 from 2024-25.

At the same time, it's important to recognize the strengths and contributions of Manitobans with autism themselves. Autism is not simply a list of challenges. Many individuals with autism bring remarkable abilities in areas such as memory, attention to detail, creativity and problem solving. Our responsibility as legislatures is to ensure that Manitobans on the 'autism' spectrum have the supports they need to thrive, while also building communities that recognize and celebrate neurodiversity.

Honourable Speaker, the bill before us today is part of that broader conversation. By continuing to invest in services, strengthening collaboration across sectors and listening to the experiences of families and individuals living with autism, we can build a Manitoba where every person on the 'autism' spectrum disorder has the opportunity to succeed. And I know through personal experience and through the support of a collaborative team that my sister is also able to live in her community, to thrive, to take part in activities and to live her best life.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I—again, I appreciate the opportunity to rise here today and speak to Bill 232, The Autism Strategy Act. And, again, I want to thank the member from Tyndall Park for the work that she has done in bringing this forward. And I also want to shout-out and say thank you to the families and the organizations who have contributed, sharing their ideas in bringing this legislation forward. So, great work on all their parts.

This legislation is—has the potential to make a difference, a significant difference, for many Manitoban families working every day to help their children reach their full potential. This strategy plan could help improve the screening and diagnosis of autism

spectrum disorder and work to support research and identify the ongoing supports and services that are needed.

I've heard from many Manitobans just recently, yesterday even and over the weekend, of concerns regarding the wait times for diagnosis and some of the issues surrounding the supports that are required in different environments, maybe more specifically some of the schools and the educational settings. So those are some of the issues that I know I've heard specifically coming from those living with the—autism.

Manitoba is seeing an increased number of those diagnosed with autism, all of which takes time to screen and diagnose. An autistic person's needs and support can be diverse and very unique. A bill such as 232 can identify some of those unique and necessary supports for these individuals. Some of these, like I've mentioned, could be educational support services, medical services, employment and even housing concerns.

Bill 232 could reveal the lack of supports in rural Manitoba and actually not just rural Manitoba but across the province and may—more specifically in remote northern communities. You know, and I think it's—something that's highlighted in this legislation also is the required consultations with autistic persons and families advocacy groups on behalf of the autistic people, and, of course, this would include doctors and therapists and First Nations and Inuit communities, all of which are key to determining the recommendations and building the strategy plan.

I want to also mention I appreciate the list that the member from Tyndall Park referenced in terms of those that she consulted with when she was working on this legislation and what she learned through that consultation. I can appreciate some of those ideas that were shared with her. And, again, it's important that families feel supported in accessing the services and get the proper diagnosis in a timely manner. It can lead to early intervention that will also provide long-term positive outcomes for families but also, more importantly, the children living with autism.

It's concerning that despite the government commitments to timely access, even a past promise of no wait-list, that Manitoba families are still left waiting. Dozens of children remain without access to the services the government claims are available. For many, early intervention is no longer a reality and some children risk aging out before receiving the help that they need. Families deserve honesty,

transparency and action. When commitments are made, they must be followed through.

On this side of the House, we will continue to stand with Manitoba families. We support a comprehensive integrated strategy plan, one that ensures access to the required services like the medical, educational and supportive services and all that will help to improve the quality of life for individuals that are living with autism and those that—who live to support and care for them.

\* (10:40)

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Transcona (MLA Corbett)—no, Tuxedo.

**MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo):** I rise today to speak to Bill 232, The Autism Strategy Act, a bill that reflects an important and ongoing conversation in our province. At its core, this conversation is about something we should all agree on, building a Manitoba where everyone has the opportunity to succeed, including autistic Manitobans and the families who support them every single day.

Autism affects thousands of individuals across Manitoba, and behind every diagnosis is a person. In many cases, that person may be a child, but, increasingly, it is also adults receiving what is often called a late diagnosis. Each diagnosis represents someone with their own strengths, challenges and a future full of potential.

Honourable Speaker, autism, or autism spectrum disorder, is a neurodevelopment condition that affects how individuals may communicate, interact socially and experience the world around them.

And, before I continue, I do want to briefly acknowledge language. Different people have different perspectives on whether to say, person with autism, or, autistic person. Both are valid. In my remarks today, I will use the term autistic Manitobans, because even the most well-supported autistic person is still autistic. It is part of how their brain is wired, and for many, it is an important part of their identity. And that word spectrum matters, because autism does not look the same for any two people. As many in the community say, and it's been said already this morning, if you've met one person with autism or one autistic person, you have met one autistic person.

And, to give an example, I had one person explain it to me like phones: the neurotypical brain, they said, is like an Apple phone, they're pretty much all

the same; whereas the autistic brain is more like a Samsung, or a non-Apple product, where there's more customization, more options available. Or another descriptor is like a soundboard, where one person has a different configuration to another. And I found those as helpful descriptions when we talk about different brains.

So, Honourable Speaker, we are seeing autism identified more often than ever before. And as my colleague from Transcona has previously said, in Manitoba, the prevalence among children and youth has risen from 0.58 per cent in 2011 to approximately 1.67 per cent in 2022, and nationally it's about 2 per cent.

But it's important to understand what is behind these numbers. Part of this increase reflects progress. We are getting better at recognizing autism. For many years, there was a very strong bias. Much of the research that existed focused on Caucasian white boys under the age of six. And, oftentimes, if children didn't fall in that category, they did not receive a diagnose—of autism and didn't get the supports that they needed.

But, today, we understand the full spectrum, or we're understanding it better, and there's always room to understand it better, including autistic Manitobans whose traits may be less visible. And this is part of the broader conversation about inclusion, about recognizing the diversity within the autistic community and ensuring people are seen and supported for who they are.

At the same time, there is still stigma. There are still outdated ideas about what autism looks like and who it affects. The reality is that autistic brains are different, not broken. They bring unique ways of thinking, learning and experiencing the world.

And I know I'd spoken with an educator, and this was years back, actually, talking about the conversation of inclusion in our schools. And they were talking about how it's great once a child has a diagnosis and a specific plan can be created for them. But they were also saying when things like wiggle boards or other types of accommodation tools to help a child self-regulate in their education space is something that actually would benefit all the children in that space. And what does it look like when we create more inclusive, accommodating spaces that normalize what people need to help them regulate, to be able to pay attention and focus and learn.

Honourable Speaker, we are also seeing more adults receiving what is often called a late diagnosis.

Many parents whose children are being diagnosed and through that process, many parents are being—oh gosh, pardon my language. Many are parents whose children are being diagnosed, and through that process they begin to recognize the same traits in themselves: sensory sensitivities, social differences, communication styles or self-regulating behaviours like stimming.

And I want to share an example about that that was shared with me. A person my brother knows was going through the process of having their child assessed for autism. As they listened to clinicians describe the traits and behaviours that led to that diagnosis, they found themselves increasingly confused because, as they put it, everything being described about their child sounded exactly like their own experience when they were a child. They had gone their entire life without a diagnosis. So they chose to be assessed, as well, and learned that they are autistic.

What's important to note is that this individual was already a successful engineer, a homeowner, married and a parent. And depending on some biases that people might hold or some stigmas attached to that diagnosis, there are people that would challenge that that person can't be autistic. So what's important to note is that this individual—oh, I'm repeating myself.

Their diagnosis didn't change who they were. It gave them a better understanding of themselves. And that is something I've heard from many adults that I've met who have been diagnosed later in life, is that it helps give them a better understanding of who they are and how they navigate through the world and also how they can better ask for the supports that they need. And if they're parents, as they've lived through their developmental years, they're better able to support their children now that they have that deeper understanding of themselves.

Honourable Speaker, behind every number is a family navigating systems, appointments and decisions. Parents and caregivers often become advocates, co-ordinators and educators all at once, and they should not have to fight for the supports that their children need. And this is where the conversation around Bill 232 becomes important. Manitoba already has an autism strategy in place, and that work is ongoing.

The intent of this bill reflects goals that I believe all members in this House share. At the same time, it is important that we continue building on the progress already under way, ensuring that what exists today is working well for families and that any changes

meaningfully improve the supports people rely on. Our government is focused on that work, and this year we're investing \$21.5 million into autistic-specific services and supports for children and their families.

And I'd like to lift up and reaffirm that our government does take a whole-of-government approach. The member from Tyndall Park did lift up their hope that that is something that our government would do because we know folks—autistic folks—are impacted by many facets of life. And, you know, as example, our Ministry of Families, our Ministry of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness that's also responsible for Mental Health, as well as the Ministry of Health, for example, I know they are speaking with one another and working together to see how we can improve those strategies together.

And we continue to work closely with our partners, like St. Amant, ensuring more children receive the support earlier. We are strengthening supports in schools through specialized teams and outreach programs because inclusion in education is fundamental.

\* (10:50)

Honourable Speaker, it also is important to recognize the strengths of autistic Manitobans. Autism is not just about challenges. It can bring many incredible abilities, like attention to detail, creativity and problem solving. An example of a famous autistic person is Dr. Temple Grandin, and her work and research has revolutionized some of the cattle industry practices to this day.

So anyways, thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member's time has expired.

There are no other members wish—the honourable Minister of Innovation and New Technology.

**Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology):** Like others in this Chamber, I rise today to put a few words on the record in relation to this important issue, and we all bring with us our own backgrounds.

As I've pointed out in this House before, I have spent a good portion of my adult life working as a teacher in the public school system, bring to the conversation this morning, as well, experience as a father. And, in spite of my youthful looks, I bring the experience of a grandfather to the conversation this morning. I know the member for Portage is surprised to discover that I'm also a grandfather. And those are

all important backgrounds, all important reference points, because it's allowed me to work with members of my community, of my family, who share an autistic diagnosis.

In the case of my family itself, I have a daughter who spent a very challenging childhood undiagnosed with autism, did not discover she had it until she was an adult. And then, in many ways, her whole experience made much more sense, it fell into place and she was able to find some peace with the experience that she'd had as a child.

As a grandfather, I now have a grandchild who is diagnosed with autism and getting the important early interventions that she needs in order to make sure that she's able to lead her best possible life.

And, as a teacher, spending many years in the classroom with many students, some of whom struggled undiagnosed, but many more thriving because they had been provided the supports that they needed in order to be their best selves, and who are now adults thriving in the community, building lives and contributing so very much to the communities in which they live.

Those are all important, and they're all critically important reference points for us as we think about the work ahead of us in relation to the bill that the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) has brought forward today and as we talk about the work being done currently in our government to move the needle on this file.

And I do want to talk a little bit about the work that's currently being done today. Our government clearly knows how important it is to support Manitobans with autism. That's why we've been working closely with educators, health-care providers and community organizations to ensure autism programs—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

If I could just interrupt the honourable minister for a minute.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** There's some guests in the gallery that need to leave right away, so I just want to draw the attention to students seated in the public gallery, 15 students from Johns Hopkins University.

And we welcome you here today.

\* \* \*

**MLA Moroz:** As I say, we're working closely with educators, health-care providers and community organizations to make sure that autism programs are practical, effective and accessible.

Our government is deeply committed to making sure every Manitoban has the opportunity to reach their full potential. And, as my colleagues have pointed out, that's why, this year, we've invested \$21.5 million in autism-specific services for children and their families. The funding supports autism case management, early intervention and outreach programs and family support services that help parents navigate care.

Through our partnership with St. Amant, more children with autism are receiving support much sooner. We've increased funding through Children's disABILITY Services to support wages for tutors in the St. Amant autism early-learning program. Budget 2025 additionally invested \$728,000 in ongoing annual funding to increase wages for staff delivering St. Amant's early-learning program for children. This ensures that staff in the program are treated fairly and recognized for the essential work they do supporting Manitoba families.

Our government continues to work closely with St. Amant to provide autism case management services. And these services help families navigate available supports, develop service plans for their children and to plan important transitions, including the move to adult life.

We're also providing an additional \$900,000 to the Children's disABILITY Services to respond to rising caseloads driven by increased autism diagnosis. This has helped, Honourable Speaker, reduce wait-lists to access those important services.

Additionally, it's important to point out the continued good work that St. Amant does and how critically important they are in this conversation. St. Amant received \$2.6 million for the 2025-26 year to deliver case management services for up to 3,000 children with autism across Manitoba.

Our government is also ensuring that students with autism receive critical support in schools. We're supporting the St. Amant school outreach team to provide expert multidisciplinary mentorship to schools supporting students with profound and complex needs, including autism.

The team works directly with six to seven schools each year to strengthen programming and supports for students. In 2025-26, our government provided

\$526,000 to this initiative, an increase from \$400,000 the previous year.

We're also proud to provide funding for two neurodevelopmental service support teachers and a speech and language pathologist. These professionals provide consultations, recommendations, staff development and training workshops to Manitoba schools for referred students.

In 2025-26, approximately \$255,000 supported this work through the Winnipeg School Division. Our government and St. Amant continue to work together to provide—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

In accordance with rule 25, and as previously announced, I'm interrupting debate to put the question on second reading of Bill 232, The Autism Strategy Act.

So is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

\* \* \*

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Honourable Speaker, I'd like to ask for a recorded vote.

**The Speaker:** Does the honourable member have support of two other members for a recorded—three other members, sorry?

The honourable member does have support.

So then, in accordance with rule 24(7), a division requested during private members' business on a Tuesday must be deferred to 11:55 a.m. on the next Thursday's private members' business, and shall not be further deferred.

\* (11:00)

## RESOLUTIONS

### **Res. 6—Recognizing ANCOP's Contributions in Uplifting Vulnerable Families, Strengthening Communities and Fostering a Culture of Compassion**

**The Speaker:** Therefore, the hour now being 11 o'clock, the time now for private members' resolutions.

And the resolution before us this morning is one brought forward by the honourable member for Tyndall Park, resolution No. 6, Recognizing ANCOP's Contributions in Uplifting Vulnerable Families, Strengthening Communities and Fostering a Culture of Compassion.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I move,

*WHEREAS ANCOP, which stands for "ANswer the Cry Of the Poor", is a Canadian-based, homegrown corporation, duly registered as a not-for-profit organization that operates globally and continues to transform lives through acts of kindness and generosity in Manitoba; and*

*WHEREAS ANCOP is a call to action, not merely a slogan, demonstrated annually by the efforts of thousands of members, volunteers, and supporters to raise funds for the poorest of the poor, helping to provide education, housing, and sustainable programs through its regular annual campaigns with Lenten Journey, ANCOP Walk, and Give Love; and*

*WHEREAS ANCOP supports children's education to unlock potential, strengthens communities, and delivers various forms of humanitarian relief to break the cycle of poverty; and*

*WHEREAS ANCOP operates three main pillar programs that directly support families in need; and*

*WHEREAS the Education Sponsorship Program is a one-to-one, sponsor-to-scholar relationship providing for a total program benefit package that includes education, healthcare, and socio-cultural-spiritual enhancement for both sponsored children and their parents; and*

*WHEREAS the Community Development Program is focused on building modest but durable homes equipped with functioning water, electricity, and drainage; and*

*WHEREAS the Humanitarian Relief Program offers disaster relief through financial aid, material goods, and home repair support; and*

*WHEREAS ANCOP promotes volunteerism, servant leadership, and community engagement by mobilizing families, individuals, youth, professionals, businesses, and both faith-based and community organizations to uphold human dignity and restore hope to the underprivileged; and*

*WHEREAS ANCOP's initiatives not only meet immediate material needs but also empower individuals and families toward long-term self-sufficiency through values formation, education, and consistent community support; and*

*WHEREAS ANCOP, as a social ministry of Couples for Christ, collaborates with the Vickar Automotive Group, and other partners in Manitoba, to expand its reach and deepen its impact on families in need.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recognize and commend ANCOP International Canada Inc. and the—ANCOP Winnipeg, along with its leaders, members, volunteers and supporters, for their dedication to uplifting vulnerable families, strengthening communities and fostering compassion through education, housing and humanitarian programs.

**The Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux),

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recognize and commend ANCOP International Canada Inc. and ANCOP Winnipeg, along with its leaders, members, volunteers and supporters, for their dedication in uplifting vulnerable families, strengthening communities and fostering compassion through education, housing and humanitarian programs.

**MLA Lamoureux:** Today I am honoured to rise and bring forward a resolution recognizing ANCOP's contributions in uplifting vulnerable families, strengthening communities and fostering a culture of compassion.

Before I jump in, allow for me to thank the ANCOP folks who have joined us in the gallery and members of the Vickar Automotive Group for being here today.

Over the years, I've had the opportunity, as I know many of my colleagues have, too, to meet with a lot of non-profit groups that do incredible work, not only in our community but well beyond. ANCOP specifically is a group that I have met with and learned from over the years, even prior to entering politics.

The advocacy work that they have been doing is what really inspired me to bring forward today's resolution.

ANCOP is an acronym, stands for Answering the Cry of the Poor, and it is a Canadian-based, non-profit organization that operates globally and continues to transform lives through acts of kindness and generosity in Manitoba.

The organization demonstrates their strength in many ways. For example, every year, thousands of people, directly or indirectly, raise funds for the poorest of the poor through regular campaigns such as the ANCOP Walk and Give Love.

I've been attending the ANCOP Walk for many years now, and I can attest to the work going into it and the fun being had along the way. Every year, at Assiniboine Park, hundreds of people come together for not just a walk but for Zumba, games, food and community.

A very special component to the ANCOP Walk and many Filipino events here in Manitoba is the jeepney. Larry and Tova Vickar are giant supporters of ANCOP. They have, over the years, consistently gone above and beyond, whether it be here in Manitoba or even in the Philippines. I share this as the jeepney has become such a staple at ANCOP events, and this is, in large, due to the Vickar family.

To give you an idea of the incredible work ANCOP is doing, just last year, the 2025 ANCOP Walk raised over \$185,000. It is such a testament to their organization and a reflection of Winnipeg's unwavering generosity and deep commitment to answering the cry of the poor.

And, Honourable Speaker, all of these funds that are raised through these annual events specifically go towards supporting children's education, strengthening communities and delivering various forms of humanitarian relief to break cycles of poverty.

Honourable Speaker, there are three main pillar programs that support families that I would like to speak a bit about. The first is the education sponsorship program. This is a one-to-one sponsor-to-scholar relationship, providing for a total program benefit package that includes education, health care and socio-cultural, spiritual enhancement for both sponsored children and their parents. It has and continues to change the lives of students and provides opportunities that they otherwise would never have had.

Interestingly, the 2025 ANCOP Walk, in addition to raising over \$185,000, also saw 45 sponsors from out of Winnipeg.

The second pillar is the Community Development Program. This pillar is focused on building modest but durable homes equipped with functioning water, electricity and drainage. Honourable Speaker, I've been very fortunate in my travels in being able to go to the Philippines on a handful of occasions. This has allowed me first-hand experience in witnessing how ANCOP here in Winnipeg has changed the lives of so many in the Philippines. I really appreciate and I'm so grateful that I was able to visit an ANCOP village. The third pillar is the Humanitarian Relief Program that offers disaster relief through financial aid, material goods and home repair support.

Honourable Speaker, ANCOP is all about promoting volunteerism, servant leadership and community engagement by mobilizing families, individuals, youth, professionals, businesses and both faith-based and community organizations to uphold human dignity and restore hope to the underprivileged. Their initiatives not only meet immediate material needs, but also empower individuals and families toward long-term self-sufficiency through value formation, education and consistent community support.

Through attending events over the years and learning more about ANCOP in the creation of this resolution, it was evident that members are focused on permanent solutions for those struggling, and they are willing to put in the commitment to make this happen.

The members of ANCOP who I've had the pleasure of getting to know over the years, here in Manitoba as well as in the Philippines, have the biggest hearts and true motivation to make the world a better place. That is why I bring forward this resolution that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recognize and commend ANCOP International Canada Inc. and ANCOP Winnipeg, along with its leaders, members, volunteers and supporters, for their dedication to uplifting vulnerable families, strengthening communities and fostering compassion through education, housing and humanitarian programs.

Honourable Speaker, in closing, let me once again thank those who have joined us here today as well as my Kuya Edwin for going back and forth with me so much when speaking about the resolution. Lastly, I would like to invite all my MLA colleagues to join

us for a group photo following the passage of the resolution at 12 in the Rotunda.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** I want to thank my colleague from Tyndall Park for bringing forward this resolution this morning, this really good resolution.

I was wondering if the member could share what inspired her to bring this forward and recognizing ANCOP's work?

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'd like to thank my colleague from McPhillips for the very good question.

There are a few factors that inspired me to bring forward this resolution. Over the years, I've been able to attend many ANCOP events, and it is something that I've grown quite familiar with, the members of the community, both directly and indirectly. And so when presented the opportunity to bring forward a resolution and wanting to recognize a group that I've gotten to know on a more personal level, I figured a resolution on ANCOP would be a good one.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I want to thank the member from Tyndall Park for bringing this resolution forward here this morning.

I just want to ask the member, what is the intent and sort of desired outcome from introducing and recognizing ANCOP International Canada here today?

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank my colleague from Agassiz for her question.

The intent behind bringing forward ANCOP as a resolution is several: (1) to better build awareness of ANCOP International as well as ANCOP Winnipeg, for the work that they're doing both directly and indirectly in answering the cry of the poor throughout the world, here in Manitoba, through sponsorship programs and fundraising.

\* (11:10)

**MLA Devgan:** Maybe for those who are unfamiliar with ANCOP's work, maybe if the member could share a little bit more about how organizations like ANCOP work with local communities here in Manitoba and support families in need.

**MLA Lamoureux:** That's a very good question.

There are hundreds, if not thousands of members right here in Manitoba who are part of ANCOP. And many of the ways that they work directly with people here in Manitoba are through education programs, through humanitarian relief, through housing needs, many different non-for-profit approaches.

**Ms. Byram:** Can the member from Tyndall Park tell us here how ANCOP's work in building sustainable communities aligns with the values that we promote here in our province of Manitoba?

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank my colleague from Agassiz for the question.

Manitobans and Winnipeggers—we are known for our generosity. We spoke about that earlier, just in the opening remarks here, about how much money—\$184,000 that was raised at the 2025 ANCOP Walk.

We have similar values, where we want to see people in the world do well, and that is what ANCOP is really bringing forward and they're really putting their actions into practice.

**MLA Devgan:** The member highlighted some of the importance of educational support. So maybe if the member could speak to how programs like the food school nutrition program and ANCOP's Educational Sponsorship Program help create long-term opportunities for children and youth living in poverty.

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank my colleague for—from McPhillips for the question.

I think that there are many ways that children and students here in Manitoba could do better in school, and one of those ways are through sponsorship programs, one of those ways are through meal nutrition programs and ensuring that when they are in school they have the resources they need to best succeed.

**Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods):** How can we as leaders and community partners strengthen collaboration with ANCOP to expand its reach and effectiveness?

**MLA Lamoureux:** That's a great question from the MLA for Spruce Woods.

One of the ways that we could further this relationship with ANCOP and ensure that more Manitobans and people throughout the world are affected in a positive way from the efforts of ANCOP is by building that awareness. It's by supporting resolutions such as the one put before us today. It's by coming out and participating at their annual events, by choosing to donate. There are lots of ways that we could better support.

**The Speaker:** Honourable member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux)—or, the honourable member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan).

**MLA Devgan:** So we know organizations like ANCOP help fill important gaps for vulnerable families.

Could the member reflect on how strong government supports—especially after the previous government's deep, deep cuts—have affected funding in key social areas? How can government supports complement the work of community organizations like ANCOP?

**MLA Lamoureux:** Honourable Speaker, one of the ways that any level of government, any party that is in government, can support is by allowing legislation and resolutions to pass through, to move forward to committee stages.

But I do want to be very, very intentional here in saying that this resolution is non-partisan. I don't want to have to bash former governments to see it move forward. My hope is that all MLAs will see the importance of the resolution and pass it unanimously.

**Mrs. Robbins:** As we support this resolution, how do we ensure that the impact of ANCOP work is not only immediate but sustainable for generations to come?

**MLA Lamoureux:** ANCOP has been working here in Manitoba since 2002—here in Canada throughout since 2002. So I believe that they have a very strong foundation already, but things that we could do to better support and further their initiatives is by being there beside them. It's by having these conversations, building the awareness, attending their events, supporting them indirectly and directly.

**MLA Devgan:** The member for Tyndall Park touched on this a little bit briefly, but I'm hoping they can expand. The resolution references ANCOP's partnership with organizations such as Couples for Christ and Vickar Automotive Group.

Could the member speak to how partnerships like these help expand the reach of ANCOP's work?

**MLA Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank my colleague for McPhillips for the very good question.

It's incredibly important to build up partnerships with different organizations, and I did speak briefly to how ANCOP has partnered up with Couples for Christ and Vickar Automotive Group. And the reason this is so important is because the more partnerships you form, the more awareness that is built.

So by creating these relationships, in our case, more Manitobans are learning more and more about the incredible work that ANCOP is doing.

**The Speaker:** No further questions?

### Debate

**The Speaker:** Then the floor is open for debate.

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I want to begin by thanking the member from Tyndall Park for bringing this resolution forward, because whenever we celebrate the good work that's happening in community, we lift up the people around us, and not only the people who are most in need, but those who have the privilege and opportunity to be able to assist.

You've heard our government say many times that we are a listening government but also that we can't do the big things alone. And so when we look at organizations like ANCOP, we really do see them as a partner in helping to bring some of the biggest challenges in our society to the good side.

Honourable Speaker, I want to speak for a moment about the foundation of who we are as New Democrats, because I think some people in the House maybe don't know, maybe some Manitobans don't know that the foundation of the CCF and the New Democratic Party were actually in social gospel, and it was an attempt to bring the good work of community into the broader society. So really looking at what is our hope on this planet, how do we take care of one another, how are we good neighbours.

And I know that many, many people find the guidance and the wisdom of those kinds of conversations through their faiths. So, in this case, the affiliation with Couples for Christ, there's clearly a spiritual, religious connection here that is the root of the motivation for a lot of the good work that's happening here. And I just—I want to lift up the group of folks who are working so hard to ensure that this organization is successful and that the good work is—reaches as many people as possible.

*Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to speak another moment about community and what that means in a province like ours. I appreciate very much that we have folks from ANCOP who are here to receive the recognition that they are getting today in the House. I want to take a moment to lift up some other fantastic organizations in our city and in our province who are also doing the good work of helping people in deep poverty, continuing to build access towards education and lifting up community members.

So one of the places that I've—I think about because we had the privilege of celebrating with them on the weekend is the Sons and Daughters of Italy and their deep commitment to community and their motivation to help support folks in our communities.

And just this past weekend, there was a phenomenal gala and fundraising event for the Reh-Fit Centre, which will serve many, many Manitobans in their cardiac rehabilitation, physical rehabilitation after surgery; and it would not be possible without the phenomenal donations of the Albrechtsen family, followed up by the continued support from the Sons and Daughters of Italy. And so I want to take a moment while we're talking about charity and community support to lift up that organization.

\* (11:20)

And also, just down the street from us, we have a wonderful place called the house of peace. And if you're not familiar with house of peace, they take in refugee women, folks who are fleeing often domestic violence situations, providing them with a stable housing, with stable nutrition and access to education. And honourable Deputy Speaker, that's happening just up the street from us. Again, thanks to the tremendous work of volunteers in our communities and working together to do fantastic fundraising in community to lift up many, many women.

The Dream Factory, honourable Speaker, is another fantastic organization that is serving families and children who have chronic illness or in—are in deep, deep health crisis. And it is a place where families can go as a bit of a reprieve from just being in the hospital, where they will be able to access food, a quiet deep breath alone, to give their children some sense of 'normalacy' in what is undoubtedly a very, very difficult time.

And honourable Deputy Speaker, it's organizations like the one being honoured today, ANCOP and places like Dream Factory and house of peace, that are part of the fabric of all of what's good about Manitoba. And I want to take a moment to lift up the local volunteers and organizers of ANCOP for, even in very difficult times, keeping that charitable piece moving.

And we know that there's been so much heartache and turmoil in the Philippines, natural disasters, geopolitical unrest; and for organizations to continue to feel that motivation and to be able to connect to people who really need support is tremendous. And I want to lift up all of the people who feel compelled every day to go out and make a difference in the world.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, folks who have the privilege of sitting in this House have a responsibility to all Manitobans and I would further extend that to all Canadians and all humans. And so I know that folks on this side of the House and my neighbours on the opposite side all feel that deep compassion and need to help others.

And it is a real privilege to be in a space where we get to approach each and every day with a human lens—a human-focused lens—and to focus on what the most vulnerable in our society require. And there's a saying that you often hear that how you can gauge a group or an individual is how they treat the most vulnerable in society.

And I think about people who are in financial need, who are being persecuted for social, religious, any attribute of their humanity and think that we need to be on the good side of that. And I am proud to be part of a government that will—that has and will continue to protect the freedoms of each and every human in Manitoba to be their full selves, to protect them regardless of place of origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression—that we will continue to protect and uplift every Manitoban, not only because it's the law, honourable Deputy Speaker, but it is the moral, right and just thing to do.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to table a document, just to make the House aware, of the ongoing contributions from the Manitoba government to ANCOP. As was noted before, they are a reputable, long-standing charity. And here is a letter from Napoleon Llanos, who is the president of ANCOP International Canada, to thank the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) for a generous donation of \$50,000 on behalf of the minister of sport, culture and heritage.

And, honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to make the House aware of that contribution to reinforce the notion that we value the work that ANCOP does as a government. We enjoy being a partner to some of the work that is being done and we will continue to uplift and support those in society with the highest need.

In the work that I have the privilege of doing as the Minister of Advanced Education and Training, a good portion of my time is spent looking at different ways that we can encourage access to post-secondary, and specifically for folks who are in lower socio-economic backgrounds who have historically been left out of conversations, and looking at ways how we can support and uplift some of the most vulnerable in our society.

And so I'm grateful because some days, deputy—honourable Deputy Speaker, the load feels pretty heavy. I am grateful to have and know other partners in society that are here to help with that heavy lifting; and, again, we can't do the big things alone. We must do them together.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** Again, I want to say thank you to the member from Tyndall Park for bringing this resolution forward to the Chamber today. It's an opportunity to recognize the incredible work of ANCOP International Canada and to recognize the meaningful impact that this organization continues to have on vulnerable children, families—and both here right at home in our province of Manitoba but, yet again, across the world.

ANCOP International Canada is a registered charity dedicated to restoring the dignity and as well as uplifting lives. Through its effort, it helps build sustainable, self-reliant communities by focusing on livelihood, support, values, formation and community empowerment. Organizations like ANCOP demonstrate the work of regular people working together to create and make significant change. The work of ANCOP can transform individual lives as well as uplift the communities we live in.

One of the cornerstones of ANCOP's work is the education sponsorship program. This initiative provides children with access to education, giving them an opportunity to gain knowledge, but also providing them with hope and, again, opportunity. Leading us to when we invest in young people, we're investing in stronger communities for generations to come. We all know that education empowers children

to break cycles of poverty and to build futures much brighter for themselves and their families.

In addition to that, ANCOP's Community Development Program addresses one of the most fundamental needs—that is safe and stable housing. By helping provide modest homes that is equipped with essential infrastructure like clean water, electricity and proper drainage, ANCOP significantly improves the quality of life. And as we know, these aren't just houses, but they are foundations—foundations providing dignity, stability and opportunity to build from for a successful future.

Through its Humanitarian Relief program, ANCOP also steps forward in times of crisis, delivering critical support during disasters and emergencies. Whether it's responding to natural disasters or these humanitarian needs, the organization ensures that help reaches those who need it most when they need it most.

It's important that we all take the time to recognize all organizations and the many volunteers who work behind the scenes to make things happen. Quite often they are the driving force spending time on initiatives that matter to them. And it's through these volunteer efforts throughout Manitoba communities that remind us of the very best of what it means to serve.

Manitobans are known across the country for our friendliness, but more importantly for our compassion. Time and again we live up to that reputation by stepping in to support our neighbours in times of needs. And Manitoba proudly carries the name Friendly Manitoba, and it is truly a reflection of the generosity and care that define us here in our province and our communities.

As the PCs on this side of the House, we've always believed in the power of community and compassion. We continue to support those in need, and it's not just good policy, but it is a reflection of the values that guide us here in Manitoba.

\* (11:30)

We believe in supporting these organizations that lift people up, empower families and strengthen our communities.

Recognizing ANCOP today is about more than acknowledging one organization; it's about celebrating the spirit of volunteerism, leadership and partnership that drives meaningful change. It's about

highlighting what can be achieved when people come together and share purpose.

I encourage all members of this House to support the recognition of ANCOP International Canada and celebrate the incredible work of its volunteers and its partners.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations):** Honourable Deputy Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in this House and speak about ANCOP.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, community organizations like ANCOP International Canada remind us that, when families face hardship, compassion and community support matter deeply. This organization's work—supporting children's education, building homes for families in need and providing humanitarian relief—demonstrates how collective action and generosity can help restore hope and opportunity for vulnerable communities.

#### *French spoken*

Les organismes communautaires comme ANCOP International Canada nous rappellent que, lorsque les familles traversent des moments difficiles, la compassion et le soutien communautaire sont essentiels. Le travail d'ANCOP, notamment dans l'éducation des enfants, la construction des logements pour les familles dans le besoin d'aide humanitaire, démontre comment l'action collective et la générosité peuvent redonner l'espoir et offrir de nouvelles possibilités aux communautés vulnérables.

#### *Translation*

*Community organizations like ANCOP International Canada remind us that, when families are going through difficult times, compassion and community support are essential. ANCOP's work, particularly in children's education and the construction of housing for families in need of humanitarian aid, shows how collective action and generosity can restore hope and offer new opportunities to vulnerable communities.*

#### *English*

Efforts, like taking meaningful action to reduce grocery costs for families, is some of the values that we see in organizations like ANCOP, where communities work together to ensure that no family is left without the basic necessities of life.

**French spoken**

Nous avons également gelé le prix des différents produits, et ces efforts reflètent les mêmes valeurs que celles défendues par ANCOP, où les communautés travaillent ensemble pour que les personnes ne doit – ne se soient privées des besoins essentiels.

**Translation**

*We have also frozen the prices of various products, and these efforts reflect the same values championed by ANCOP, where communities work together to ensure that people are not deprived of basic necessities.*

**English**

We also have shared values that resonate strongly. ANCOP's commitment to supporting children's education and development is at the forefront of their purpose.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we are proud as a government to maintain an expanding true \$10-a-day child care, including coverage for non-school days so families can rely on affordable care year-round.

This program saves Manitoba families an average of more than \$2,800 every year. This tenant of affordable child care and education goes into ANCOP's reason. They work to make sure that no child is left behind. The poorest of the poor have access to the education that the richest of the rich do.

**French spoken**

Nous sommes également fiers de maintenir et élargir le programme de garderie à 10 \$ par jour, y compris pendant les journées où il n'y a pas d'école, afin que les familles puissent compter sur les services de garde abordables toute l'année.

**Translation**

*We are also proud to maintain and expand the \$10-a-day child-care program, including on non-school days, so that families can rely on affordable child care all year round.*

**English**

Organizations like ANCOP often step forward to help vulnerable families rebuild stability and hope. Our government's changes to programs like Rent Assist and increasing the portion of income that low-income households were required to spend on rent, effectively reducing the support available to many Manitobans—this is what happened before.

In many ways, we are working to restore these supports, make sure that people have what they need.

**French spoken**

Dans le domaine du logement, dans le projet – dans le gouvernement conservatrice, certaines unités de logement sociales ont été vendues ou transférées sous le précédent gouvernement.

**Translation**

*Regarding housing, as part of the project—under the Conservative government, some social housing units were sold or transferred during the previous administration.*

**English**

I don't think ANCOP would have agreed with that strategy. In many ways, our approach mirrors the philosophy of organizations like ANCOP, which also focus on supporting children and families so that young people can reach their full potential.

Our universal school nutrition program reflects a simple but powerful belief: no child should try to learn on an empty stomach.

**French spoken**

Notre programme universel de nutrition scolaire 'lefrète' une conviction simple, mais essentielle : aucun enfant ne devrait apprendre le ventre vide. Cette approche rejoint également la philosophie d'organisations comme ANCOP, qui soutiennent les enfants et les familles afin que les jeunes puissent réaliser leur plein potentiel.

**Translation**

*Our comprehensive school nutrition program reflects a simple yet fundamental belief: no child should have to learn on an empty stomach. This approach is also in line with the philosophy of organizations like ANCOP, which support children and families so that young people can reach their full potential.*

**English**

Honourable Deputy Speaker, our government also recognizes that poverty is a complex and—is complex and requires coordinated solutions. That's why we have launched a co-ordinated and renewed poverty reduction strategy that focuses on supporting families at key stages of life: from early childhood, to youth transitioning from care, to seniors facing new challenges. Just as community organizations, ANCOP work every day to help families build

stronger and more helpful futures, we will be there to do the same with them.

### **French spoken**

Notre stratégie vise à bâtir un Manitoba où chacun a la possibilité de réussir, où les occasions sont partagées équitablement, tout comme le travail quotidien d'organisations comme ANCOP, qui soutiennent les familles et redonnent l'espoir aux communautés.

### **Translation**

*Our strategy aims to build a Manitoba where everyone has the chance to succeed, where opportunities are shared fairly—just like the daily work of organizations such as ANCOP, which support families and restore hope to communities.*

### **English**

Honourable Deputy Speaker, organizations like ANCOP International Canada remind us that compassion and service remain at the heart of strong communities. Their volunteers, partners and supporters demonstrate that when people work together, meaningful change is possible. Our government shares that spirit by lowering costs, strengthening public services and investing in families. We are working to build a province where opportunity is real and where no one is left behind.

### **French spoken**

Les organismes communautaires comme ANCOP nous rappellent que la compassion et le service demeurent au cœur de communautés fortes. En réduisant le coût de la vie, en renforçant les services publics et en investissant dans les familles, notre gouvernement travaille à bâtir un Manitoba plus juste et plus prospère pour tous.

### **Translation**

*Community organizations like ANCOP remind us that compassion and service remain at the heart of strong communities. By lowering the cost of living, strengthening public services, and investing in families, our government is working to build a fairer and more prosperous Manitoba for everyone.*

### **English**

Honourable Deputy Speaker, affordability is more than just numbers in a budget. It's about everyday realities of families, whether here or abroad, who want to build a good life here at home.

I celebrate ANCOP and their efforts to bring the Manitoba spirit across the ocean.

Merci.

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** I'd like to thank the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) for bringing forward this resolution.

As a proud Filipina-Canadian who was raised in a Catholic household, I am incredibly moved by the work that ANCOP does in our community. I'm grateful to the labour of the guests in the gallery today. Understanding the roots of ANCOP is something that I am very grateful for the opportunity to share with the House today.

So ANCOP, Answering the Cry of the Poor, of course, was founded out of Couples for Christ. ANCOP Winnipeg, as a local—so to speak, a local or a branch—is the strongest of any other ANCOP branch across the world, I would say. ANCOP Winnipeg brings together thousands of people across—throughout the year, but namely for their largest event that happens in August, which is the walk that happens at Assiniboine Park.

I am so proud that our government has partnered with this organization in a way that really speaks volumes to our values as Manitobans. ANCOP, of course, uplifts educational opportunities and humanitarian aid across the world. And if there's anything that is quintessentially Manitoban about the Filipino community and ANCOP, it's the fact that we help out our neighbours and that we understand the need to give back after we've been so privileged to live the lives that we have here in Winnipeg, in Manitoba, in Canada.

And so, honourable Deputy Speaker, I wanted to read into the record a vision that ANCOP has, and that is to quote, unquote help a poor child and family by making sure that that poor channel—child and family is blessed and by blessing to transform communities at the same time.

\* (11:40)

This government understands that we do not exist in a vacuum, honourable Deputy Speaker. We are influenced by many factors, including things that transcend borders. And so, as such, we have this key role to be a beacon of hope in this country, in this world and really show our humanity when it comes to natural disasters and acute situations that require our support.

And it's no coincidence that Manitoba is one of the most giving provinces—if not the most giving province—and it's also no coincidence that ANCOP is the strongest here in Manitoba.

And so I uplift the work that our kababayans [*compatriots*] are doing and that our fellow ANCOP, Couples for Christ community members are doing for our community and I am so proud that our government this past winter announced \$50,000 to support their work, honourable Deputy Speaker.

And so, giving us all the opportunity in this Chamber to vote in favour and support this resolution strongly, I will make sure that I rest my case and give us all the chance to come together as a Chamber and make sure that ANCOP gets the recognition that they so rightfully deserve.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Seeing no—are there any other speakers?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Seeing no further speakers, is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** Can I speak on the resolution?

**The Deputy Speaker:** So we're in the midst of putting the question, so the opportunity to speak has passed. So I would ask, is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? [*Agreed*]

The motion is accordingly passed.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Is there a will of the House to recognize the clock as noon?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to recognize the clock as noon? [*Agreed*]

The time being 12 p.m., the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. today.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, March 17, 2026**

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