

Fifth Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Gimli	—
<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 2, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. 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.

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 12—The Advisory Council on Workforce Development Amendment Act

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 12, The Advisory Council on Workforce Development Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil consultatif du développement de la main-d'oeuvre, now be read for the first time.

This bill is intended to—

An Honourable Member: Not yet.

Mr. Chief: —be now read a first time.

An Honourable Member: Read the whole thing.

Mr. Chief: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 12, The Advisory Council on Workforce Development Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil consultatif du développement de la main-d'oeuvre, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chief: The bill is intended to expand the role of the advisory council to better support their ability to provide information and advice on the programs, policies and strategies needed to develop Manitoba's workforce.

The bill also changes the process for appointing members, create term limits and broadens the

appointment criteria to ensure the council reflects the diversity of our provincial workforce.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Bill 13—The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework)

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that Bill 13, The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislative Assembly for first reading Bill 13, the First Nations, Metis and Inuit education policy framework act. This policy framework sets out the vision and key activities to support the educational success of First Nations, Metis and Inuit students and to teach Aboriginal perspectives in Manitoba schools.

This bill is inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action and builds on the efforts already under way to both learn and teach the histories, values, knowledge and culture of Manitoba's indigenous peoples.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for all our students to know the history of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people in Manitoba, and I'm humbled to table it today.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Any further introduction of bills?

Bill 14—The Communities Economic Development Fund Amendment Act

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Yes, I move, seconded by the Minister for Jobs and the Economy, that Bill 14,

The Communities Economic Development Fund Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to expand the role of the Communities Economic Development Fund to allow it to provide loans to indigenous entrepreneurs in Winnipeg and to partner on projects in Winnipeg with the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund and the Metis Economic Development Fund, amongst other projects in Winnipeg.

It's currently headquartered, as you know, in Thompson, with offices in Swan River, The Pas, Gimli and Winnipeg.

CEDF businesses and fisher clients have generated over 400—or \$840 million in business revenue and \$268 million in fishing revenue since 1999. Business clients have paid over \$213 million in wages during this time period.

We believe that it is time to move forward.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Further introduction of bills?

Bill 15—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Recognition of Customary Care of Indigenous Children)

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that Bill 15, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Recognition of Customary Care of Indigenous Children); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille (reconnaissance des soins conformes aux traditions pour les enfants autochtones), be read now for the first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, it's a historic day here in Manitoba. This bill introduces amendments to The Child and Family Services Act to provide for an additional care option for CFS-involved indigenous children and families called customary care.

Customary care is premised on indigenous beliefs that caring for the child is a community responsibility. Through customary-care agreements, CFS-involved indigenous children can keep cultural ties with their identified community. The bill includes a spectrum of customary-care services,

incorporating traditional values and—traditional family and cultural values.

The goal is customary care is to invite all parties—indigenous communities, indigenous families and CFS agencies—to come together to design customary-care approaches and engage in a journey towards healing.

* (13:40)

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

And while I'm on my feet, I want to remind our guests, not only welcoming them to the Manitoba Legislature, but they're not to participate in any of the activities of the Chamber, and that includes applause, so I'm asking for your co-operation in that regard.

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs
First Report**

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building

- *August 17, 2015 (4th Session – 40th Legislature)*
- *October 6, 2015 (4th Session – 40th Legislature)*
- *November 25, 2015 (5th Session – 40th Legislature)*

Matters under Consideration

- *Recommendation for the appointment of the Conflict of interest Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator*

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the August 17, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. EICHLER
- Mr. GAUDREAU
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Ms. HOWARD
- Hon. Mr. KOSTYSHYN
- Mr. MARCELINO (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. SMOOK
- Mr. WIEBE

Committee Membership for the October 6, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Mr. BRIESE
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Mr. HELWER
- Hon. Mr. MACKINTOSH
- Mr. MARCELINO (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WIEBE

Committee Membership for the November 25, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. CULLEN
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Mr. MARCELINO (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mrs. STEFANSON
- Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WIEBE

Motions agreed to at the October 6, 2015 Standing Committee meeting:

- THAT a sub-committee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs be struck to manage the process of hiring a new Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator for the Province of Manitoba, under the terms and conditions as follows:

(a) the subcommittee consist of four government members, two official opposition members and one independent member;

(b) the subcommittee have the authority to call their own meetings, the ability to meet in camera, and be able to undertake duties it deems necessary in order to fulfil its responsibilities in the hiring process;

(c) the subcommittee may only report back to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs with a recommendation that has been agreed to by all members; and

(d) the Committees Branch staff as well as the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services staff be authorize to attend all meetings of the subcommittee.

Motions agreed to at the November 25, 2015 Standing Committee meeting:

- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs now meet in camera.
- THAT the report and recommendations of the Sub-Committee be received. (in camera)
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Jeffrey Schnoor be appointed as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator. (in camera)

Sub-Committee Report

At the November 25, 2015 meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, the Sub-Committee presented its report.

Meetings:

Your Sub-Committee met on the following occasions:

- October 6, 2015 at 2:38 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building
- November 6, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building
- November 19, 2015 at 9:45 a.m. in room 302-386 Broadway

Matters under Consideration:

- Recruitment and Selection of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator

Sub-Committee Membership:

Sub-Committee Membership for the October 6, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. CULLEN
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WIEBE

Your Sub-Committee elected Ms. ALLAN as the Chairperson and Mr. WIEBE as the Vice-Chairperson during the meeting on October 6, 2015.

Sub-Committee Membership for the November 6, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. CULLEN
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chairperson)

Sub-Committee Membership for the November 19, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. CULLEN
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chairperson)

Staff present for Sub-Committee meetings:

- Judy Wegner, Executive Director, Legislative Assembly Administration and Finance
- Deanna Wilson, Director, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services
- Monique Grenier, Clerk Assistant/Committee Clerk
- Andrea Signorelli, Clerk Assistant/Committee Clerk

Agreements:

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreement during the meeting on November 19, 2015:

- It was agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that Jeffrey

Schnoor be appointed as Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator

Sub-Committee Activities:

Your Sub-Committee considered applications for the positions of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator as follows:

- Fifty-two applications were received for the position.
- One individual was interviewed for the position on November 19, 2015.

Mr. Marcelino: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Any further committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to tabling reports.

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the following report from the Department of Healthy Living and Seniors: The Caregiver Recognition Act Report for 2013-2015, and inventory of resources for caregivers.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none, ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Craig McIntosh and Lorraine Beck**

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Today, it is my privilege to honour my good friends and constituents Craig McIntosh and his wife Lorraine Beck, along with their children Kaitlyn and Thomas, who were recently featured in the fall issue of Working Together, published by The Winnipeg Foundation.

Craig is a successful Winnipeg businessman and the owner of Acrylon Plastics. He and Lorraine are some of the most humble and honest people that I've ever met.

Over the last 10 years their incredible generosity and support has seen over \$500,000 given back to our community. Their focus has been mainly education and helping young people by providing support that will make a tangible difference in their lives.

One of Craig's sayings is, and I quote, if you're going to give money, make sure it has a meaningful purpose. Unquote.

Craig and Lorraine provide supplemental bursaries to allow students to attend Balmoral Hall School who otherwise wouldn't have the means. They provide scholarships to help Virden, Manitoba, students face the challenges of entering post-secondary education.

Craig and Lorraine also support students at the University of Winnipeg's Collegiate Model School through their 50-student program.

In 2013, with the help of The Winnipeg Foundation, Craig and Lorraine created the Craig McIntosh and Lorraine Beck Fund. Their generosity is now permanently endowed to address future needs as well as immediate granting. Along with education, Craig and Lorraine's fund supports causes close to their hearts such as the Manitoba Opera.

To Craig and Lorraine, thank you for everything you have given to those in need. Thank you for strengthening our community. Thank you for your generosity. You truly make a difference in people's lives.

Floyd Wiebe

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have just lost a larger-than-life victim advocate and hero in Floyd Wiebe.

Karen and Floyd became pillars of strength in the face of disbelief and grief when their son TJ was murdered in 2003 at the age of 20. That tragedy could have been disabling, Mr. Speaker, but the strength of character of Floyd and Karen and their resolve was extraordinary. It really is a true testament to the power of the human spirit that must inspire us all.

I was honoured to get to know Karen and Floyd after TJ's death. I was compelled by their passion, Mr. Speaker, their insights into victimization and the scourge of meth. But I was compelled more so how a couple could turn despair into such strong action for others.

They spoke of their vision for drug awareness for youth in Manitoba, and at that time I said, well, good luck, you know, it's—that'll be a long haul, that'll be tough job. But today we look at TJ's Gift Foundation, Mr. Speaker, and the tens of thousands of dollars that it has raised. It really is an

extraordinary, extraordinary achievement and triumph for all Manitobans, particularly youth.

Floyd worked very hard for greater victim rights in Manitoba, for gang awareness and, most recently, for restorative justice. I think I can say that Floyd in every way was a big presence, and, in fact, when he was here just a few weeks ago, I joked with him. Floyd said to me one day, well, this is the second time I've seen you today, and I said, well, where was the first time? He said, well, when you gave that speech, and I thought, how could I have missed Floyd Wiebe in a crowd? And we laughed about that, Mr. Speaker, just a short while ago.

But Mr. Speaker, I have a great memory as well on snowmobiles looking for TJ's Way; it's a snowmobile trail that they established in Nopiming Park.

But on behalf of all members of this House, I'm sure all will want to join in condolences to the family, and we wish Karen and all the family all the strength, Mr. Speaker, as they deal once again with horrid tragedy.

Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize on the sad passing of Floyd Wiebe, a Winnipeg activist who helped at-risk youth avoid illegal drugs and gangs.

I wish to express our sincerest condolences to his family, especially his wife of 40 years, Karen, and his remaining children, Stacey and Chad. I know his work will leave a deep and lasting impact on our community. I know many of us in this Chamber today have also had the opportunity to work with Floyd and knew the good work that he did.

Floyd became a leader and started working with at-risk youths and their families, raising awareness of drugs and gangs, advocating for victims' rights, after his son TJ was tragically murdered in 2003. Twenty-year-old TJ had been involved in Winnipeg's illegal drug trade, which Floyd blamed for luring TJ to a violent end.

In the years following TJ's death, Floyd and Karen created TJ's Gift Foundation to provide financial assistance to students taking part in programs that promote peer-led drug abuse education. Floyd channelled the energy and emotion from the loss of his son into something positive that benefited the entire community. For that we should be grateful.

The Wiebes raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for community organizations and programs to help keep youth away from drugs and gangs. Floyd also spoke at schools about drug awareness and gave his youth—gave youth his cellphone number so he could answer their questions via text. Floyd said through these text conversations, he stopped some people from trying drugs and answered as many as 8,000 texts a month.

Floyd's mentorship focused on youth to avoiding or exiting gang life, championing outreach programs rather than incarceration; at-risk youth could consider alternatives to easy money and deadly crime. He called for government funding for anti-crime strategies, saying there's not enough resources for young people who end up in trouble.

His work was both local and with Manitoba Organization for Victim Assistance, the provincial justice system and, as well, extended throughout Canada with him having input into many processes, such as the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. He was the first chairperson for the Victim Advisory Council to the Parole Board of Canada, prairie division, where he was successful with endeavours to support victims of homicide. He served as the vice-president of The Compassionate Friends, Canada, for many years. He received the Queen's Jubilee award for his support of the victims and his work to help kids avoid drug involvement.

Floyd was very much looking forward to the birth of his first grandchild in just a week and to his second in April, but, sadly, Floyd left us all much, much too early.

Mr. Speaker, I ask leave for a moment's silence in the memory of Floyd Wiebe.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to observe a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please, members will rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

* (13:50)

Synonym Art Consultation

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to highlight a pair of young people who are helping to make Winnipeg a national centre for artistic expression. Andrew Eastman and Chloe Chafe of Synonym Art Consultation started organizing art shows in my constituency about three years ago.

Beginning by creating—curating the work of local artists for restaurants like Deseo and the former Bistro 7 1/4, they have since expanded their services for some of Winnipeg's most popular shops, restaurants and bars. Their consultation efforts transform each business into a trendy spot for young people, while welcoming an emerging artist into the fold. Aside from curating shows, Synonym organizes events to celebrate Winnipeg's vibrant art scene. Another aspect of their work is an artist-in-residence program at The Tallest Poppy restaurant, which sees elements of each artist's legacy on permanent display.

For the last two years, Synonym has been organizing the Wall-to-Wall Mural and Culture Festival. Chloe and Andrew partner with businesses that provide space for an artist to create a mural. The mural is then launched with an event which includes entertainment, participation and art. With this project, Andrew and Chloe try to take art out of the warehouse and into the public environment. These murals translate the complex Winnipeg identity onto the walls of our city and in turn shape and define that identity.

I've known Chloe and Andrew since they were children and have watched them grow into exceptional community leaders. Their off-grid artistic entrepreneurial adventures are exactly what National Geographic magazine has recently endorsed about Winnipeg. Their work has helped to reinvigorate our young people's pride in our city.

Now, the two say that they don't just plop murals down; they ride a wave of entrepreneurial and community spirit and they praise the organizations which partner with them.

Chloe and Andrew, you are a credit to our neighbourhood, our community and our province. I'm very, very proud of you, and I wish you all the success in the future.

Manitoba's Holiday Wish List

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about Manitoba's holiday wish list, a list which has been unfulfilled by this NDP government.

Today, 93 children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder are on a waiting list for treatment in Manitoba. For these children and their families, ABA therapy is a gift, but only for some, as 75 of those families are waiting for the early learning program and desperately hoping their child does not age out of all eligibility. A Liberal government

would ensure psychological services such as these would be available for children through medicare.

Students in post-secondary education continue to struggle with day-to-day expenses while trying to focus on their studies. For years they have been calling on the government to ease their debt burden. They've been met with a nearly 50 per cent cut in bursary funding and clawbacks on their loan amounts when they work part-time to try to make ends meet. A Liberal government in Manitoba will not punish students for trying to survive. Manitoba students would receive the gift they've been asking for when a Liberal government converts their provincial student loans into non-repayable grants. And graduates with less debt will be able to purchase their first home sooner, when the additional burden of the land transfer tax has been removed by a Liberal government.

At this time of year, it's sad that adults in our province have their choices limited by NDP management of liquor sales. Should they find that special something, they pay more for it than their relatives outside the province. A Liberal government in Manitoba will find the best model for liquor sales to ensure competitive pricing, more choice, opportunities for small business and appropriate regulation.

Today I express a holiday hope shared by many Manitobans that 16 years of Grinch-filled deception will finally end when Christmas arrives late, on April the 19th. Manitobans don't want any more surprise lumps of coal in their stockings from this NDP government; they want real solutions.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I have a number of guests to introduce prior to oral questions.

I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Craig McIntosh, Lorraine Beck, Kaitlyn McIntosh and Thomas McIntosh, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Synonym Art Consultation, we have Andrew Eastman, Chloe Chafe, along with their families and partners: Dan Chafe, Benjamin Chafe, Jennifer Partridge, Gary Eastman, Joan Weitman, Janna Eastman and Anthony Nelson.

And also seated in the public gallery we have with us Damon Johnston and Marileen Bartlett from the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, Fred Ford from the Inuit Association of Manitoba, and Sharon Parenteau from the Manitoba Metis Federation, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Education.

And also seated in the public gallery we have with us today from Rivers Collegiate, we have 21 grade 9 students under the direction of Lesley McFadden, who are the guests of the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat).

And also seated in the public gallery we have 12—from Selkirk junior parliament, we have 12 grades 7 to 9 students under the direction of Nadia Gorbay and Matt Nickarz, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome all of you here with us this afternoon.

I thank honourable members for their indulgence for the list of guests.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: And we will now proceed to oral questions.

Tiger Dam Contract Mandatory Public Disclosure

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Manitobans have a reputation for being smart shoppers, Mr. Speaker. And working hard for their money, they want to make the most of it when they spend it, so they shop around.

And it shouldn't change when their money is taken by a government, but it does. And so the government, unfortunately, has not shopped around on these Tiger Dams contracts that they bought, \$9 million worth of contracts signed with a party pal and donor without shopping the market.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the worst part. The worst part, Mr. Speaker, was that they didn't disclose that they had failed to shop around; they didn't disclose. According to The Financial Administration Act, it's required that they make public all untendered contracts, but they did not do that.

Now we've learned through freedom of information documents that the government was warned; all deputy ministers were warned, all ministers were warned. Three years ago, again two years ago, they

were told failure to do so is a breach of statutory responsibility—failure to do so is a breach of statutory responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation failed to disclose these documents, Mr. Speaker.

Why has the Premier allowed the minister to place himself above the laws of our province?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I would agree that Manitobans want good value for their money, and that's exactly what we saw with the announcement from the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation that the rates for drivers are actually going down slightly this year, Mr. Speaker, very significant.

And we know that that is just another one of the value-added components of us owning Crown corporations, Crown corporations owned by the people of Manitoba, Crown corporations which provide good value for the people of Manitoba and good jobs for the people of Manitoba.

And the member knows that just this week we passed a new law in Manitoba that requires full disclosure of all tenders, and since the new procedures have been put in place, based on the auditor's recommendations, 93 per cent of all contracts are tendered. Many others are sole-sourced to provide essential services for people, but we're making tremendous progress in this regard, and the member opposite knows it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pallister: Well, I just asked a question about \$9 million of untendered contracts and the minister who broke the law, and I get gobbledygook about MPI rates not going up, which is the same thing they always do the year before an election, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to ask the Premier again: If a premier who broke the laws of our—a premier who has aided and abetted a minister who broke the laws of our province and he won't respond to the question, still no disclosure.

I'll read from the document again. A senior official in the Department of Finance says: As a reminder, it's mandatory all departments regularly identify—it's mandatory. Failure to do so is a breach of statutory responsibility. Finance strongly recommends that departments review their non-public items and develop explanations of why they're still there.

Three years ago: nothing, no information, not on the list of untendered—not at all, not public, hidden

violation. Thirty days, it's supposed to be reported, and not reported.

The minister has zero respect for the law, zero respect for the senior officials in the Finance Department and the Auditor General who was reporting on this.

* (14:00)

I have to ask the Premier again, and I'd like an answer: Did the Premier do anything at all, or did he do zero to stand up for the laws of our province?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, another classic double-standard question from the Leader of the Opposition.

He had no freedom of information requirements in place when he was in office. They reported on nothing. They took no responsibility for anything they did. They rigged elections. They did sole-source contracts. They—the largest sole-source contract let in Manitoba was the privatization of our telephone system, which they pushed through this Legislature in the wee hours of the morning. And who got the benefits of that? Their political friends were the major beneficiaries of that.

The Auditor General brought out a report on how to improve the system. We put those measures in place in our budget implementation bill. The member opposite, if he was serious about that, should've not held up the budget implementation bill. He held it up for months. The minute it was passed, we brought in the new regulations: 93 per cent compliance, good value for the money, not only on that but on our auto insurance rates because it's a Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pallister: Nine million dollars of untendered contracts to a party pal and donor, covered up for years, and the Premier comes out with that answer, Mr. Speaker.

There's a second letter that went out from the secretary to the Treasury Board—the secretary to the Treasury Board—was copied to the chair of the Treasury Board, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard)—copied to the chair of the Treasury Board, the member for Fort Rouge—and it outlines that it's—the information is not being disclosed. And I asked again that it be disclosed because it's the law.

Now, the department the minister's in charge of disclosed dozens of contracts in response to this, but not the six untendered contracts to his pal. It says in the documents: Failure to disclose is a breach of statutory responsibility.

It is obvious to anyone who is paying attention here that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure failed in his legal obligations to disclose, failed to respect senior officials of the Finance Department, failed to respect members of Treasury Board.

Why does the Premier (Mr. Selinger) allow this MLA to conduct himself as if he's above the law? Is the Premier himself incompetent, or is he in on it?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this may be the only recycling program the Leader of the Opposition has ever supported in Manitoba. He's brought these questions up many times. They've been thoroughly answered by the members of this side of the House. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner made a very clear ruling that the minister was not in a conflict of interest.

Mr. Speaker, this is the government that brought in legislation to ban corporate and union donations in Manitoba. The Leader of the Opposition, when he was in office, when he was serving the public, he took corporate donations. He refused to support the legislation that bans corporation and union donations and puts a cap on individual donations. That is the best guarantee that nobody has undue influence in this province, and he refuses to support that legislation, another classic double standard.

He wants to recycle old questions for which he has had an answer, because he doesn't want to acknowledge we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country, we have the best job creation rate in the country, our economic performance has been very strong at a time of economic recession, and he has no plan for the future of Manitoba.

Untendered Contracts Public Disclosure

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, at the time of the Tiger Dams controversy, section 80 of The Financial Administration Act required that untendered expenditures that exceed \$1,000 be made public or disclosed not later than a month after the date on which the contract is entered into.

Mr. Speaker, why, then, did the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) sit on millions of dollars on untendered contracts and undisclosed contracts to close friends for Tiger Dams for over six years?

He not only broke the law, he did so repeatedly and with impunity, a clear example of Manitobans getting more—paying more and getting less.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, this is a variation of the same question the members have asked now for several months, despite the fact that the Auditor General brought in new rules and asked us to implement new rules, which we did, which means contracts over \$10,000 were online, available to anyone who can check it, the most advanced in the country.

And the only reason members opposite have some of the information they have is because we extended FIPPA rules to provide information. We extended the rules that allow them to have documents to ask questions, but we also changed the rules on the recommendations of the auditor. And we've put those rules in place.

They're dealing with typical Tory double standards. They did it a different way. We're doing it the right way, Mr. Speaker, and they're nitpicking.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, with respect to untendered and undisclosed contracts, all departments were directed in 2013 to review their non-public items and develop explanations on why they are still there, essentially make up a story on why you've not followed The Financial Administration Act. This was done while the minister of MIT was responsible for the Procurement Services branch. He was the boss and ultimately responsible.

Why did the minister direct civil servants to make up stories to cover up untendered and undisclosed contracts?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, that statement or so-called question is so full of holes you could drive a Cat—a power tractor through that—[interjection]—or whatever it is.

Mr. Speaker, we post all contracts over \$10,000 online, for the first time in the history of the province. We banned union and corporate donations, something members opposite would not do so their friends could fund them and that leader could get up and brag about how much money he was able to fund.

We put in place extended FIPPA legislation. We put in place a lobbyist act. We put in place a whistleblower act, things that are so foreign to members

opposite they never did it during their nine mean years in office.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I could drive a Caterpillar through the holes in that response, let me tell you.

Mr. Speaker, recently, Procurement Services was moved to the Department of Finance. Was it moved because of meddling, obstruction and hiding of tenders and undisclosed contracts by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton)?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General made recommendations about untendered contracts, which we put in place with the assistance of the committee that the member opposite is a—is the chairperson of. When the auditor makes recommendations and asks us to move on something, we move on something.

We passed legislation that members opposite held up in this Legislature for months and asked questions about not doing something that we could've passed before. And I find it very strange that members opposite, who didn't extend FIPPA legislation, who didn't have whistle-blower legislation, who did not have lobbyist legislation, who did not have these controls in place, would now question why, Mr. Speaker, why we hadn't done something that hadn't, in fact, been in place.

There are many contracts that go untendered for good reasons, like IBM and other related contracts that get extended, particularly in emergencies like flood situations, Mr. Speaker.

Sector Council Program Report Review and Recommendations

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): On September 25th of this year, through a freedom of information request, we asked the government to provide 19 pieces of information, and after more than two months we heard back from the freedom of information that 18 of the 19 items were rejected.

Mr. Speaker, the last request was to provide a copy of the most recent sector council review completed by the Department for Jobs and the Economy.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate what the recommendations were in that report?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question.

We, of course, work closely with all of our sector councils throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it's one of the reasons that we have one of the strongest economies in the country. They provide a great deal of expertise to us. They help provide advice and support, and we continue to work closely with our sector councils. It's one of the reasons why we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. It's one of the reasons why we have the—we have more people working in Manitoba than ever before. They cover a wide variety of industries as well as we take into account the entire province of Manitoba.

We'll continue to work closely with our sector councils. We appreciate their advice and their thoughts, and we'll continue to work closely with them.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Stefanson: The reason I'm asking for those recommendations, Mr. Speaker, is because the document we received from freedom of information omitted four areas of the report, including the consultation findings, the summary of the findings and conclusions, the recommendations and the implementation and phasing. These are pretty key areas of the report.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate why these key areas were redacted from the information that we received?

Mr. Chief: Mr. Speaker, we—as I said, we continue to work closely with our sector councils. We appreciate their advice that they provide. We move on the action items that they ask us to do.

We often partner with our sector councils, and one of the things that we know is a big part of what the sector councils talk about is the importance of training, training young people, training a credible demographic of young people. Our—of course, our new Canadians all throughout the province, our young indigenous population, they are part of the reasons why we keep moving on making sure that young women is a strong message; there's no job they can't get.

We'll continue to work with our sector councils. We'll continue to promote the things that we do publicly around jobs and our economy, Mr. Speaker, and we're proud of the work that sector councils do.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a copy of the report entitled Industry Workforce

Development Sector Council Program, dated November 19th, 2013.

This is the copy of the report that we received from freedom of information. And not only were several of the pages of the report entirely blacked out, but 67 of the 106-page report were withheld entirely.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate why these pages were entirely withheld? Were they trying to hide the findings of the report, or did the department of—the FIPPA department simply run out of black Sharpie pens?

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from this minister: What are they trying to hide from Manitobans?

Mr. Chief: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we're proud of the work of the sector councils, and we're proud of the plan that they have, and they support young people. In fact, we're proud of the plan that they have for young people.

You know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we do know is the Leader of the Opposition has a plan for young people. What he wants to do, when students struggle the most, he wants to give up on them. In fact, here's what the Leader of the Opposition had to say: There are studies that have shown clearly that grade 9 boys are incapable of learning much at all. That's the plan that he has when young people are struggling the most. That's his plan.

I ask the member from Tuxedo, does she believe that grade 9 boys are incapable of learning? I ask the member from Lac du Bonnet, those studies that he's talking about, grade 9 boys not being able to learn, Mr. Speaker, has he shown the member from Lac du Bonnet those studies?

Our sector council supports young people, Mr. Speaker, and so does this government.

Government Spending Tax Increases

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech is a promise of massive overspending to the tune of \$6 billion in new spending commitments over the next five years, promises the NDP can't pay for because they can't manage spending and they can't even reduce the deficit.

So it is fitting that yesterday the Finance Minister would choose a chocolate shop as the

backdrop for his press event, because under the NDP in Manitoba, life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what tax you're going to get.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the Finance Minister indicate what Manitobans are going to get as a result of this \$6-billion tax plan? What will they tax next?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I had the great privilege of attending an event yesterday in the beautiful constituency of St. Boniface at the Constance Popp's chocolate store.

And I want to remind the House that yesterday was the fifth anniversary of this Premier (Mr. Selinger) and this government eliminating the small-business tax in Canada. In fact, we were the first province. In fact, we are the only province in Canada to completely have eliminated the tax on small business.

We came into the—into government, it was 9 per cent. That is the legacy of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, one of the highest small-business tax rates—excuse me—in Canada. We've completely eliminated that.

January the 1st, 2016, another 2,000 small businesses won't—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, this Finance Minister can't see the forest for the trees. What he didn't indicate is he made that same promise four years ago and broke that promise.

Mr. Speaker, at yesterday's event with the Finance Minister, he clearly left the door open to additional tax hikes. He was asked directly about his secret plans to increase other taxes to pay for these billion dollars in promises, and the Finance Minister responded by saying, we're reviewing all of our options.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that because the NDP breaks its promises to reduce government spending time and time again, they have less and less options to address their massive overspending.

So that—will the Finance Minister admit that when he says he's still reviewing all of his options, what he really means is they're considering which sales taxes they will widen? Will he tell this House: What is he going to raise the tax on when he widens the sales tax next?

Mr. Dewar: I want to remind the House that the only individual who is talking about raising taxes is the Leader of the Opposition and the member, Mr. Speaker, for Morden-Winkler.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to small business that in 2017 we will increase the threshold from \$450,000 to \$500,000 for small business. This will mean another 3,600 small businesses will not have to pay any tax to the provincial government. In 2017, over 20,000 small businesses will not have to pay tax to this government.

Or—fact, Mr. Speaker, since we've come into office we've cut taxes for businesses between \$3.8 billion. That is a record we're proud of.

Mr. Friesen: I wonder if he's proud of the fact that Manitobans pay the highest taxes west of Quebec in this country.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago the Premier (Mr. Selinger) himself left the door wide open to new taxes when he said, and I quote, you have to always stay open to that, end quote, when talking about tax increases.

Mr. Speaker, what is it exactly that the NDP believes that Manitobans must stay open to? Is it open to applying the PST to movies? Is it applying the PST to funerals? Is it applying the PST to home repairs or maybe to gasoline?

Will this Finance Minister just come clean and tell Manitobans: What is he going to tax next? What is his secret plan to tax? Because Manitobans are tired of paying more and getting less.

Mr. Dewar: The only one talking about increasing taxes in this House is the member opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday at the announcement Constance Popp said: When small businesses like mine aren't required to 'smay'—to pay small-business tax, that gives us extra capital to hire new staff, invest in equipment or purchase more inventory. She also went on to add, Mr. Speaker: As well, this initiative helps make Manitoba a more marketable place to attract new and established business owners to the province.

Also remind the member that Elliot Sims said eliminating corporate taxes on Manitoba's smallest businesses has made the system one of the most competitive in Canada for entrepreneurs.

We are on the side of small business.

Lower Assiniboine Dike System Location of Maps and Records

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, during the course of assisting my local municipal government in their effort to repair damage on the lower Assiniboine dikes caused by the flooding of 2011, I sent a FIPPA request to Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation for a copy of the maps for the lower Assiniboine dikes.

Imagine our surprise when we received a response from MIT stating, and I quote, that the Province does not have custody or control of any maps associated with the transfer of the lower Assiniboine River dikes. And I would table that response.

Does the Province therefore have no record of this critical piece of flood control infrastructure?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): Definitely the flood of 2011 have left a number of scars for everybody in the province of Manitoba.

I want to acknowledge the forward thinking of the province of Saskatchewan has finally come forward with a member of understanding of to deal with drainage regulations in the province.

We often hear members opposite supporting the province of Saskatchewan and the great things they do. I wonder if they're so brave to say that they support the work that has been done in the province of Saskatchewan that causes the watershed problems that we face today.

And let us not hope that 2011 does not have a repeat in the province of Manitoba, for all people in the province, whether it's agriculture or urban settings.

I would respect that comments from the member opposite.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, if they have no knowledge of the lower Assiniboine dikes, I think we're virtually guaranteed a repeat of the problem.

Mr. Speaker, knowing that these dikes were in fact constructed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, which was then PFRA, and turned over to the Province in 1999, we then sent a information request to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

* (14:20)

Imagine our further surprise in receiving confirmation that, quote, all records and maps were transferred to the Province of Manitoba. And I would table that response as well.

Can the minister confirm that his department has possession of these critical maps, or have they been destroyed?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Mr. Speaker, definitely, I think what we talk about of the importance of the watershed organization, that's very key to all of us across the whole watershed.

Let's go back in the Harper era, and we talk about the importance of the PFRA organization that was somewhat dissolved when the Conservatives were in power federally, and now we see that the members opposite are complaining that we're not doing enough. Well, let me tell you, if the members opposite believed of what the federal government decision was to eliminate PFRA, which was one of the greatest things in western Canada to be a watershed authority, it's too bad that they never supported the opportunity to go against the wishes of the Harper Conservatives.

Are they on the side of the Harper Conservatives? Do they think like the federal minister of the Conservatives did? I'm sad to hear that's the situation that they chose.

Mr. Wishart: I know they like to revise history, but it was, in fact, a federal Liberal government that discontinued PFRA.

Mr. Speaker, as you can well imagine, access to detailed maps of dikes and structures on the lower Assiniboine is a very valuable tool for our local municipal governments in both their floodfighting and their repair efforts.

I would call on this government to put aside any petty partisanship, in fact, their obvious confusion, and try and find these lost maps to assist the municipalities in their process.

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you so much for the question.

It's obviously a minister from MIT had to put together a task force team to do a regulation study of how the water flows have—in the Portage Diversion and other areas. And I am pleased to say that Mr. Faurichou, who is well known to the members opposite, was part of that team as we talked about dealing with people that are grassroots within that designated area.

And I do respect the opportunity that we work forward together in partnership, but let's have co-operation in the whole watershed starting from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba so we can address these issues and move forward in a positive manner rather than being segregated by provincial boundaries, Mr. Speaker.

Climate Change Conference Manitoba Delegation

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): On October 8th, 2009, under the guise of belt-tightening measures, the NDP government announced a new policy, quote, restricting out-of-province travel, end quote.

Can the Minister of Conservation advise when the NDP rescinded this new policy?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Conservation.

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):—travel province. Well, Mr. Speaker, any endeavours of a provincial government to restrain expenditures I would hope and think that the member for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business would be in support of. Why wouldn't he be?

So, really, the question is moot, I would have to say. Obviously, on this side of the House, keeping fiscal restraint over all departments of government is a worthy endeavour, so thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that the minister has his bags packed as he prepares to share his government's utter failure, as its failure to live up to its own legislated greenhouse emission targets, with the delegates in Paris.

Speaking of delegates, Mr. Speaker, on Monday, November 30th, the minister stated in this Chamber, and I quote: We will be sending a delegation over to the conference on climate change in Paris. End quote.

Can the minister share with the House who comprises his crack team of climate change specialists accompanying him to Paris?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say I'm encouraged—encouraged—that a member opposite would raise a question about climate change. Perhaps they have come into the third millennium with us and recognized the existence of climate change.

It certainly wasn't the case in 2009 when we had legislation before the House here, The Climate

Change and Emissions Reductions Act, which was debated, and I was here at that time. Members opposite had the opportunity to debate it, ultimately voted against the legislation, following in the path of their leader, who, when he was a Member of Parliament, also voted against measures to address the issue of climate change. So—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the NDP, with great fanfare, announced a government-wide policy restricting all out-of-province travel and then quietly rescind that policy when there's a chance to head overseas.

So at a cost of six tons of greenhouse gas emissions, tens of thousands of dollars to attend the Paris conference, we have, among others, we have the minister, we have the deputy minister, we have the Premier (Mr. Selinger), we have the Premier's chief of staff, we have somebody from Cabinet communications and we have the MLA for Wolseley.

Can the minister advise the qualifications of the MLA for Wolseley that allows him to be a provincial representative at the Paris conference, or was his anyone-but-Theresa campaign qualification enough?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, the fact that members opposite are now aware of climate change is very encouraging to me personally, because it's going to take a united effort of all people in this House to step up and address the challenge of climate change. It's probably the greatest challenge the history of—in the history of humankind. All of us have to acknowledge the importance of addressing these issues, and certainly on this side of the House we are united on that front.

The Paris conference is before us, that's true. And this government will do its utmost to garner as much information and knowledge from that conference as we humanly can. And we will go forward and bring that back to the House and report to the people of Manitoba.

Student Financial Aid Non-Repayable Grants

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Premier talked about a \$33-million loan program for student loans. The government's numbers have varied daily and are, indeed, much inflated. The Premier, in calculating this number, is

ignoring the actual loan amounts repaid back each year, as well as the default amounts his government writes off.

Regardless of the NDP math, switching the program from loans to non-repayable grants is the right thing to do.

Will the Premier please explain why he will not consider switching from loans to non-repayable grants for students at post-secondary education institutions?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): We're always open to new ideas on how to make post-secondary education more affordable while retaining quality for students in Manitoba, which is why we actually put in place a policy that restricts the growth in tuition fees. We have the third lowest tuition fees in the country, Mr. Speaker. Pretty soon we'll have the second lowest tuition fees in the country.

We brought forward a graduate tuition tax rebate program, which is available in the third and fourth years. It allows a student who lives and works in Manitoba to get 60 per cent of their tuition back upon graduating and making their choice to live and work in this province. It's the best program in the country.

We announced interest-free loans for students in Manitoba so that they can pay down the principal without having interest charges build on that. And we offer a very progressive bursary program all across Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, often matched by private donations as well. And, yes, we have student aid in Manitoba, very significant amount of student aid in Manitoba.

Our program is much better than the program offered by the Liberals. They will actually be doing less for students in their program when they wipe out student aid and the other bursary programs that we already have in place, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is wrong about the Liberal program. He tends to misrepresent things time and time again.

If he believes that the interest has been removed from loans, he needs to explain to graduates making their payments every month why they haven't seen any difference in the amount of interest coming off each month.

We already know that the Premier and his government can't keep track of dollars well. His

credibility for any form of financial accuracy is at an all-time low.

Regardless, Liberals have committed to do the right thing and to make the change.

Instead of trying to misrepresent the Liberal commitment, why doesn't the Premier (Mr. Selinger) make the needed change from loans to grants himself, as a Liberal government would do?

* (14:30)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member 'opp' talks about a \$20-million program for students. We give \$33 million of bursaries right now in the province of Manitoba. His program would cut the bursary program by \$13 million.

It's completely ridiculous. It's the same thing he did on the fertility tax credit, a very narrow program, much less than what we're doing for people with respect to that, Mr. Speaker.

When you put our bursary program together, our interest-free loan program, our graduate tuition tax rebate program, which is available in third and fourth year, and controls on student fees, Mr. Speaker, and controls on tuition, we have one of the most affordable post-secondary education systems in the country.

And we make sure that it's a high-quality program and available to all Manitobans. University College of the North never existed before. It's now there and in many First Nations and indigenous communities throughout the North.

We've put more—during this recession, our increases to post-secondary institutions have led the country, Mr. Speaker. At a time when Liberal governments in other jurisdictions are cutting university funding, we've increased it.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting to know whether the Premier spends more time misleading Manitobans on his own commitments or on misleading Manitobans about Liberal commitments. He's way off the mark, and, indeed, the Premier himself cut bursaries by almost half, as the document I tabled on Monday.

The real question is not this NDP's government's shockingly poor math skills; it's whether the best approach to help students deal with massive debt is to move from loans to grants, and it is.

Why is the Premier so resistant to do the right thing and switch from loans to grants, as a Liberal

government will do in Manitoba, while leaving the other supports there?

Thank you.

Mr. Selinger: While the member opposite was a part of the federal Cabinet, the transfer payments for post-secondary institutions, as well as health care, as well as social services, was cut by 39 per cent. That's what he did. He downloaded and wiped out all the support for post-secondary institutions all across the country.

We're the only government, through this recession, which has every single year increased our support for post-secondary education, while having a graduate tuition tax rebate, while having student aid, while moving to interest-free loans, Mr. Speaker.

We provide very abundant support to students and we will look for even more ways to do that. We're never going to stop in our desire to have a high-quality, accessible and affordable post-secondary education system.

Indigenous Children Customary Care Practices

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, we know that a child's best interests are served when they are amongst their people and within—and in their own communities, where their identity, culture and well-being can flourish.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Family Services please tell us about this historic day and how customary care will allow for indigenous children to remain in their communities and avoid apprehension when it is safe to do so?

Also, can the minister also explain how this is an important step on the road to reconciliation?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, today was a historic day in Manitoba. It was the next phase of devolution. I gathered, had the privilege of gathering with many indigenous leaders, community members, people that represented the CEOs and—as well as the authorities, and we discussed the importance of amending The Child and Family Services Act to ensure that we could permit and work with communities to support customary care.

Customary care has been a practice for generations with indigenous communities. We are working with them to ensure that they can continue to implement that practice, to ensure that they can

provide that support to children and families in their community.

We're going to work with indigenous communities across this province. We're going to work to better support families and work towards a reduction of indigenous children in care.

Biosecurity Concerns Clubroot Contamination

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I'll table these pictures for the Minister of Agriculture.

An Honourable Member: Did you draw them yourself?

Mr. Pedersen: That's pretty good for a Minister of Education.

Clearly, there is no biosecurity measures in effect, either with the workers themselves or the cleaning of the equipment between fields.

So why is the Minister of Agriculture allowing and, indeed, encouraging the spread of crop diseases like clubroot in canola across Manitoba?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, obviously the importance of clubroot in the province of Manitoba is taken very seriously by all of us and in the department as well.

I do want to indicate that the staff and the department have worked constantly with agriculture producers, first and foremost of the education and the importance of the minimize spread of clubroot but also the importance of biosecurity, Mr. Speaker, that obviously in our province we went through the scare of the PED virus, and I want to compliment the MAFRD staff who worked very closely with Manitoba Pork and the producers to minimize the spread and the economic hardships of the biosecurity, and I want to assure the member opposite we as a department and we as a government will continue to communicate with the producers and anybody else involved in that segment.

Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, Mr. Speaker, only a couple of weeks ago right here in this Legislature the Minister of Agriculture spoke to the Manitoba Canola Growers and emphasizing the importance of the canola industry to the Manitoba economy, and now his government is out there actively spreading clubroot because they're not doing any biosecurity.

Look at the workers' boots. Look at the drilling equipment. There is no cleaning between fields.

These farmers have gone out there and actually kicked these people off their private property because they're accessing not only the easement but they're going across private property to get on the easement, and yet this minister stands up here and he's now—his government is actively spreading clubroot across Manitoba.

Why is it that this government is so intent on spreading clubroot across Manitoba?

Mr. Kostyshyn: And let me just say, unfortunately, biosecurity is the new swear word of agriculture and throughout the province of Manitoba and Canada. And I do know that education continues to be the top priority based on—and working with different departments regardless where they fall in, whether it's agriculture or any other industry, whether it's the MTS or if it's even Manitoba Hydro or anybody else.

The key important is that there are policies in place that must be made in contact with landowners and they need to be notified of trespassing, and which we believe is still happening and will continue to happen.

But the key importance in this, Mr. Speaker, as long as we communicate in co-operation and provide the importance of biosecurity, we're doing our due diligence. And hopefully members opposite support us on that mission statement for the betterment of agriculture, not only canola but for the overall economy benefit for the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

It is now time for petitions.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Point of order. The honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), on a point of order.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, it's a long-standing rule of this Assembly and I believe that you as Speaker have ruled that members in this Chamber are to be addressed by either their constituency or by their ministry if they're entitled to a portfolio. I believe if you review Hansard, you will see that the member for the Interlake breached that rule.

I would ask that you review Hansard and ask him to apologize to this House when you've had that opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I apologize to the member opposite. I'll in future refer to him by his constituency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), I thank him for raising that point, and I also thank the Minister of Conservation for his apology to the member and to the House.

I think that'll conclude that matter.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: And while I'm on my feet, it would be helpful, too, that when we're in question period or any time during debate that honourable members pick and choose their words very carefully.

I noticed today there were a couple of times where some of the language, while not totally unparliamentary, perhaps, comes very close to the line, and so I'm asking for honourable members to kind of heed this caution to them because I want to make sure that we act with some decorum in this Assembly.

That's just for information of the House.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I will now proceed to petitions.

Manitoba Interlake—Request to Repair and Reopen Provincial Roads 415 and 416

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Interlake region is an important transportation corridor for Manitoba but, unfortunately, is still dealing with serious underinvestment in infrastructure under this provincial government.

Provincial roads 415 and 416 are vital to the region but have still not been repaired or reopened since sustaining damages during the 2010 flood.

Residents and businesses of—in Manitoba Interlake are seriously impacted and inconvenienced by having no adequate east-west travel routes over an area of 525 square miles.

This lack of east-west travel routes is also a major public safety concern, as emergency response vehicles are impeded from arriving in a timely manner.

* (14:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government repair and reopen the provincial roads 415 and 416 to allow adequate east-west travel in the Interlake.

And this petition is signed by M. Bruce, N. Neufeld, R. King and many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: In keeping with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to have been received by the House.

Applied Behavioural Analysis Services

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government broke a commitment to support families of children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, including timely diagnosis and access to necessary treatment such as applied behavioural analysis, also known as ABA services.

The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes that—notes the importance of early intervention ABA for children with autism.

School learning services has its highest ever waiting list, which started with 45 children. The waiting list is projected to keep growing and to be in excess of 80 children by September 2016. Therefore, these children will go through the biggest transition of their lives without receiving ABA services that has helped other children achieve huge gains.

The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as any other Manitoba children.

The current provincial government policy now imposed on the ABA service provider will now

decrease the scientifically proven, empirically based and locally proven five-year program to a consultative model that will now have over 200 children wait-list and allow only a small portion of children to access these new services.

Waiting lists, decreases in services and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their diagnosis still remains and their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services, maintain the current successful program and fund true ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder until they reach age 21.

This petition is signed by K. Butterfield, V. McGregor, B. Swaenepoel and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles that should have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for the safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the

shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by S. Mooney, P. Kornelsen, P. Hoogmoed and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Manitoba Interlake—Health Care

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) There is a severe shortage of emergency and regular medical care in the Interlake region of Manitoba.

(2) The staffing levels within such units such as hemodialysis, chemotherapy and emergency-outpatient services at the Johnson Memorial Hospital in Gimli are below operational levels.

(3) This lack of essential front-line services is causing patients to travel 45 minutes away for regular and emergency life-saving treatments, often at their own expense.

(4) This highway medicine approach places the welfare of residents and visitors to this community at further risk.

(5) The shortage creates additional strain to the limited rural ambulance services and results in all Manitobans paying more and getting less.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider implementing a plan to cover the immediate shortfall in staffing levels and to develop a long-term solution to provide timely and quality health care to the residents in the Interlake.

This petition is submitted on behalf of M. Johnson, R. Vanderkerkore, N. Perry and many other fine Manitobans.

Proposed Lac du Bonnet Marina—Request for Research into Benefits and Costs

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Lac du Bonnet is a recreational area with great natural beauty.

(2) The Winnipeg River is one of the greatest distinguishing cultural and recreational resources in that area.

(3) Manitoba marinas increase recreational access and increase the desirability of properties in their host communities.

(4) The people of Lac du Bonnet overwhelmingly support a public harbourfront marina in Lac du Bonnet.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider collaborating with other levels of government to research the economic benefits and construction costs of a marina in Lac du Bonnet.

This petition is signed by B. Shirliffe, G. Smith, L. Cumming and many other fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

**Request to Reduce Speed Limit
along Road 9E, La Salle, Manitoba**

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

(1) The community of La Salle, Manitoba, continues to see significant residential growth, including new developments along Road 9E.

(2) As part of this growth, additional active transportation improvements are being constructed by the RM of MacDonald, including the installation of walking paths.

(3) One of these paths is less than 10 feet away from Road 9E, a gravel road where the current speed limit is 90 kilometres per hour.

(4) Families and individuals, including those with small children and pets, are concerned about the safety of using walking paths with high-speed traffic being within such close proximity.

(5) Interconnecting roads, including Road 47NE and Vouriot Road, have speed limits of 70 kilometres an hour and 50 kilometres an hour respectively.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to recognize the potential danger of

allowing high-speed travel on a gravel road immediately adjacent to a walking path.

(2) To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation consider reducing the speed limit along Road 9E similar to Road 47NE and Vouriot Road.

And this petition is presented by P. Rodgers, K. Redys, M. Fraser and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions?

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to grievances.

The honourable member for Lakeside, on a grievance?

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Today I rise, Mr. Speaker, on a grievance. First I'd like to draw attention to the government a recent request from the residents of Sunrise Lodge North in Arborg. They've asked me to relay to this government, in particular, that some of the members believe to be these members from the government like sasquatch. They hear that they have an MLA, but they don't ever see him.

Mr. Speaker, the residents would like to ask why this government has turned off the cable to their TV. It comes on, it works; there's no channels to watch. I'd be more than happy to take anyone on that side of the House to Arborg and have them explain why this NDP government can spend \$6 million more per day that they have coming in but cannot pay \$3 per day to give seniors cable so they can watch TV in the common area if they so like.

Secondly, I'd like to draw attention to the remarks put on the record yesterday by the member from the Interlake about the flood of 2011. This very member told the farmers, ranchers, families, business owners and tourists that it could have been worse. This is shameful, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:50)

We on this side of the House stood beside our friends, our neighbours, to help sandbag, move furniture, open roads, loan them vehicles, trailers and tractors. We are proud that we on this side of the House stood with those impacted by the flood of 2011.

We asked this NDP government hundreds of questions about flood protection and compensation. The Selinger government promised multi-year flooding in compensation. Well, that didn't work out either, Mr. Speaker, another broken promise by this NDP government. And we know how much each of those businesses, families and those impacted by the flood had banked on that promise coming to 'fruitition' in regards to the flooding of 2011.

I also want to talk about the Gimli hospital and the lack of staff to do dialysis for Gimli and the surrounding area. This Selinger government issued a press release, which I would like to table here today, in January of 2011 that things were on track for the \$4.8-million unit to treat patients. Well, no wonder the member for Gimli jumped this sinking ship and announced that it didn't last very long at all.

The member from Charleswood and myself have asked questions on this time and time again, and no one had been in place unit to do dialysis. We put the question to the public about the lack of service in that area. With a very short time, we had over 350 signatures on a petition asking this Selinger government to implement a plan, to develop a long-term plan, to reopen, to continue to keep open the unit in Gimli. I'd like to table the remaining petitions for this House as well. And I'd like to ask the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) to keep the promise that this ND government made to the fine folks in the Interlake.

We know that every member opposite went door to door in the last election and they said no new taxes. If anyone challenged them, this Selinger government said it was nonsense, that they would not raise taxes. We saw more new taxes in—within just weeks of the election that no government has ever brought in before. Then they brought in a 14 per cent increase in the PST and subsequently took the right of Manitobans' right to vote on that very increase. Shame on this government and every member opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about hydro and how the Selinger government misled the real owners of Manitoba Hydro, the ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro. Once again, every member opposite went door to door and told Manitobans that Bipole III and Keeyask would not cost ratepayers 1 cent, the cost would be built into the cost of selling hydro to the US market, which is the way it should have been. However, that didn't work out either. This Selinger government stuck to its—stuck it to the

ratepayers for the next 20 years, as we on this side of the House found out that the government had misspoke and we found that the ratepayers are the ones that would bearing the costs. This government obviously cannot be trusted.

Hydro rates are going to double if not triple under the leadership of this government. And today, Mr. Speaker, we saw very clearly that a number of those rate increases are guaranteed by Manitoba Hydro. We've seen very clearly that the Public Utilities Board has been presented with documentation to ensure that those rates will be continuing to go up by 3.95 per cent for the next 20 years, thus on the back of the ratepayers of Manitoba.

Unfortunately, we also saw Bipole III, the longest route that has been built in the history of this province, it's a route that was not approved by Manitoba Hydro at all. It was approved by this government and they forced it on all Manitobans. And, unfortunately, it's a legacy this government's going to have to live with. And we have an opportunity to change this route if the government would listen to those ratepayers of Manitoba, the real owners of Manitoba Hydro.

And, with that, we know that the opportunity—I know tomorrow there's a resolution being brought forward by the member from La Verendrye that is going to be very clear about the opportunity for the government to stand up and talk about the route going into Minnesota, Wisconsin, on the route that they had decided to take down through some of the busiest corridor within the province of Manitoba. And I know that the minister is going to have an opportunity to correct the record on what he put on the record last Monday in regards to about the decision being made on that particular route.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know we have this opportunity in this House to debate issues that we feel is importance, and we certainly take this opportunity to bring this grievance forward, and I know that with the help of all Manitobans, a change for the better is coming.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any further grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to orders of the day, government business.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Can we take a brief recess to await the Government House Leader? *[interjection]* We can't?

Can we take a brief recess, Mr. Speaker? And we'll have the bells ring for one minute in advance of the House coming back.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to have a brief recess, with the understanding that when the House is ready to come back into order, we'll ring the bells for one minute? *[Agreed]*

The House is now in recess, pending the call to order.

The House recessed at 2:56 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:58 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call the House back to order.

We're under orders of the day, government business.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce the following standing committees will meet as follows:

Monday, December 14th, 2014, at 9 a.m., the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs to consider the Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014, and the Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015.

And on Monday, December 14th, 2014, at 10:30 a.m., the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development to consider the Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (ALL Aboard) for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014, and the Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (ALL Aboard) for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015.

And on Monday, December 14th, 2015, at 2 p.m., the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to consider Auditor General's Report-Follow-up of Recommendations: Waiving of Competitive Bids, November 2015; witnesses to be called, minister and deputy minister of Finance, minister and deputy minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Wednesday, December 16th, 2015, at 2 p.m., the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs to consider the Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2011, including conduct of the 40th Provincial General Election, October 4th, 2011; Permanent Voters List Study-Report dated June 2013; Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2012, including the conduct of the Fort Whyte by-election, September 14th, 2012; Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2013; Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2014, including conduct of the 2014 Arthur-Virden and Morris by-elections.

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker: Just for clarity, to make sure that I'm clear on this, on the first two items that were referenced in the announcement, it was indicated a year that is different. It was indicated as 2014. Was the intent to indicate the Monday, December 14th, 2015, 9 a.m. meetings and 10:30 a.m. meetings, the honourable Government House Leader?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. Correct that to change the date to 2015 at 9 a.m. and 2015 at 10:30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. I thank the honourable Government House Leader for the clarification.

It has been announced that the standing committees will meet as follows:

Monday, December 14th, 2015, at 9 a.m., the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs to consider the Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014, the Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015.

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include the minister and deputy minister of Finance and the minister and deputy minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

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That's for information of the House.

The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Will we resume—when we resume second reading debate on Bill 7, then we will be doing second reading on bills 4, 3, and 5.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now be calling bills for debate in the following order, starting with Bill 7, followed by Bill 4, then Bill 3 and then Bill 5.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 7—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools)

Mr. Speaker: We'll start now by calling debate on second reading of Bill 7, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools), standing in the name of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler, who has 27 minutes remaining.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): And I'm pleased to continue my remarks on Bill 7, protecting child care spaces in schools.

And yesterday when the 5 o'clock chime went, I was conveying to you that this is an important bill in areas like the one I represent of Morden-Winkler, because this is a growing community. And yesterday the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) was putting onto the record comments of the same with respect to other jurisdictions in Manitoba. And the member from Lac du Bonnet was talking about the

need for a nuanced approach. He was talking about the fact that—and he mentioned these same comments and concerns when he spoke on an earlier bill, Bill 2, talking about the fact that communities are not all the same and their needs are not all the same when it comes to education, and we know that one of the great variables when it comes to some communities in Manitoba is the variable of population growth.

And so, yes, Mr. Speaker, now I remember exactly where I was at when that chime had sounded, and that was we were talking about the tremendous growth that areas like my own, like the area I represent, have seen in the last number of years. In fact, I can report to this House that it was in 2011 when I was elected; I believe that was the year when the new Stats Canada data came up—came out for the province of Manitoba and, indeed, for the rest of the country. And we were able to measure at that time population growth in Manitoba communities going back five years, and I was astounded. We all had a quite informed idea that the population was increasing rapidly in our area, but it was evidence that we were taking in anecdotally. And we could see it in new housing starts, we could see it in our community in other ways, new faces in the community. We saw in terms of increased traffic on city streets. We heard it, you know, through real estate agents and school boards and, indeed, we did see it in terms of enrolment in schools.

Ms. Jennifer Howard, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

But when that data was released, then we got a better sense of the real—the data with respect to those population changes. And I can indicate to this House, and I believe I have done so before, that the population for the city of Morden increased in just the space of five years by 20—I believe it's 20.7 per cent. I would have to go back and check the exact numbers. I believe for the city of Winkler, that had itself experienced tremendous growth the previous time those growth figures had been tabled and conveyed to Canadians, Winkler was still up at around 18 per cent growth over five years, and the RM of Stanley I believe exceeded 30 per cent growth.

So, the Minister of Education, we have continued to convey to him that we have challenges in our community—in our communities that perhaps other areas of Manitoba don't share to the same extent. And I would acknowledge that areas like Brandon are experiencing the same kind of growth. I know that the city of Steinbach is experiencing

similar kinds of growth. And I can recall still when I was in the teaching profession, and now that's getting to be longer and longer in the rear-view mirror, but when I was still in the classroom, I remember the frustration that was being expressed by trustees and board chairs in my communities.

And I actually used to teach in Steinbach, and I don't know if I've ever actually disclosed that to the House. I wasn't sure I wanted to disclose that to the House. No, I had the pleasure of teaching in Hanover School Division for six years, and I know that those trustees expressed frustration at that time, not with the Public Schools Finance Board per se because we know that they've got a job to do, but with the fact that the formula by which decisions are made to build new schools was not more flexible, didn't entertain variables more—didn't entertain those variables better in respect of population growth.

So, in essence, you would get on a list and the PFSB would indicate that you had been shortlisted and that they understood that you were on the list for a new school. But the list was—for all working purposes, it was static and it was chronological and it was like the order in which you were received on the list you went to the bottom. And incrementally you would rise by step until finally at some point in time hopefully that school was built.

Now that formula, I understand now, has been revised. And it's been revised in large part due to the successful efforts of communities like my own to engage in conversation with—respectfully with the Education Minister, with the deputy minister and also with the PFSB to indicate there needs to be flexibility to be able to understand that communities can grow very rapidly, very quickly. And part of that is the success of our MPNP program, our Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

In this province that program has been really largely responsible for some of the most impressive growth that we have seen really over the last 20 years. I would remind the House it was our party who built that program and I have been pleased to see that the current government has continued the efforts that were first put in place by members, including the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) and others at that time. That program has succeeded in bringing large numbers of new residents, and sometimes I say new Canadians, but we must remember that when they come here, when they arrive in our communities, they aren't new Canadians at that time and they need to go through

that whole process to become new Canadians. But that program has been in large part responsible to bring new people to our communities.

* (15:10)

Now, when they're there, yes, they need those services to be able to support them there, and our communities of Morden and Winkler and the RM of Stanley, we learned this lesson. And it was a hard lesson for us, going back 10 years when manufacturers in our community, manufacturers like—and as soon as I start a list I know I will leave off names—but Grandeur Housing and Decor Cabinets and Convey-All Industries and Meridian Manufacturing, Triple E, Huron Window and so many others, 3M Canada, these kinds—Farm King, Madam Deputy Speaker. So many businesses like these—oh, I didn't even mention Load Line and Lode King and other area businesses—businesses like this were telling local officials to bring more residents.

And then, of course, when they started to arrive in large numbers, what we realized is that we had real challenges to support them in the community, challenges in respect of housing, challenges in respect of affordable housing, challenges in respect of classroom space, challenges in respect of resources that would help them successfully transition into the community. And I can't say enough about our local settlement services office. And that's just one of the agencies that has rose up to meet that challenge. And Laurie Sawatsky and her staff, with whom I've had the opportunity to meet many, many times, are just second to none when it comes to delivering language services and delivering very practical services to newcomers.

And I would imagine, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's probably no different in your own neighbourhoods, where you represent in Fort Rouge, where you have new people coming to the community. And it's easy for our government to say, oh, okay, we've done it now. But we know that there are agencies and groups and local community groups and church groups who say, we understand we have a role in here to help people transition into community. That is so important.

It's so important in an area like mine that used to be far less diverse and is becoming more and more diverse. As a matter of fact, I accompanied my wife Shelley—we were at Superstore on Friday last week—and I was amazed at the number of foreign languages that I could not immediately discern. And those foreign languages, you know, used to be German and

Spanish. And now, I mean, we have so many people in our communities. Filipino community is growing terrifically. The Congolese community is growing in the Winkler-Morden area. We have so many different nations represented from eastern Asia, from eastern Europe. We have a whole new set of immigrants coming from places like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. And they need supports and community as well.

So those early efforts were encumbered by community groups who really didn't fully appreciate—maybe I should say fully understand the nature and the extent of the challenge that would be theirs when these newcomers came. But anyway, I would want to say for the purposes of this bill that I want to stress that our communities have been successful. And I would say that our school boards have been successful, and I know that even the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) is often glowing in her praise for the members of my community who are on school board trustee positions. I know that the relationships between some of those school board members at GVSD go back a long way with her. And it was their persistent and respectful advocacy that helped convey to this NDP government that we—our schools could wait no longer, that with some schools in excess of 30 huts in the back of the school, we simply had our back against the wall. And it was important for this government to understand that.

Our communities have been successful. Our trustees have been successful. Our school board superintendents have been successful. This bill would seem to underestimate the capabilities of local communities to do the job in delivering education. Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill 7 includes a provision that effectively would locate again more power in the minister's office in a role of an overseer with respect to child-care spaces in schools. And we understand in this place and, I think, more and more, Manitobans are coming to understand that there is policy in place in our province that requires that when new schools are built, that child-care space will be located in that school.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would want to be clear with my comments. I want to be crystal clear that I support every effort of our communities to create child-care spaces, and I say that knowing that, in this province, child-care wait times have accelerated under this NDP government. As a matter of fact, I think that at any one time the number of people waiting for child-care placements can be in excess of 1,000. I think—sorry, 12,000. That's right

because I'm remembering now the mayor from Morden, Ken Wiebe, telling me recently that even in Morden the wait-list is over 500.

So let me say first off that it is important to have child-care spaces available in community. Now, of course, that becomes more difficult when an NDP government is restricting and restricting the ability of family-based child-care units to actually do business. These are hard-working entrepreneurs, moms and dads, men and women, who are saying, you know what, I have an interest in this, I have some acumen in this, I am trained in this, I can safely deliver these places.

And more and more it's become a case in this province that the government has ideologically driven an agenda that says no to those spaces and says yes to these.

Well, we have said as a party and our own critic has said the whole way along is, why don't you just allow the whole system to succeed? Why don't you drive both of those agendas? Why do you have to ideologically fixate in such a way to create winners and losers? And who pays the price of that kind of rigid ideology? It's parents whose kids cannot get into daycare spaces, because one thing we know and that is, even if on a go-forward basis we understand that this agenda will create spaces in schools, we understand, at the same time, we cannot build schools quickly enough to attend to all the child-care needs. So I'm disappointed, Madam Speaker, that the NDP government has not done more to drive both of those conversations.

Indeed, a month or two ago, when the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) raised this issue, well, then again, the government, who has nothing left but the ability to create fear, they begin to agitate. They begin to spread stories saying that our party wants to somehow privatize the daycare industry when, really, they all understand it, and perhaps it's just a good headline for them but they understand what we're saying: don't create winners and losers when it's Manitobans who pay the price.

Create a robust system of both types that both recognizes that the Province has a role and that communities have a role, because what I can tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that communities are ready to step up. As a matter of fact, right now, at this time, the City of Morden has spent the money, has allocated space, has addressed all the logistical issues and they cannot get approval to open a daycare that would significantly attend to the need in

our community. Why not? Because the minister doesn't know the square footage of the system.

I'm hearing that the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) saying the same thing here, is that why does the Minister of Education feel that he has a role to micromanage this system when we have more and more trustees telling us that they have less and less of an adequate role when it comes to the delivery of education in communities?

There are so many areas of function that are now overseen by the overseers in the Minister of Education's department. It's not unlike other areas of government but the point is in my community—and I'm confident that in the, you know, community of Midland and the community of Spruce Woods and the community of Portage la Prairie, and all across Manitoba, we have capable trustees who take their role very seriously. We have capable superintendents who take their role very seriously and who are ready to do what is in the best interest of education in their own community. This is the very principle of—I'm forgetting the name of the principle, Madam Speaker, but it's got a great name. And it's—I'll think of it in just a moment. It—oh, I knew it. It's the principle of subsidiarity, and subsidiarity would say that the agency in the best position to oversee and administrate is the agency most closely related to the issue and the challenge. In a nutshell, that is what the principle would say.

* (15:20)

And yet this kind of thinking, this kind of legislation runs over that principle. It says no, no, no. We know best. This is—we'll locate the power here and communities will have to go back to the minister's office. Well, we know how that goes. These things take time. All of these linkages take time. The minister, I would imagine, is busy in his role. I imagine there is demands on his time that are significant. Here is one small area where government could have said, we trust you; we know you; we have relationship with you. If there's a problem, we will address it in the specific.

But this is like so many issues in Manitoba, and I don't want to digress, and I don't want to test the—your speaker, Madam Deputy—your patience, Madam Deputy Speaker. But it reminds me in some respects of another issue that is near to the hearts of our communities, and that has to do with police boards. Because it's exactly that area of interest whereby we now have more and more—we have members of our—the public who are seconded to—or they are, I guess,

appointed to police boards where they serve and they oversee police function in community. The problem is that there wasn't evidence that there was widespread problems when it came to municipal policing.

Now, you and I would both remember, and other members of this House would remember, there have been some issues in respect of municipal policing in this province, some significant issues. But I submit to you they were isolated issues. And rather than address an issue in isolation, it is a government that lacks enthusiasm, a government that lacks ideas, a government that lacks ingenuity, that seeks to make wholesale solutions in the aggregate, in the macro. Maybe it's easier. Maybe it seems easier at the time. But I would submit it will be no less easy in its working out because it will demand time. It will demand time of the minister. It will demand time of the deputy minister, an individual that we know—and I know that deputy ministers never like to have their names raised in this House—but an individual who is very busy and who has significant challenges in his role. I can't imagine he will welcome this. I can't imagine the assistant deputy ministers will welcome this additional role. I sometimes wonder, when legislation hits our desks as legislators and we read the preamble and we read the rationale, we wonder what is the issue in specific that has driven, again, this wholesale knee-jerk response. And I was asking my colleague, the member for Lac du Bonnet, what is the issue that has driven this response? And, honestly, we can form some theories about what it is, but we're not sure. We're not sure why the minister thinks this is the solution.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have schools that have some huge problems, some huge challenges, even now in my community. As a matter of fact, I was just in contact with two superintendents, the superintendent for Garden Valley School Division and the superintendent for Western School Division, just in the last two days. And they're expressing to me that they continue to convey to the minister and to that department, and I would say they work very effectively, both of those communities, taking an approach that I think is positive, that is based on relationship building, that says it doesn't matter who's in power in the province; we must work with everyone because what we take very seriously is our role to deliver education in the best manner possible with the resources that we have, with the teachers that we employ, with the parent groups with whom we advise in the spaces that we have.

But I would say, Madam Deputy Speaker, members of this Legislature might not know that right now, GVSD, Garden Valley School Division, is still using 44 of the 55 portable units in that school division. They were up to 55 portable units at one point, and it was aerial photography, independently done, sent to media, that finally drove the NDP to prioritize the building of a new high school in Winkler because it looked—I mean, some people even said that it looked like some kind of a camp that was built behind this school. It was a labyrinth of buildings that posed a host of logistical problems. I can't imagine what 55 portable units means in the case of—what is that expression they always use when they talk about an unapproved visitor to a school who could pose a threat to school safety? And it's not the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), I know that. There's another name that they give it. But it's like that word they give to intruders. And when those things happen—and we know they're very, very serious when they occur, and schools have these lockdown procedures that occur—then I know at that point in time they lock and secure the outside doors.

Imagine what this means when you're a school with 55 portable units. Now GVSD is still using 44 of those units. These schools have logistical issues to address that the Minister of Education can't possibly attend to. He can't possibly understand the nuance of those things, and that is saying nothing against the capabilities of the minister.

If I was the Minister of Education, I can't imagine I would want to be involved in that minutia of detail. I would say, don't bring this to me; go and solve the issue and tell me how you solved it and use every creative path you can to solve it.

Well, that's what schools are trying to do now, and yet this—in this legislation is written a provision that says if a school wants to change the space where a daycare is located, then the minister has to approve. And it says that if you're moving a daycare between schools, well, then the minister has to approve. And all these things will take time, and time is precious in the school division where problems need to get solved; they need to get solved under real timelines.

I often speak to stakeholder groups and they chide us in this place as legislators and parliamentarians, for not being more rooted in common sense. They talk about common-sense approaches. They talk about pragmatic approaches, and I often say there is a lot of the private sector that we must learn as legislators to inject into our practices. We

can learn that, and there are members in this place with a background in the private sector, as I know the member for St. James-Assiniboia, Assiniboia-St. James—

An Honourable Member: Assiniboia.

Mr. Friesen: —Assiniboia has and other members of my own caucus have, members who come here and have a business background and have worked in the private sector. And some days they must just recoil under some of the legislation that hits these desks and say this is not the most efficient way to do x, y or z.

And we need that approach. We have it now. We have the basis in which we can have an approach that respects the time, that respects the competencies, that respects the sober oath taken by our trustees, our school divisions, our superintendents to deliver education in their communities. We could take an approach that respects the principle of subsidiarity. We could locate this power in their hands and we can trust that they will do it.

And you know what, I would say another great example that I haven't even referenced yet would be the example of Bill 6. No, was it Bill 9? I've forgotten already. What was the name of that bill that the NDP brought just two years ago with respect to antibullying legislation?

An Honourable Member: Eighteen.

Mr. Friesen: Oh, yes, Bill 18. How could I forget Bill 18?

There, again, we heard day after day after day in committee stage that people agree—Manitobans all agree that NDP spends a lot of time talking about Manitoba principles and Manitoba values, and Manitobans in that room, I didn't hear one of them depart from the idea that kids should be free from bullying in schools. But the NDP so narrowly focused their bill that it left so many groups of students unprotected from bullying acts. And, as a parent of three kids who have gone through the school system, two of whom are still in the school system, we know that bullying exists.

We had great ideas coming forward from school divisions, from third-party groups, from faith-based school groups in the independent system, groups that said we want to respect the integrity of this bill, we want to extend it, we will do it even better. But there was this top-down, management, hostile approach that didn't want to hear what they have to say. I hope

that in this case that is not the fixation of this government.

I hope that with the compelling evidence that my colleague, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), has put on the record yesterday, and with these few thoughts that I add to the debate today, and with others that we still will hear from today, that this government will take a second look, that they will say, you know what, I think we got this wrong; I think that we have a—we have school divisions that are ready to do the job. They're—and want to take a lean approach and get this right.

And so that's why we're looking forward to hearing what the public has to say when this bill goes to committee because in the same way that Bill 18 and other bills that this government has brought, the bill on policing in communities and municipal police force, in the same way that the government didn't do a good enough job of listening, perhaps this time they'll do a better job of listening to Manitobans.

And so I thank you for that opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (15:30)

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Madam Acting Speaking, I welcome the opportunity to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 7, another bill dealing with education.

I think after today's introduction of another education bill, I think that's four bills on education we have this session. Certainly, it looks like the NDP have a new-found friendship for education, and maybe it's a reflection on the poor results that we've seen here in Manitoba in the last few years. And, certainly, the results are—have been going downhill quite dramatically over the last few years. So we, you know, we were ninth at one time; now we're 10th and we're—quite frankly, we're 10th and fading. So it is time to pay some attention to education here in Manitoba.

Madam Acting Speaker, certainly we think that education is a paramount concern for Manitobans and should be a paramount concern for government as well, and, certainly, we need to have a very positive academic experience here in the province so that our students understand the basics and are provided with all opportunities to move forward in life, whether that be in the workforce once they graduate or whether they decide to go on to some further studies, whatever that may be.

Madam Acting Speaker, we're in a bit of a change in our—at home, with us, my wife being a teacher and certainly has been a teacher for, oh, boy, quite some time, and I think she obviously realizes the importance of education, and she quite often shares those stories with—of her students and some of the things that they encounter as educators, as problems and as roadblocks. And, obviously, we all have to work together with the stakeholders, you know, the parents, administration and, in this case, the provincial government as well. So everyone has a role to play in education, and if we can all work together, certainly, I think we have to work together in the best interests of the students, and that, at the end of the day, is really what it's all about. The decisions we make should be based on the needs of the students, and I think that's the important part of it.

So the change I talk about is in the fact that our youngest son is now off to college so it's quite a different dynamic around the household nowadays with the kids showing up basically on the weekends, but he's decided to take a business course at Assiniboine Community College, and things are working out pretty well there so far and he seems—certainly seems to be enjoying that. And we certainly are looking forward to not more announcements; we actually need some work to be done at Assiniboine Community College. And I know the—there's—there certainly has been a—the first phase of Assiniboine Community College, the move to the North Hill has been undertaken. But I know the folks in—certainly at the college itself and certainly a lot of the people in the communities are looking forward to that project moving on.

And it was really good, the member for Lac du Bonnet and I had a chance to visit with President Frison not too long ago, and he really had a—gave us a thorough explanation of what they were hoping to accomplish over the years. And, again, that is—that will be determined by how much funding comes from the Province, and I guess they're looking at some federal money for that as well, but, clearly, provincial funding will make that project move forward. But it is really quite interesting to see how that campus could develop, and I think there's some real opportunities for expansion of the college, some expansion of different classes there as well. So I know Mark, he is really excited about the potential there and certainly looking forward to the future there, and we hope things will happen sooner rather

than later on that development. So it is a positive move forward.

I know we had the Throne Speech just a couple of weeks ago and there was the same line in there this year as there was last year. It was exactly the same line in regards to Assiniboine Community College. So we will wait with bated breath to see if the government puts their money where their mouth is, in that respect.

The other thing that's happened at our household, our middle son who just graduated with his agribusiness degree from the University of Manitoba—so he certainly had that experience there at the University of Manitoba—got involved a little bit in politics there as well. Turned out he was the senior stick for the Agriculture and home economy faculty. So it was an interesting time for him and certainly an interesting learning curve for him, in learning to deal with a faculty and learning to deal with the students within the faculty, so it was a very good opportunity for him. He's come to the point in time in life where he's going to have to decide whether he's going to continue in the workforce as he's doing now or potentially go back to school in some capacity. So that's where he is at.

And I just wanted to say, Madam Acting Speaker, that our oldest son is now a journeyman carpenter, so he has taken the apprentice side and actually went to Red River to get his Red Seal documentation. So he is working in the carpentry industry and certainly likes that as well.

So, clearly, you know, we see that education is very important for students and we think for all Manitobans, and we hope that students, as many as possible, will graduate here and then continue with their education here or ultimately to stay and work in Manitoba, and that's really what it's all about, Madam Acting Speaker.

I do want to give credit to the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), our Education critic. I know he spent a lot of time on looking at the legislation that's before us. He has also spent a lot of time since becoming critic travelling the province, meeting with teachers, meeting with principals, meeting with school boards and other administrators, as well, so that he has a pretty good understanding of what's happening around the province in education, and I think that's pretty key. I think a lot of our members have been doing the same thing in different areas and it's important that we understand what's happening, big picture, around the province.

So I do want to just say congratulations on the work he's been doing in consultations. And that's the one thing that we think the NDP government could do more of, and that's consulting with various stakeholders before legislation is brought forward.

Clearly, we're interested to see this particular piece of legislation move into committee and we'll hear what Manitobans have to say in regard to the child-care spaces in schools.

I do also want to acknowledge the member from Morden-Winkler who is also a former teacher, former educator, and the good work that he has done in his community and also bringing forward legislation as it pertains to safety in school areas, some important legislation brought forward by that member. And I think it raises some awareness of some of the things that had been missing in previous legislation. So I certainly want to acknowledge his efforts as well in terms of consulting with the communities and stakeholders on the education front, and I appreciated his comments here this afternoon.

Madam Acting Speaker, we're certainly in favour of child-care spaces and I've seen it work quite nicely when it's rolled into the school community. I know the school just around the corner from us has a daycare and has a daycare for, oh, about five or six years since it's been incorporated in there. And it was a perfect opportunity to incorporate a daycare there because of some declining enrolment in some of the communities. So it was a really natural fit, and I think it's worked out quite well in that regard. I think it—what it does, too, it adds to the ability of the school to be more of a centre within the community, so that the community understands a little more about what's happening in the school buildings and the facilities and the sort of activities that are going on there. So I think it's a real positive way for the community to focus around a school. And I hope that will help the communities as well to understand the important relationship that education and the school facility itself has in the community and, hopefully, I think in the most cases it is a fairly positive opportunity.

*(15:40)

I also had an opportunity to work with the community of Wawanesa. They'd been looking for an expansion of their daycare in the Wawanesa School, and the problem in Wawanesa was the building was full. Quite frankly, the building was full of students, and there was one room set aside for the daycare. But the community was growing. The

younger population was growing. And there was a need for an expansion of a daycare facility, but the school did not have room to accommodate any more kids. So it was quite a dilemma in terms of how they were going to move forward.

But, as always, when we look at solutions to these things we have to look at rules and regulations around moving forward. And that really became an impediment when we looked at the rules the Province had laid out for the expansion and development and construction of a daycare. And, quite frankly, the community were scratching their heads for what seemed like years in trying to deal with the provincial rules and regulations and, in fact, process. And it seemed to me that, you know, every time we would get close to having a tender on a project, the prices would keep coming back; they would just be astronomical. And the community was going to be asked to fund a percentage of the building. And it just came to the point it wasn't feasible for the community to go forward on that.

But, anyway, after about four years of various discussions back and forth, the Province decided they were going to come in and build a daycare on grounds adjacent to the community school, and this facility was actually just completed last year. And, actually, just trying to find out exactly what the cost was of that particular building, and it's about a 1,500-square-foot, one-level building. But the story's going around it cost \$1 million. And if—Madam Acting Speaker, most people look at it and say, how could a building like that cost \$1 million? It doesn't seem to make any sense. But I'm looking forward to getting that number from the department and to see what the actual cost was and see if there's any way we can justify that cost for that size of a building.

I know when you look at the building itself, it doesn't make any sense to me where we have a building that's built six feet off the ground, and we have nothing in that crawlspace there except more gravel, and then we have expensive stairs and ramps leading up into the building. It doesn't seem to make sense to me from a common sense perspective. And I think that's where we have to come back to. A lot of the rules and regulations and red tape is—we have to come back to the common sense. And that's something that we're asking the minister to have a look at in this particular piece of legislation too.

You know, it appears the minister will have final say in terms of how daycare expansion will happen, what daycares will be established, what sort of

child-care spaces will—where they will be, and if they have to be moved, they have to be approved by the minister. And it seems to get, you know, another layer of bureaucracy in there. And I know some of the communities and probably the school boards are a little concerned, again, that some of their autonomy is being taken away. And they've seen this before, Madam Acting Speaker. You know, we talk about the legislation to prohibit any school closures. They took that authority away from school boards, unless, of course, the community and the minister agree with it. So they've taken that sort of autonomy away from school boards.

I know they've also limited some of the financing, too, that school boards are allowed to accumulate. So those sort of things that, you know, the history has shown that they've taken the autonomy away from school boards. And I'm sure that's something that I—we will hear when this particular bill goes to committee. At least we're certainly looking forward to hear what the public has to say.

Clearly, child-care spaces are positive things in our communities. Quite frankly, there's no doubt about that. And I think that, you know, the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) really talked about it. You know, it's the ideology of how we accomplish what we're trying to accomplish. And maybe there's other ways to accomplish things that give us better bang for our buck, better value for our dollars. And I think that is what the public is telling us well, that we deserve better value for our money, and there's no need to spend more money and provide less services. So it's the providing the best possible outcomes for the least possible inputs, and that's something that I think we should have a good, hard look at.

And that's, I think, what we will hear from communities as well. Communities want to be part of the discussion. They want to be part of the stakeholders, along with school boards, in terms of how these child-care spaces are developed into the future. And I think that's a very important part of the consultation with all the stakeholders involved.

Madam Acting Speaker, if we have a look at some of the NDP failures in terms of child—children in Manitoba, quite frankly, you know, they haven't been very successful at reducing child poverty. We have some of the highest records of child poverty of any province. So it's certainly something that has to be addressed.

You know, and we look at—if we look at—actually look at the testing that's done in schools, I think what's happened, you know, we can compare ourselves in different perspectives to other provinces and other countries. And, unfortunately, I'm not sure where things have gone off the rails here, but Manitoba students are 'lank'—ranking dead last in math, science and reading. And we have a lot of work to do to turn that around, and I think we're all trying to do that, but we're not just sure how to do that. And that's sometimes the challenge.

Now, I'm not sure if it's a matter of we've lowered the bar too low to try to get our graduation rates up, you know, if that's the reason for it. Like, if we can say we got high graduation rates, that is one thing that should be positive, but if our students aren't qualified to carry on into post-secondary or if they're, worse yet, they're not qualified to enter into the job market, then, quite frankly, we've let our children down. And I think we should be doing everything we can to make sure we have a serious look at that and make sure that our children are qualified for the workplace.

I'm quite encouraged by the—some of the good work and the leadership at Brandon University and Assiniboine Community College. You know, those two entities are working very closely together, and in my perspective, they're working closely together because they view—they have the same view about—it's about the kids, and it's about getting the kids prepared for life. So I know they're working very closely in some—establishing some different courses to work together to try to get kids ready for the workplace. And the other component of that is we have to be working with the business community to make sure that we're training kids for the jobs that are going to be required down the road. So that's, to me, is a pretty key element. So that's why I'm encouraged to see, you know, the leadership from those two, from the university and from the college out in the community, and they're out in the communities all the time. And they're talking with the people in the community; they're talking with business leaders to make sure that they have a handle on what the community and what the business community is looking for in terms of students going forward.

So it's really reassuring to see some of those discussions take place, and I certainly hope that those kinds of discussions will continue. I think there was an announcement just last week about a potential for a shared business, actually, a building being

developed in Brandon where business students would share the same building and there would be kind of a co-op course between Assiniboine Community College and Brandon University, and it seems like a very positive thing, to me, to work together. I know, for instance, my son, his aspirations, at least at this point in time, are to take his two-year diploma at Assiniboine Community College, and if everything goes well and looks well after that, he would transfer to Brandon University and finish off with a two-year degree there. So, clearly, there is some courses that are—they're working nicely together where you can get the, you know, the hands-on experience and then also you can get the theory and component to it as well. So there certainly is some opportunities to move forward with those types of programs.

We certainly is—as PC caucus, we recognize that child care is certainly essential. We want to make sure that everything is done to provide that to Manitobans. We believe there's lots of opportunity for expansion of child-care spaces around the province. We also think the community should have a broad discussion and consultation in terms of how child-care spaces are developed as well.

So we do look forward to seeing this legislation move to committee, and we do look forward to hearing what Manitobans have to say.

With that, I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

* (15:50)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to talk for a few minutes on Bill 7. I'm actually very supportive of the thrust of this legislation, which is ensuring that there are adequate child-care spaces and that they're used for child care and not diverted into other uses, but we need to have a situation where there are early childhood education spaces there for children.

But I have some significant concerns. My first concern has to do with the degree of micro-management of the affairs of school boards. I wonder whether this approach is really necessary for the government to be, you know, micromanaging what happens at the school level and what the managing has done by school boards. It seems to me that what we should have had here was a bill which provided for universal child care and the structure and framework of such a universal child-care delivery program.

And then, you know, within that structure, there would be assurance that where there are children who need child care and early childhood education, there would be spaces there and you wouldn't have to get into the kind of micromanagement that is present in this legislation.

You know, I recognize, and I think most of us do here, that when it comes to child care and early childhood education, that this government has basically moved from one crisis to another. I have been at many meetings where people have talked about the crisis in child care with large numbers of children not able to get spaces, with people's lives being disrupted because they are unable to get the child care that they need when they need it.

And they have used the word crisis. I have heard this used by a whole variety of people who are involved in this area, and I recognize that from—16 years, in spite of a lot of, you know, talk of the importance of child care, in spite of the government saying, well, we're going to do a little bit this year and a little bit next year and little bit, and they have not solved the issue and we continue to have crisis and crisis and crisis.

You know, it seems to be that, you know, when we have a situation like we've had with thousands and thousands of children waiting for the child care and early childhood education spaces, which are not there, that we need more than just this kind of token approach of trying to ensure the existing spaces, you know, are—and micromanage what's going on at a school board level. We need to make sure that there are actually the child care—number of child-care spaces that are actually needed.

So, you know, currently I think that there's—probably in the order of more than 10,000 children still waiting. You know, it's a lot. In fact, I'm told that on the registry as of September 30th of this year the total number of children on the wait-list was 12,729—12,729 children waiting. You know, there is a problem here, and it's a problem that is much bigger than what's in this bill and should have had a more comprehensive approach, you know, instead of coming through this bill. Not that I don't—and I do support all efforts to improve the situation, but, quite frankly, what's happening with the education system when there are 400 children, say, in K to 8 in a particular community who need an education, there's an insurance—an assurance that there will be space for 400 children.

But, when it comes to child care and early childhood education, this government has operated on the principle that if there are 400 children needing child care and early childhood education, that the NDP government feels that it is sufficient to have only 300 spaces when there are 400 needing, leaving 100 children and families out in the cold. You know, and it's hard to understand their approach, and it's hard to, you know, figure out why, year after year after year, they're leaving us in this situation.

Children and families are being disadvantaged by what's happening because there are not enough access to child-care spaces in their community, or where they work, in some instances. Employers are disadvantaged because they themselves sometimes don't have access to child care, or the people that they want to work in their business don't have access to child care. And so it's a problem for businesses. And it's a problem for people who want to work.

I was at one session where a small-business woman who'd been running her business and doing very well and employing nine people was unable to get a child-care space for her child. She had to stay home, and she had to lay off nine people. And this is the sort of thing which is happening here in Manitoba because this government has kind of lurched from crisis to crisis instead of solving the problem and making sure that there is the universal child-care system so that children who need it are able to get the child care that they need.

One of the aspects of this bill which I find interesting is that the government wanting to regulate and be sure of the timing of construction and so on. This is a government which took two and a half years to move and to improve the provincial tourist centre at The Forks. You know, it was an adjustment to construction at the centre which, you know, probably, at the most, should have taken three or four months, but this government took well over two years. This government really has, you know, no credibility in trying to mandate that others meet tight timelines when it itself can't meet tight timelines.

So, Madam Speaker, you know, they're—Manitoba Liberals are very supportive of getting—making sure that there is high-quality child care and early childhood education and that people who need it actually are able to get the early childhood education that they need. But this, you know, is only one small piece. We really should have had the legislation which provided for the universal child-care system, but we don't have it, in spite of the

fact that the NDP are talking about that that's what they want to do. And they've been there for 16 years, and they haven't done it. And so we have questions; you know, are they going to talk another 16 years? Probably, but who knows?

Madam Speaker, before closing, I did want to say a few words, first of all, with respect to Floyd Wiebe, who passed away very suddenly. Floyd was a tremendous advocate for victims, for improvement in the justice system, for improvement in communities in the way that we approach things. His son died tragically, and he had a very difficult time, but he became a very strong advocate and raised thousands and thousands of dollars with his wife Karen and others in an effort to improve things for many other children and a better future.

* (16:00)

I also want to talk, Madam Speaker, a little bit about Maurice Strong. Maurice Strong passed away recently. He was a Canadian. He was from Oak Lake, Manitoba, originally. He was an environmentalist. He was also a businessman. And he's really given a lot of credit for his leadership in movement toward sustainability, making sure that we're looking after the environment and looking after our economy at the same time.

And so I just want to recognize Maurice Strong as making a major contribution to not only Manitoba but to Canada and to the world, and I think it's important to recognize that contribution and to acknowledge the important work that he did.

Madam Speaker, with those few words I will sit down and let others have their piece. Thank you.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 7, protecting—The Public Schools Amendment Act and in brackets I guess we have Protecting Child Care Space in Schools.

It's, I guess, an interesting act when you read through it. And when I look through it, the thing that stands out to me is the control that goes into the office of the minister, how much control that the minister feels that they need in order to, I guess, manage this area. And I'm—I don't understand. Obvious the minister has a plan, but why there's that necessary segment of control there that the minister has the final say on so much here when to most people, I believe, when I speak to them, they're looking for child care. They don't care the politics of the child care; they just want, first of all, to have

safe, obviously, child care available and they want to have a space available.

It's something that, you know, with four children ourselves, my wife and I obviously dealt with child care as they were growing up, and it was something that we worked through various different situations. But now when I'm out speaking to people and listening to them, they're having tremendous difficulty, especially over the past several years under this NDP government, finding space.

There was a time when I had friends in Toronto—I still do—and their children were the same age and it was part of their planning process for having children, that they would find the child-care space as they're planning to have a child. And I thought, isn't that horrific, that you have to think before we're even going to have a child or one more child, that, first of all, we need to have space for that child so that the spouses could go back to work in order to make enough money to pay for that child and for living and, you know, thank goodness most of the time we didn't have that in Manitoba.

But now it's come to Manitoba. I constantly hear of people—from people in Brandon, and elsewhere in Manitoba, that this is part of their planning for having additional children. Where can they finally—where can they find a child-care space? I mean, it's fabulous if they have more than one children and they have additional child-care space in that same facility. But often that's not the case, where they have one child that is in this facility over here and then they find they—a space, if they're very lucky, probably somewhere across town. So you're taking the children or to child care, if it's one parent's doing it, or both, travelling around town prior to going to work and then coming back after work and hopefully getting to the facility before it's too late, you know, because they—staff there have times that they're allowed to work and, you know, it's creating a lot of stress on a lot of families.

Especially, you know, people that are moving into Brandon, what we find is that young families moving into Brandon and they think, okay, we're—if they're coming from a smaller community they're coming to a larger one or they perhaps move from Winnipeg or outside of the province, if we're lucky enough to attract them here, and they're thinking, well, you know, hopefully it'll be good. We'll be able to find some child-care spaces because they may have one, two, three or more children, and they find moving in that that's just not available. Not only it's

not available, but you're one on a waiting list with thousands of people. Meanwhile, you have often not one job on the line but two jobs on the line of both parents that are working and have to still look after the children and find places for them to be during the day so the parents can go to work.

And what we found also is, as this NDP government has layered more and more and more taxes on that family, and all families in Manitoba, it used to be the case where you could have one provider in the family and there was enough income in that family to allow a caregiver to stay home, to look after the children and raise the children and educate the children along the way, and make sure that they're all doing things well. And, you know, then we saw that as this NDP government layered more and more and more taxes on that family, then the necessity became that, well, now both parents have to work in order to pay the taxes. And then we've got to find child care, and then it's just a vicious cycle here, Madam Deputy Speaker, where the more taxes you put on families, especially young families, the harder it is for them to make ends meet. And often now, when I'm out in communities and speaking to young families, even for those individuals that have jobs and are working hard, one job may not be enough for each individual parent. They may now have to have more than one job to make things all work out.

I have—was very fortunate, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the last month or so, to be at many Diwali celebrations, and many of these young people that I spoke to—most of them, I'd say, in fact, especially the Mauritius group—they're all young families with young children, both parents working in a variety of jobs. And child care was one of the big topics that we ran into there: where they can find it, how they can access it, where they can make it easy enough so that they're not running all over Brandon trying to deliver one child to one care facility and another child to another one and making the parents', you know, time work, if they're on shift work or on other types of work, how it will all work together. It's a very difficult planning process that has been forced on these individuals by this government.

So, you know, I—this is what I see and what I hear from people, that it's just getting worse and worse and worse, and I don't see that this bill is going to improve that because the minister obviously fashions himself as an expert in child care. They're going to have ultimate control. They're not going to

allow the child-care centres to operate in the manner in which they should and be efficient and effective. And more and more downloading on the schools as we move along here, Madam Acting Speaker.

So, you know, I really question—have to question the—some of the entries in this act and how it's going to work, if it's going to work, if it's going to improve anything. This government talks and talks and talks about providing more child-care spaces, and yet we see the waiting lists continue to grow, lots of desperation.

And even when you speak to the child-care providers in those centres, the pressure that is put on those individuals and the management of those centres by parents because the parent may know that there's another child coming along, or they have a younger child that they have to enter into care, or they want to get them both into the same centre. And a great deal of pressure on those providers to accommodate the parents. And well-meaning parents, they want to make life easier for themselves so that they can use one child-care centre as opposed to two or even have their newborn child come into child care as the parent has to go back to work.

But the pressure on those providers is, indeed, intense, Madam Deputy Speaker. And it's—is that a fair thing to do? Well, that's the situation that this government has placed them in. They're all, you know, great stories that you hear from the parents, and they're all in need, but yet we're not always able to accommodate them and, in fact, rarely able to accommodate them because this government's—of this government's inaction on this file.

And it was a common thing that I found door knocking prior to the last election, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I hear it again now, is that child-care spaces all over Manitoba and in Brandon are a critical need that has been ignored by this government. And we have shift workers that are having difficulty, obviously, and we don't always—we're not always able to plan child care for shift workers, but that is the reality for a lot of people in Brandon. And they're finding a lot of difficulty in this area, and the last thing you would want is to have a child at risk, especially the young children. And it is, I think, forcing parents to make some decisions, very troubling decisions, sometimes, and that's, again, the last thing you would want to see some of these parents have to deal with.

* (16:10)

There's a lot of stress raising children. I'm sure that you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's not easy. There's a lot of books out there, lots of manuals, as such, but all with different ideas, some of them about the same ideas.

And, you know, it was something that I found kind of interesting in my work in business is there's lots of business manuals out there too, but what I found is the business books are often quite a bit more expensive. And if you bought a child-care book, it often says the same things because you're dealing with people and individuals and their behaviour. So I did often use child-care books in management of companies because you're dealing with those people, and I found that our staff was able to find good information in them as well in how to deal with staff and how to learn how to raise your children as well. But those, obviously, don't always deal with every aspect, and when something happens when you're caring for children, you don't always have time to go back and check on the book what you're supposed to do because you're reacting immediately to a situation with that child.

So nothing very easy there, but it is, of course, very rewarding all the way along, and as you see those children grow and evolve and take on more tasks and be more responsible, it's a very rewarding job. And now when I see that, obviously, having coached sports in the community for many, many years, especially when they're young children, they've now grown up, driving, working, and I'll go to a store or establishment, and it's always very humbling when one of the individuals comes up to me and says, you know what? You used to coach me in hockey or in volleyball or in skiing. And, obviously, they've grown from when they were five years old to now when they're 16, 17 or more, and with the number of individuals that I've coached, I can't always remember them; some of them I do because they certainly had distinct characteristics, but we talk about where we met and how it worked and it is very humbling and gratifying when I do get that response from people that I have had an impact on their lives, hopefully, in a positive way, and it does seem to be that way quite often.

I can think back to when I first started coaching hockey when our older children were quite young, and they started at the age of five or six in what was called the hockey improvement program at that time; I think it now—it's now sponsored by Tim Hortons, and they all get these fancy little jerseys. But the more people you can have on the ice, the better,

because these young children, both boys and girls, are obviously learning the sport. Some of them are more developed than others; some of them are older because when you're at the age of five, a span of a year makes a huge difference, and you might have someone that's born in September that is in your current year and you might have—so they would be quite young, and then you might have somebody that was born in August and is essentially almost a year older, but they're in the same age span there.

And I do remember distinctly one coach that I was working with, and he was setting up the players all over the ice after they had run through some drills for about 40 minutes and handled the puck a little bit, and then he was going to set up a little scrimmage, a little game between them. So he was putting the kids in their place and saying, well, you're going to be a right wing, you're going to be a centre, this is where you start in the faceoff, left wing. And then there was a young fellow. He says, okay, I want you to go in goal, and he continued to set up the players around the ice. The young player went into goal, and the coach turned around and he was—the player was standing right beside him. He said, no, no, I want you go in goal. Okay, and he turned around, and we're—coach is still setting up the players. So the player went into the goal and came back because children are very, very literal, as I'm sure you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, and so after the third time the coach looked at him, and he said, well, I want you go in goal and play net. You—I want you to be the goalie. Oh, okay, well, that's a different story. That was—I thought we were playing a game: I go into the net and come back; that's what I was doing.

So, yes, they are very little, very literal and little Madam Deputy Speaker, and we all learn a great deal from how we interact with children, obviously. So it's not just for the well-being and the development of the children, but it's also the well-being and the development of the caregivers and the parents, the coaches, all around that that has been, I think, probably, my biggest source of education all the way along has been coaching young children and learning how to help them learn, learning how to develop and learning how they see the world.

So it is quite enthralling and interesting, I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, to see how children see the world. Indeed, now that I no longer have young children, I do often miss that. When I was at the Diwali celebration with the Mauritius community, there was a young girl there. I'd say she's, oh, just a

little bit older than a year-year-and-a half type of thing, her beautiful little dress on, dancing away, and she fell down just in front of me. So I picked her up and she immediately snuggled right into my shoulder, and that—well, that's something you don't get very often. And it's a fabulous feeling that the children have that comfort with you and that they feel safe and secure, so that is something that I do miss. And maybe some day we'll have some grandchildren or something—just have a grand-dog right now, so not to put any pressure on children or anything, but it is something that I do miss and the laughter of the children, the free laughter that you get from them.

But, in this particular bill, it is quite troubling, I think, to see how much of the control that's going to shift and how much control the minister feels is necessary to go into the minister, and I don't see how that is going to help this government create more child-care spaces. It's a plan that they've had for a number of years, and, obviously, they failed at that plan because those spaces just keep becoming more and more stressed and more and more sparse, and demand for them is causing a great deal of stress on the young families. As I go around and listen to them around the province and, of course, in particular, in Brandon and Brandon West, which is where I do spend a great deal of time with families when I do have the chance, this is one of the things that is of the greatest stress that they have to deal with, where they can find a spot for the child so that the parents can go and work and pay all those taxes that are levied on them by this government as we see more and more taxes all the time and yet we're having more and more difficulty finding a spot for children.

So it's—I think it's always distressing when we do see stories of children at risk, Madam Deputy Speaker, and we know that having child-care spaces available would go a long way to reducing that risk, but sometimes parents are forced to make decisions that are not very palatable and they do run the risk of causing—putting their children at risk, and that is always the dilemma now that you face as a parent. And, indeed, some parents are facing more of that dilemma than others as they move along in their child care.

So we have, as a party, the PC party has consistently called for more and more action from this NDP government on this. They've been—the NDP has been languishing, I believe, on this file. I mean, I don't know how they can say they've had success when we see the over 12,000 children on the

waiting list and growing. So, you know, the government talks about action, but then we don't see any. And we see, in this bill here, I don't see how it's actually going to add any spaces out there. Just get on with the program and let's get things done.

We know that it's a critical time of child development, and it's not just a warehouse that you put child—children in to—so that they are somewhat cared for. It is also an area that we need child enrichment, and as I see areas around the province that are doing it well, even with the challenges that the government has put on them, it is encouraging. And I know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you have visited the YMCA in Brandon and seen their child-care facility. It was one of our goals when we were going to create and build a new Y. We saw child-care facilities and other YMCAs in Canada as we travelled around to see how the new ones were being built, and I do distinctly remember one facility in Edmonton where the children were being led out of the class—of that particular age was being led out of the child-care facility, hanging on to the rope going down the hallway to go for their daily swimming lessons, and how much better can that be than to have swimming lessons as part of your child care?

* (16:20)

And those are the things that facilities such as YMCAs can provide. And I'm sure you know that YMCAs are the largest provider of child care in North America, and they work with the government when they can to make things, obviously, work. And the government has a lot of demands, not just in this province but in all provinces on child care, as we well should in some regards, but sometimes, you know, the—I know I've heard questions from child-care facilities, well, why do we have to do this, why do we have to do that? And there usually is, in the end, a good reason, but it's not always communicated well to that facility.

So the communication is a challenge, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I know it's a challenge that you dealt with when you were a minister. And it's something we all have as a challenge is how to communicate best and how to make sure that the children are protected and that spaces are available.

So, with those words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm sure there are others that want to add to this particular bill. And it is a caution from me, I guess, that the amount of this that I see that's going into the control of the minister, that I really don't see how

that's going to augment child care in Manitoba, and the need is so great and has been so disappointing under this NDP government. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Just a few words of comment. Of course, we have told the government that whichever bill they bring forward as their first bill on a day, that we will certainly debate that bill for a couple of hours, as is reasonable for a piece of legislation; we'll pass that bill to committee. So we will pass this bill to committee as per our word, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I hope that your good graces will give me a little bit of indulgence in that this is the first opportunity I've spoken today. I just want to put a couple of words on the record regarding Floyd Wiebe. *[interjection]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Order, please.

The honourable member has—the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has the floor.

Mr. Goertzen:—words regarding Mr. Wiebe.

I had the opportunity in my role as Justice critic for a number of years to meet Floyd and Karen. And at the TJ's Gift gala, which is one of the seminal events of the organizations that he ran, you really got a sense of an individual who was impacting so many lives. And the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) said it in his statement today, and it was right, that to be able to take grief and despair and turn it into something so hopeful and so positive speaks to a human quality that's almost undefinable, and that was certainly the experience that I saw with Floyd. He was always very 'gregacious' and had a great sense of humour.

At the last TJ's Gift gala, there was an auction item that involved being the police chief for the day, and he came to me and he said it's something that I should bid on for my grandson, and I ended up bidding on it for my son, not for my grandson, but I never did tell him anything otherwise than that. But I bid on it and my son won it and he became the police chief for the day earlier in this year. And Floyd posted a picture—because I had a picture on social media—he posted a picture of me and my grandson, who was actually my son. And so I talked to him a few weeks after and said, you know, Floyd, I'm not that old, you can change the picture. And we had a good laugh of it. But I—or the caption to the picture.

He will leave a legacy that will live through the lives of the people that he touched, and we are very

fortunate to have somebody like that in Manitoba, and he's an example to all of us about how to take a difficult circumstance and bring it to the best of humanity. So I just wanted to put those few words on the record, and thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to do that.

In context of this particular bill, when it comes to child-care spaces, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to just say that we know how important having accessible child-care spaces is in Manitoba. My own son was in child care for a number of years prior to entering his school-age years, and we were fortunate to have great care and a great daycare where he attended.

I do have some concerns with the current government and their fulfillment of promises or their lack of fulfillment of promises when it comes to child-care spaces. During the 2007 election, I was—I participated in a debate with the now-Minister of Justice. He was the minister of Family Services, I believe, at the time. And it was the child-care debate; it was entitled that. It was organized by organizations interested in child-care issues. And during that debate, I remember very clearly talking about the lack of fulfillment of promises and the NDP sort of talking about their grand vision for child-care spaces and what they would end up doing if they won re-election. And I said at the debate that the only way that they could fulfill this promise is if they would raise taxes. I didn't mention specifically the PST, but I said the only way they can fulfill this promise is if they would raise taxes. The minister denied it.

Now, of course, in hindsight, not only did the government raise taxes, they still didn't fulfill the promise, and so actually it was even worse than I could have imagined. I thought that they could only fulfill the promise if they raised taxes, and, of course, they raised taxes and didn't fulfill the promise, Mr—Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, when we see the different commitments from this government when it relates to child care, we have to look at history and to look at the track record and to see that many of the commitments that have been made haven't been fulfilled, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that causes people to be concerned. It causes people to be suspicious, and I think it causes them to cast a bit of a leery eye on these promises.

The timing is also important. They often say that timing is the most important thing in politics, but when it comes to policy quite apart from politics, I

think that that is true as well, Madam Deputy Speaker. When the government hasn't fulfilled the different promises for 16 years and then on the eve of an election says that they have all sorts of commitments and all sorts of things that they are determined to do, it causes people to wonder if the only reason that these promises are coming forward are because of the election, and whether or not they're actually going to be fulfilled.

And I see the Minister of Education is perplexed by my comments. I know that he is, compared to some of his colleagues, hasn't been around quite as long, he may want to look back at the history of the, NDP of his own party and the different promises that have been made on the eve of an election only to be broken after the election and then promised again prior to the next election. It's quite a long history of those things happening, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I would ask all the members of the NDP, whether they are relatively new or have been here for a longer period of time, to review their own party's history when it comes to that.

So we are, of course, concerned that a lot of the commitments that the government's bringing forward, whether it relates to this bill or other bills or the Throne Speech, of course, which promised now more than \$6 billion of promises and which will, of course, necessitate an increase of the PST and a broadening of the PST to pay for those things—we are concerned that they relate only to the election and not to the best interests of Manitobans because the best interests of Manitobans aren't just governed by election timing and they shouldn't be governed by election timing. When Manitobans need particular services and particular things that are important to them, it's not the timing of an election, Madam Deputy Speaker, that should be the governing factor; it should be the need itself. And we don't see that with this government on a consistent basis.

So we will look at all of this legislation through that lens, and, of course, this bill will pass and will go to committee following debate today, Madam Deputy Speaker. And we look forward to hearing people come to committee and to talk about their experiences with child care. Whether they are professionals within the child-care sector or whether or not they are users of child care, they're parents or they've had the opportunity to use the child-care system in the past, we look forward to what their reflections are when it comes to committee. And I suspect that there will be some who will have heard the promises before by this government who will

have been disappointed, who will still be dealing with extremely long wait times to try to access child care in different parts of the province, and that seems to be the story of this government. It's not just child-care spaces. If you're looking for personal-care-home spaces in many parts of Manitoba, you are not waiting just days or weeks; you are waiting potentially years, to try to access personal-care-home spaces in the communities that you grew up in or grew nearby.

So the issue of lists and wait times don't just relate to child-care spaces but, of course, they relate particularly to this particular bill. But we look forward to those presenters at committee, those who have different ideas and suggestions related to this topic whenever the committee is called, and we hope to glean information and expertise that could potentially make this bill better, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to say a few words.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 7, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools).

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

* (16:30)

SECOND READINGS

Bill 4— The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Amendment Act (Constructing Freedom Road)

Madam Deputy Speaker: Next we're moving to Bill 4, The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Amendment Act (Constructing Freedom Road).

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): I'd like to move, seconded by the Minister of Mineral Resources (Mr. Chomiak), that The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of this bill, and I table the message.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Aboriginal and Northern

Affairs, seconded by the Minister of Mineral Resources, that Bill 4, The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Amendment Act (Constructing Freedom Road); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Commission manitobaine d'aménagement de la route située du côté est (construction de la « route Freedom »), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Robinson: I'm pleased to make a few further remarks on Bill 4, the east-side road amendment act, the Freedom Road project, or otherwise the Shoal Lake #40 road project, is much more than about an all-season road for the community which has been isolated for over 100 years. It is truly about providing access and services—or to services and opportunities that most Canadians take for granted. When you consider the location of Shoal Lake #40, it's not that far from the city of Winnipeg, and yet the city of Winnipeg enjoys the clean water that is derived from Shoal Lake, and this is not only Shoal Lake #40 but, indeed, the traditional territory of Shoal Lake #39 on Treaty 3 territory, our neighbours to the east of us.

We have seen the difference that the East Side Road Authority has made in communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and the work that we're doing there with respect to building an all-weather road system on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

I'd like to cite an example. Last November, the Bloodvein First Nation became the first community on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to be linked to the all-weather road system, and I was very proud to stand with Chief Roland Hamilton of that community, along with his council members and members of the reserve, for the ribbon cutting of the Bloodvein River Bridge, which marked the completion of that leg of the project. It was not only a proud day for Bloodvein, but it was also one that demonstrated the value and the importance of the project. So the Bloodvein community was one of the communities that I use as an example as we further build the east-side road network in the eastern part of Manitoba in communities that are ordinarily isolated from the remainder of Canada. Up until last year, up until last November, Bloodvein was one of those communities that was totally isolated from the remainder of the province of Manitoba and the remainder of Canada.

And the First Nations that we are dealing with on the east side of Manitoba have all signed a community benefits agreements with the East Side Road Authority, and this model is what we want to use under Bill 4 to benefit the Shoal Lake First Nation #40 by providing opportunities for the people that live in Shoal Lake, but not only the people that live in Shoal Lake but, indeed, the people that live on the Manitoba side, the opportunity of capitalizing and getting training opportunities and also being a part of the project from the finish to the start.

Our government has committed to our share of the funding for the all-season road project that involves Shoal Lake. We committed our \$10 million. We anticipate that the City of Winnipeg and the federal government and the other two partners in this project will commit their \$10 million as well. The project itself is roughly \$30 million. It's been referred to as a freedom road because of the long-standing issue of it, and it's about 28 kilometres in length, and, thankfully, the federal government, as I indicated, has committed to come to the table to pay their share along with the City of Winnipeg. So we're very happy about the partnership, and we believe that this, indeed, will address the long-standing issues that have existed with Shoal Lake #40 and the issues that they have.

And this is one of the few communities as well near Winnipeg that's had a boil-water advisory for so many years now, and it's shameful that a community so close to Winnipeg and supplies, from its traditional territory, the City of Winnipeg and the almost 800,000 people that live in the city of Winnipeg with clean drinking water each and every day, something that, perhaps, people in Winnipeg and other Canadians take for granted, and here the people of Shoal Lake don't have accessibility to clean drinking water, and we want to correct that. And we believe we can correct that with the development of an all-weather road.

And we believe we can achieve that by the east-side road, Bill 4, that we have introduced, amending it to allow us, in short, Madam Deputy Speaker, to allow us to work in Ontario. Roughly 98 per cent of the area is in the province of Manitoba. The other 2 per cent—I'll say two kilometres, roughly, as far as I understand, is on the Ontario side, but I believe it's time that we work with the Shoal Lake community and also the Canadian government, the City of Winnipeg, to further make this a reality for the people in Shoal Lake.

So, with those few remarks, I will just leave my comments there.

Thank you very much.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Following the honourable minister's speech, we have a question period of up to 15 minutes, and questions may be addressed to the minister by any member, starting with the opposition and then moving to an independent member. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): There are several questions I would like the answers put on the record. They're similar questions to which I asked at the bill briefing, but I know the minister touched on the cost of building Freedom Road. It's possibly a \$30-million project.

How recent are those figures?

Mr. Robinson: I apologize, Madam Deputy Speaker. Those figures are very recent, I would say, in the last few months.

Mr. Briese: I also asked at that time if Ontario was supplying anything to the project and received a negative answer on that. I would just ask why Ontario is not, as this First Nation happens to be in Ontario.

Mr. Robinson: The minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs from the province of Ontario and I have met and discussed this issue. The bulk of the area that we're talking about is in the province of Manitoba. A very small portion of it is on the Ontario side with that portion, the First Nation, being the responsibility of the national government, this being an Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada—falls under that responsibility. Therefore, that is why the responsibility has been taken on by Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

* (16:40)

Mr. Briese: I also questioned why—and I know the minister referred to this in his remarks—but why this community has had a boil-water advisory for decades, and I fail to see the relationship between building an all-weather road into the community and the quality of their drinking water. I would like the minister to tell me how that—building the road is going to improve the drinking water quality.

Mr. Robinson: Up until now, supplies have been brought in through the winter road system as they are in the province of Manitoba right in our own backyard here. This, we believe, will give the

community of Shoal Lake #40 the opportunity to bring in necessary equipment to—whether it's a water system for the community, but the needed supplies to construct and work on these issues in their own local community. We believe an all-weather road system would provide that opportunity.

Mr. Briese: The boil-water problem in this community, I think, could've been addressed long ago with equipment brought over the winter road, or I don't know for sure whether this area has barge service, but they can take vehicles in, they can take all sorts of things in over the winter roads, and I would just ask if the minister is looking at the Province of Manitoba contributing something to the costs of improving the drinking water in this community or if there's been any discussions along that line.

Mr. Robinson: The first priority is the Freedom Road, accessibility for Shoal Lake #40, Treaty 3 territory people, and, secondarily, of course, there'll be the issues that the member raised, and I will not disagree with him for a moment about the need for accessibility to clean drinking water in the community. Indeed, it's a federal government responsibility, and I'm not trying to play a jurisdictional game here, Madam Deputy Speaker, but simply stating a fact about the reality that First Nations people face in the country of Canada that the federal government has to step forth, and we're very happy with the new Prime Minister's commitment to addressing this issue when he said so publicly by expressing his support for the Freedom Road project during the election campaign of 2015.

Mr. Briese: The—one other question I would like to get an answer on the record on is why this bill is being proposed, really, is, the bill is calling for the road to go under the East Side Road Authority, and I would just question why this couldn't have been handled under Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation, why it has to go under the East Side Road Authority.

Mr. Robinson: The East Side Road Authority has the experience and certainly has the track record of dealing with First Nations communities in developing these community benefits agreements with First Nations communities and being able to provide training and employment opportunities to ensure that the occupations that are going to become opened in the—during the construction period will be equipped with the proper necessarily trained people for these occupations that will become open. And

that is why we have taken the model of the East Side Road Authority and using it and employing it in this particular area, and we believe that it's a natural transition, the East Side Road Authority, from its— from the floodway work that it did, to the east-side road initiative, to carrying it over to the Freedom Road, is a natural transition.

Mr. Briese: I just would like to know, after the road is built, who's responsible for the maintenance of that road? Is it going to be under MIT, or is the East Side Road Authority going to put equipment in there to look after maintenance of that 28 kilometres of road, or is the First Nation going to be responsible?

Mr. Robinson: Well, I think that, as legislators, our main issue is to work with our fellow citizens at Shoal Lake #40, build the road in the anticipated two-year period that we expect it to take, and I would think that, like all roads in the province of Manitoba, we suspect that it may fall under the auspices of Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation. But let's build the road first.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I listened to the minister's comments, and I'm wondering if he has any actual commitment from the federal government to contribute dollars to this or—and if he can tell us what those dollars are.

Mr. Robinson: Discussions have occurred with the CEO of the East Side Road Authority along with Chief Erwin Redsky of Shoal Lake #40, along with officials from the federal Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs. So the wheels are in motion, and we anticipate that the federal government will make their announcement in due course and we hope that that won't be too long. We'll be meeting with the federal minister again in a short period of time; again, I'll be raising this issue with her. We have talked about it in the two previous meetings we've had, one on the telephone and one in person in the last couple of weeks.

Mr. Helwer: And again to the minister, why was there no application made through the building capital fund—Building Canada Fund if this was such an urgent issue? Money was available there, made available by the previous government and applications were taken in for several years, but this apparently did not—was not important enough at that time for the Manitoba government to do. So why was an application not made under that?

Mr. Robinson: Quite the contrary, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that this government has always

been on the record of supporting Shoal Lake #40 in—and many attempts have been made—were made with the previous federal government in trying to access the proper resources to build the Freedom Road, as we are trying to do right now, and met no success in their dealings with the federal government.

And I don't really want to get into blaming anybody, the previous government or anybody else for that matter, but, as all of us know, there was some resistance on the part of the federal government about the Freedom Road itself. The former Natural Resources minister under the previous government basically said no to the road when I asked about it sometime ago during the election period.

Mr. Helwer: So was an application made under the building capital fund for either the road or a water system?

Mr. Robinson: As I said, Madam Deputy Speaker, several attempts were made with the federal government to engage in any dialogue with them. I can't specifically say and respond to the member from Brandon West whether or not an application was made under the Building Canada Fund, but I do know that several attempts were made with the federal government to engage them in dialogue on the idea itself were attempted, but to no avail.

Mr. Helwer: Will there be additional staff required under the East Side Road Authority to administer this project?

Mr. Robinson: I believe that we have the proper number and the right number of employees at the East Side Road Authority to commence with the necessary pre-work prior to the construction of the east-side—or of the Freedom Road, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Helwer: So what are those individuals doing currently in the East Side Road Authority if they have the time available for this new project?

* (16:50)

Mr. Robinson: We've been aggressive on the east-side road and the things that they have been doing. I think that the Freedom Road has long been in the planning by—certainly by the community and by the citizens that live there. I do think that the expertise as within the East Side Road Authority will work with the community to enable the project to continue and commence in a fashion that will do us all proud.

And, as Canadians, I think that this is a project that we should all be celebrating together.

Mr. Helwer: Well, I missed the answer to that question, so I have to ask it again.

If there are no additional staff required, and they have the time and expertise to take on this new project, what are those staff currently doing for the East Side Road Authority in the absence of this project?

Mr. Robinson: I don't make it my business to oversee the daily operations of the East Side Road Authority. I'm sure if additional expertise is required, the East Side Road Authority will advise the government and the appropriate measures will be taken if additional help is required as we set our eyes on developing the Freedom Road.

Mr. Helwer: Madam Deputy Speaker, what is preventing upgrades to the water system today?

Mr. Robinson: As I indicated earlier, the Shoal Lake First Nation #40 in Ojibway country, Treaty 3 territory, falls under the responsibility of the federal government and, like all reserves and First Nations communities nationwide, it's a community that has many challenges—social, economic and otherwise, and they've done their best to ensure a good quality of life for their people. We believe that the all-weather road system will provide even greater opportunities in the future and the boil-water issue, I hope, will be a thing of the past in time as they develop their internal infrastructure, which will be made possible by being able to get the supplies into the community as required.

Mr. Helwer: Well, I'm really mystified on what's preventing those supplies from getting into the community now. They have ways to get into the community in the winter when there is no all-weather road, and if the water system is the critical thing, then certainly that would be the—that would be the start of working on the water system and the road may be the secondary, but the government has chosen to focus on the road, and if it is such an urgent thing, why are they going through this delay tactic of putting it in legislation, rather than just using MIT? MIT can, I'm sure, be ready to go. They build roads. This government brags all the time about them building roads, so what's one more road for them to build, and if it's so immediate, why isn't it under MIT?

Mr. Robinson: I thought I responded to that question, Madam Deputy Speaker. I said that the

East Side Road Authority has the experience. They have been dealing with First Nations in the last few years, developed partnerships, developed community benefits arrangements, and—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Just—order, order. I think we've got a problem with the honourable member's microphone. Is it okay now? Sorry, the honourable minister, to complete his answer.

Mr. Robinson: I don't want to get into a debate about the internal water system in Shoal Lake #40. We're talking about an all-weather road system. We're bringing in an amendment to the East Side Road Authority to allow us to do work in Ontario. That's simply the meaning of this amendment, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that is our aim to get it done and, hopefully, have all of us as Manitobans, people that live in Winnipeg and people that live at Shoal Lake feel proud to be a part of Canada.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We thank—I thank all the members. The time for question and answer has expired.

Mr. Briese: I'm pleased to rise today and make a few remarks about Bill 4, The East Side Road Authority Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We—I have no problem at all with the road. I think the road is something that is very necessary for this community. I think it should've been done long before now, but I guess later—it's 100 years since they've had access to that community, and it should've been done long before now, and I'm totally in agreement that they need access to that community.

What I'm not as comfortable with is why it has to go under the East Side Road Authority. We have Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation—has the expertise; they build roads. They build roads in difficult places; they maintain roads. I just don't see why they have to come under the East Side Road Authority. You know, it used to be the Floodway and East Side Road Authority. In the expansion of the floodway, we saw—and basically they will claim it went in on budget, but there were two bridges that got cut out of it, so they could hit the budget. And we saw roughly \$50 million in extra costs there, simply out of forced unionization.

I'm not sure if when they do the community benefit agreements, whether—when those communities put out a workforce, I'm not sure whether

they're forced to unionize or not; I do need to do some checking and find that out. I've been raising questions, or I raised questions the other day in here about access to Princess Harbour. Now, the east-side road has now gone past Bloodvein, past where Princess Harbour would hook up to the east-side road. In the—on the website for the East Side Road Authority, Princess Harbour is listed as one of the communities that is supposed to get access to the east-side road. Earlier this fall, the ferry, which has—ran for—served Princess Harbour and Bloodvein for 35 years was discontinued, and Princess Harbour now has no service from ferry. They have—they're not hooked up to the east-side road and no indication at this point of when they may be hooked up to the east-side road. The people there are stuck without access, without anywhere to get access, and I expect they can come across ice in the winter, but I don't think there's ever been a specific winter road into that community, at least according to the people I've talked to up there. And negotiations have been very poor on dealing with the people in that community. And they certainly are—deserve access as much as

anybody else, and, as I said, the website states that they're one of the communities that are supposed to get access. It's not happening.

Now it would look like some of the budget for the East Side Road Authority, because I think it's fixed from year to year, some of the budget for the East Side Road Authority is going to go now to the Freedom Road. At least on the figures that were talked about here earlier, at least \$10 million is going to come out of the East Side Road Authority. So does this mean that communities like Princess Harbour are going to be that much further down the line before they get funding for a road into their community?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) will have 25 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 2, 2015

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<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>