

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

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of bills?

Seeing no bills, we'll move on to committee reports.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Introduction of bills?

Mr. Speaker: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry if I missed you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member—we'll revert back to introduction of bills.

Bill 208—The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 208, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act; Loi sur la responsabilité et la transparence en matière réglementaire, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: We have heard from private and not-for-profit stakeholders all across this province who are concerned about the excessive red tape that impedes the ability for them to do work in Manitoba. This bill requires government to measure and determine the exact number of current regulations, an achievable reduction target and a timeline within which to achieve the reduction target.

Individual departmental plans must be created and publicized to outline their red-tape reduction plans and provide annual public updates outlining the progress in reaching the targets.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that this bill will help address some of their concerns and we look forward to members opposite finally supporting us on this bill.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Third Report

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

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Third Report on the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on March 7, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 5)** – *The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands)/Loi sur la gestion des eaux de surface (modification de diverses lois visant la protection des lacs et des terres humides)*
- **Bill (No. 13)** – *The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire (cadre stratégique sur l'éducation et l'histoire des Premières nations, des Métis et des Inuits)*
- **Bill (No. 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)*

- **Bill (No. 17)** – *The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act/Loi sur l'Association des enseignants du Manitoba*
- **Bill (No. 18)** – *The Path to Reconciliation Act/Loi sur la réconciliation*

Committee Membership

- Hon. Mr. ALLUM
- Mr. BRIESE
- Mr. GAUDREAU (Chairperson)
- Mr. HELWER
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Hon. Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)
- Mr. MARTIN
- Hon. Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF
- Hon. Mr. ROBINSON
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. WISHART

Substitution received prior to committee proceedings:

- Mr. HELWER for Mr. EWASKO

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 5)** – *The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands)/Loi sur la gestion des eaux de surface (modification de diverses lois visant la protection des lacs et des terres humides)*:

Greg Bruce, Ducks Unlimited Canada
James Battershill, Keystone Agricultural Producers
Alexis Kanu, Lake Winnipeg Foundation

Your Committee heard the following five presentations on **Bill (No. 13)** – *The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire (cadre stratégique sur l'éducation et l'histoire des Premières nations, des Métis et des Inuits)*:

Sharon Parenteau, Manitoba Métis Federation
James Wilson, Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba
Aimée Craft, Private Citizen
Siobhan Faulkner, Private Citizen
Norm Gould, Manitoba Teachers' Society

Your Committee heard the following seven presentations on **Bill (No. 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):

Billie Schibler and Judy Mayer (by leave), Métis Child and Family Services Authority
Tara Petti, Southern Authority (Southern First Nations Network of Care)
Brenda Watt and Bruce Unfreed on behalf of Ron Monias (by leave), First Nations of Northern Manitoba, Child and Family Services Authority
Lore Mirwaldt, Q.C., Private Citizen
Wallace McKay, Private Citizen
Chief Chris Baker, Private Citizen
Chief Jim Bear and Rhonda Kelly (by leave), South East Tribal Council

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 17)** – *The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act/Loi sur l'Association des enseignants du Manitoba*:

Norm Gould, Manitoba Teachers' Society

Your Committee heard the following two presentations on **Bill (No. 18)** – *The Path to Reconciliation Act/Loi sur la réconciliation*:

Murray Sinclair, Private Citizen
Aimée Craft, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 5)** – *The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands)/Loi sur la gestion des eaux de surface (modification de diverses lois visant la protection des lacs et des terres humides)*:

Joe Masi, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Your Committee received the following two written submissions on **Bill (No. 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)*:

Marcel Balfour, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
Cora Morgan, First Nations Family Advocate Office

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 5)** – *The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect*

Lakes and Wetlands)/Loi sur la gestion des eaux de surface (modification de diverses lois visant la protection des lacs et des terres humides)

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 13)** – *The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire (cadre stratégique sur l'éducation et l'histoire des Premières nations, des Métis et des Inuits)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 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)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 17)** – *The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act/Loi sur l'Association des enseignants du Manitoba*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 18)** – *The Path to Reconciliation Act/Loi sur la réconciliation*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, with the following amendments:

THAT Clause 4 of the Bill be amended by renumbering clause (a) as clause (a.1) and by adding the following as clause (a):

(a) is to be guided by the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the principles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

THAT Clause 4 of the Bill be amended by adding the following after clause (e):

(f) ensures that survivors of residential school abuses have a role to play in its development.

Mr. Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Any further committee reports?

Seeing none, we'll move on to tabling of reports.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

International Women's Day

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, today, March 8th, marks International Women's Day in Manitoba and around the world. On this day, people across the globe celebrate the hard-won collective progress made toward women's rights.

Today is an opportunity to reflect on the status of women in society and reaffirm our commitments to advancing equality for women and preventing gender-based violence. 2016 is particularly important year to commemorate International Women's Day as we mark 100 years since some women in Manitoba gained the right to vote.

To acknowledge this important milestone in women's suffrage, Manitoba declared January 2016 Women's Equality Month. Other groups across the province have also commemorated this important occasion. Throughout our celebrations, we have also honoured the decades of work that continued after 1916 to promote equality for people of all genders, regardless of race, disability, employment or religion.

These lessons from the past speak to us today. Mr. Speaker, March 8th is a day to connect our past with our future. International Women's Day emerged from women's organizing in the early 1900s, which led to improved working conditions in factories across North America and Europe. Women in Manitoba today continue to organize and work together within and across diverse movements, including those led by indigenous women, women of colour, women of disabilities and the LGBTTQ community, among others. They work on issues such as safety and violence prevention, education, human rights and child care. We are grateful for their passion and commitment to achieving equality in our province and beyond.

We in this House are committed to supporting these movements and working towards a Manitoba where women are safe, respected, are paid the same as male counterparts and have equal access to all the opportunities our great province offers. We commend everyone working for Manitobans today and the generations to come.

Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Today is International Women's Day. It is a global day celebrating the economic, political, and social achievements of women past, present and future, while focusing on areas that require further attention.

A few weeks ago we celebrated Manitoba being the first province in Canada to give women the vote, and what a celebration that was. Our PC team feels extremely privileged to live in a world where progress has been made for women's equality. The PC team has a solid track record for advancing the rights of women, Mr. Speaker, but there is much more we as a province need to do.

We look forward to having the opportunity to further advance women's equality in Manitoba. According to the United Nations, a threshold of at least 30 per cent of female legislators is required to ensure that public policy reflects the needs of women, and we are extremely proud of the fact that we have 20 incredible and diverse female candidates on our roster for the upcoming provincial election. That's 35 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

We are very proud of the efforts made by our leader, Mr. Speaker, on advancing the equality of Aboriginal women's property rights, supporting women's issues in Manitobans and encouraging and advocating for all of our female candidates.

It is because of our leader that we have the highest rates of female candidates in PC Manitoba history. We are proud and honoured to stand as a team that supports and encourages the involvement of women at every level.

The list of failures on this NDP government on the status of women is extremely disappointing. And, particularly, last week, the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) made an announcement that was pure hypocrisy. To single out a candidate from another party who has profited off incredibly derogatory and offensive language and call for their resignation while their own party has a candidate who has done the very same thing is profoundly disappointing—profoundly disappointing.

The actions of this NDP government on this issue speaks volumes on the double standard the NDP hold for their party compared to everyone else. Hateful comments that devalue and degrade women have no place in 2016. We must all stand against it.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this government has many failures. We've raised many of them this morning during a private member's debate and it is clear that they have failed women in many ways, and it is time that we stop, and a PC government will commit to doing much better for women and girls in Manitoba.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, today being International Women's Day, it is important to recognize the achievements of the last 100 years and to reflect on the fact that Manitoba was the first province where women—some women—had the right to vote 100 years ago.

It is with great pride that I stand here today because it was a Liberal government under the leadership of Premier Tobias Norris, then, and with the support of many, many people including, of course, notably, Nellie McClung, as well as many others, that that happened then.

* (13:40)

But it—there is still room for a lot of progress, and, clearly, as we stand today in a province with a very high level of intimate partner violence, we must dedicate ourselves to reducing family violence and taking all measures that we can to make sure that women in Manitoba feel secure, feel able to achieve the best that they can be and are involved in our society as much and as widely and as diversely as they possibly can be.

I note that on a global scale that girls who complete primary and secondary education are likely to earn more and have fewer unwanted pregnancies and break the cycle of poverty. We have too much poverty in Manitoba and that should be one of our goals is increasing the extent of education of women throughout our wonderful province.

Secondly, I note that on a global scale that women's participation increases the probability of peace agreements lasting at least two years by 20 per cent and increases the probability of peace agreement lasting 15 years by 35 per cent. Mr. Speaker that is a big difference and something that we should note, and it speaks to the importance

of evolving—involving women in political and world affairs and the important aspects they can contribute.

Mr. Speaker, it is 2016, there has been lots of talk. It's time for urgent action to complete the work that has begun over the last 100 years and to do much better.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any further ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

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

Anniversary of Leadership Vote

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, today marks the one-year anniversary of a rather interesting day in Manitoba's history. I would like to bring some attention to the event itself and the happenings leading up to the event. One year ago today a vote was held to determine who among three different members opposite should run this province of ours. For some time, and I am quoting a member opposite here, it had become, and I quote, increasingly difficult, unquote, for members opposite to do their job; they felt the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was not listening to their advice. I can imagine the frustration at a time like this. It would be impossible to contribute to the province's well-being when your suggestions are being ignored.

But for how long were these ministers finding it difficult to do their job? How long had members opposite been keeping quiet about the Premier not listening to them? It's concerning to think that this issue likely did not appear overnight. But there isn't any particular issue or single decision to blame for this debacle. As the member from Fort Rouge made clear in the fall of 2014, the Premier refused to listen, and I quote, not just on the leadership vote, but also on a wide range of issues in our portfolios. Unquote.

Mr. Speaker, I was under the impression that one of the main roles of Cabinet was to advise the Premier on issues relating to their portfolios. This NDP government doesn't seem to think so. Our province's best interests were being ignored. Calls for the Premier to resign were rampant among members opposite. These requests set off a chain of events, ending in a leadership vote that was held one year ago today.

Mr. Speaker, this is a clear sign of broken trust and a broken government.

Thank you very much.

Bill Turner

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Municipal Government): Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise in the Legislature today to honour Bill Turner, who's with us in the gallery along with his wife Joyce and brother George.

On September 16th, 2015, capping off a 45-year career in radio, Bill hosted the CKLQ radio show Feedback for the final time.

Mr. Speaker, for decades, every weekday morning, Bill interviewed live, on air, local politicians, entrepreneurs, artists, soldiers, farmers, teachers, professors; you name the profession, Bill interviewed someone connected to it.

Bill has interviewed several prime ministers but those weren't his favourite interviews, and I didn't make the cut either. His all-time favourite interview, as he related to the Brandon Sun, was with Air Canada pilot Bob Pearson, who safely landed a Boeing 767 without fuel at the decommissioned Gimli airport in 1983. That jet plane was nicknamed the Gimli Glider.

In reflecting on his career, Bill noted that the Internet, social media and other instant news and rumour mills have changed how radio is delivered and how journalism is done. What hasn't changed, however, is the relationship the listener has with the broadcaster and the need for responsible journalists to inform and engage the public.

In his retirement, Bill is focusing on his hobbies of woodworking, playing music and building musical instruments. He's enjoying his freedom and he's now a regular listener on the other side of the airwaves of CKLQ Feedback.

Having dreamed of being a radio broadcaster since he was a teenager and having spent 45 years on radio, it can truly be said that Bill has been living the dream. It is his passion for radio broadcasting that has made him so good, so excellent, at informing and engaging the people of Brandon and of western Manitoba every weekday morning.

Mr. Speaker, it was always a pleasure to be Bill's guest on CKLQ Feedback, and I would ask all members to join me today in celebrating the radio career of Bill Turner.

Thank you.

Anniversary of Leadership Vote

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, I would like to use this time to pick up where my colleague left off. As my colleague before me acknowledged, today is the one-year anniversary of an important day in Manitoba politics. The leadership vote we were all so eagerly watching was held on this day in 2015. The outcome of this day brought forward absolutely zero change.

It is safe to assume that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has carried on in his old ways, ignoring ministers, not allowing them to speak honestly in Cabinet, refusing to listen on leadership issues. The list goes on, and it doesn't get any better.

It is a wonder that the Premier managed to hold on to his position, considering how he acted as a leader. But then again, winning by 33 votes doesn't show a lot of certainty.

Winning by this narrow margin is far from comforting for Manitobans. Only 50 per cent of the delegates wanted to see the member from St. Boniface carry on as the Premier. If there was this much uncertainty within the NDP's own members, it's easy to see why Manitobans across the province are fed up with this NDP government.

Unfortunately, the leadership vote one year ago today did not solve anything. Members opposite are still storming out of caucus meetings and shouting at the Premier. It seems that business is carrying on as usual on the other side of the House. This kind of turmoil among members opposite is not conducive to effective government.

Mr. Speaker, let this day serve as a reminder to Manitobans of the way this NDP man-has-government has managed our province. A change for the better is coming for all Manitobans. Broken trust, broken government; a change for the better is coming.

Child Daycare Funding

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, our NDP government knows how important child care is to the economic growth of our province and to well-being of our children and working families.

In 1983, the NDP government passed The Community Child Day Care Standards Act. That momentous act made sure that daycare in Manitoba met high standards and it provided funding to ensure

that children with special needs were taken care of. By 1987, many daycare advocates said that Manitoba had the best system of training and daycare in North America.

Mr. Speaker, in 1991, Manitoba daycare took a giant step backward when the Conservative Filmon government drastically reduced daycare funding and dramatically restructured the system. By 1993, funding was way down, and spaces were capped. To top it off, the Manitoba Child Care Association and Family Day Care Association both lost their annual operating grants.

In 2000, the new NDP government increased child-care funding by 18 per cent in their first budget. Since then, the NDP governments have nearly doubled the number of high-quality, affordable spaces and worked steadfastly to improve our public child care that supports middle-class and hard-working Manitoba families, strengthens the economy and gives kids a strong start.

Mr. Speaker, in Elmwood, as across the province, there's a steady demand for spaces. I'm glad to say that since 2011, in Elmwood alone, our NDP government has provided over \$1.3 million in funding for child-care spaces and child-care facility upgrades at wonderful centres like Bright Future Day Care, Brazier Street Nursery School, Can You Imagine Preschool Care and Education Centre, Care-a-Lot Child Care Centre, Munroe Early Childhood Education Centre, Elmwood Day Nursery and Poplar Avenue Kids Care.

Mr. Speaker, this year we committed to eliminating the wait-list by adding 12,000 new spaces while supporting well paid and well trained child-care staff in the years ahead. We have committed to a universally accessible child-care system for all Manitoba families who need it, because everyone matters.

Thank you.

Anniversary of Leadership Vote

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues just pointed out, today marks the one-year anniversary of a dark day in Manitoba politics: the infamous leadership vote.

* (13:50)

Exactly one year ago, Manitobans were on the edge of their seats, waiting to see if a new premier would be voted in or if business would carry on as usual with a Premier who had become more

concerned about remaining leader than necessarily doing things in the best interest of the province.

That last bit is of course a direct quote from members opposite. It is quotes like these, and there are plenty, that will certainly go down in the history books as playing a huge role in the end of this NDP government. But actions speak louder than words, and the actions of the five Cabinet ministers in the fall of 2014 were certainly heard loud and clear by the entire province.

To do their jobs, ministers needed to be able to speak up to the honesty in Cabinet—speak up honestly in Cabinet and disagree with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) at times, without fear that speaking their minds on some points would mean their voices are ignored on things that are important to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's safe to say both sides of the House would agree on that statement. Certain member opposite said in these exact words last fall, when she felt there really was no way to go on, no way to continue to be in Cabinet with integrity.

After replacing these dissidents, it was decided that perhaps the best course of action for solving this dispute would be with the leadership vote at the NDP's annual convention. The vote was held on the final day of this convention, one year ago today.

Such monumental moments in our province's history always will be remembered. Broken trust, broken government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Just prior to oral questions, I have a number of guests I would like to introduce. We have with us in the public gallery today from Green Valley School in Grunthal, Manitoba, we have five students under the direction of Mme. Robidoux. And this—these folks are the guests of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross).

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

And also seated in the public gallery, we have from HBNI-ITV System out of Fairholme School, we have 18 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Evelyn Maendel, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Portage La Prairie (Mr. Wishart).

And also seated in the public gallery this afternoon, we have with us from Laidlaw School, we have 17 grade 5 students under the direction of John Matas, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Spending Tax Increases

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we know that we have a Premier in Manitoba who has the reputation of being the \$6-million man. Every day since the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) assumed the role of Premier in our province, he has actually added \$6 million to our provincial debt, spent \$6 million more than he has brought in with some of Canada's highest taxes and most rapidly increasing taxes under his management.

He has also doubled our provincial debt during his time as Premier, and he has seen our first credit rating decline in three decades as well. But to the amazement of all Manitobans, in January alone, he and his colleagues made over 100 new promises.

And today, they're not releasing a budget so that Manitobans will not know how those promises will be kept, or if in fact they will be kept at all. The only way that they could be kept, Mr. Speaker, is if taxes were raised.

So would the Premier admit today that the real reason for no-budget day today is so he can hide his agenda for higher taxes on Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the economic outlook which will be presented very soon this afternoon will be a roadmap and a down payment on the Throne Speech, a Throne Speech which promises to continue to grow the economy: good jobs for young people at a time when young people need those opportunities, education funding so they can get a college or a university or a trade beginning in high school and be able to have that bridge to the future; investments in health care to ensure that our parents are looked after and people with chronic disease get the support they need in their communities; additional daycare places so that young families can have safe, quality daycare in the non-profit sector with wages and pensions for the

people that work there while they go enter into the labour market and take the good jobs.

What is the Leader of the Opposition promising? Cuts, a half a billion dollars of cuts.

Will he come clean today and table his program for cuts? How many less teachers will be in the classroom? How many less nurses will be at the bedside? How many daycares will he privatize, Mr. Speaker? Let him put his plan on the table. Tomorrow is an Opposition Day. Table it today, table it tomorrow, come clean for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the Premier's anger is a mere fraction of the anger Manitobans feel at not being able to see the real agenda for the future of our province.

The Premier claims today he's announcing a road map, but a lot of people have jumped out of the orange van that he's driving, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to go along with his road map. He refers to a down payment but doesn't refer to the payments that will follow, the payments that our children and grandchildren and us as we're older will be expected to make, aren't enunciated in today's fantasy financial document.

Now, the Premier has also indicated through his massive communications staff that he will be now putting money back in the pockets of Manitobans. This is interesting, for, in the past few years, he's been doing absolutely nothing but taking money out of the pockets of Manitobans, \$5,000, in fact, in just broken-promise taxes has come out of every family's pocket.

So would the Premier admit that this is a nickel-back plan: \$5,000 out and a nickel back in?

Mr. Selinger: Our infrastructure program created nearly 10,000 jobs last year, 10,000 jobs. And that puts wages in the pockets of Manitobans. That puts food on the table. That puts fuel in the tank of their cars and automobiles. That allows them to pay their mortgages. When people are working, they're doing well in Manitoba.

The Leader of the Opposition: no commitment to the minimum wage, no commitment to job creation, a half a billion dollars of cuts. When will he come clean with Manitobans and put his plan for cutting a half a billion out of the budget on the table? Tell us which teachers he's going to lay off. Tell us which nurses he's going to fire. Tell us which schools he

won't build. Tell us which daycares he will not fund. Tell us which people will lose their jobs. And when they lose their jobs, nothing will be going into their pockets, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pallister: And when they lose their jobs, pensions would be going in their pockets, Mr. Speaker.

But the real concern I have is for Manitobans' future—for Manitobans' future—a future under a government that keeps its promises. The difference between the Premier and our plan for a better Manitoba is we believe in keeping promises and he believes in making them. Unsubstantiated, unpriced, vague, generalizations and false attacks are not an agenda to inspire confidence in Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Selinger—I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker—the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) has claimed that he'll protect Manitobans' interests when he is the one that's eroded their confidence and faith in the trust that they should feel for their own government by breaking virtually every major promise that he ran on last time. He and his candidates all went to the doors, they knocked and they looked Manitobans in the eye and they promised them no new tax hikes and followed it up with the largest tax hikes in Canada, bar none. So protecting front-line services, Manitobans would be right to doubt that.

Will the Premier admit that his plan involves protecting nothing but his job and certainly places Manitoba's interests last and his own first?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's read out that statement so many times I'm surprised it's not smudged up from all the sweat he's got on the paper there.

Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada came out with their economic forecast today. They said, fuelling economic growth in Manitoba will be the construction sector, as the provincial government continues to roll out its large infrastructure program. In addition, major Manitoba Hydro projects and a rebound in housing starts will boost growth in the construction sector by 4.4 per cent this year and nearly 10 per cent in 2017.

That's our plan: Grow the economy, create good jobs, provide green energy to our neighbours so that they can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

What is the Leader of the Opposition promising? A ban on building Hydro for exports, a cut in

infrastructure programs, a cut in education funding, a cut in health-care funding, a privatization of daycare. Mr. Speaker, that puts people on the unemployment rolls, no income in their pocket, no future.

* (14:00)

It's a dark day if the Leader of the Opposition gets his plan in place in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

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

Budget 2016 Tabling Expectation

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): I don't mind sweating if it's working for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier's sweating about losing his position, that's all he's worried about. I'm worried about Manitobans losing ground. I'm worried about Manitobans falling behind their neighbours. I'm worried about Manitobans working harder and getting less for it.

I'm working—I'm very concerned, and our team is very concerned, that Manitobans deserve better, and they're not getting it from that Premier.

But maybe the real reason—maybe the budget is ready or maybe it's not; we won't know. But I expect, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier was distracted last year, anniversary, of course, the rebellion a year ago when he was really sweating.

And the fact of the matter is, he has had distractions. He had that leadership problem. He had all that time he needed to negotiate payouts to his former friends. He needed to deal with replacement ministers of questionable experience. So maybe that's the reason he wasn't able to get a budget done today.

I want to give him the benefit of the doubt. I want to give him a chance to explain to Manitobans why a full year after the rebellion and the leadership contest, where he hung on by the skin of his teeth, he wasn't able to produce a budget.

Tell Manitobans the honest reason.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): We have spent the last year focusing on growing the economy of Manitoba. That's what we focused on. We weren't sweating because we were in Costa Rica. We were working hard for the people of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why we've created over 9,000 jobs with our infrastructure program, a plan the Leader of the Opposition plans to cancel, plans to cancel before we've built flood protection for communities. That's his plan for rural Manitoba: no flood protection. What's his plan for health care? Less nurses at the bedside. What's his plan for education? Less teachers in the classroom. What's his plan for daycare? Privatization. What's his plan for child welfare? Privatization.

Has he consulted anybody on that? Not a word of it. He sits at the beach dreaming up plans to cut the services of Manitobans. That is not a future. That is a dark day in Manitoba, and we will not allow it to happen.

Mr. Pallister: What's the Premier's plan for the future of Manitoba? Tenth on wait times, the worst wait times in Canada.

What's his plan for the future of Manitoba students? Tenth in educational outcomes, 10th in science, 10th in math, 10th in literacy. What's his plan for the future of Manitoba children living in poverty? The most children, depending on food banks, the most children in care.

That's his plan. Seventeen years of miserable failure, Mr. Speaker, and now he talks about new plans. We broke all our old promises, he tells Manitobans, but I'm sorry, and I have new ones now.

Well, I don't think—while the Premier—while we were working on this side, really reaching out, they were having phony budget consultations which resulted in a phony budget.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier was distracted. He had a lot of things on his mind. Maybe he'd like to admit that he was spending a lot of time in port in the last year and didn't have time to do a budget.

Mr. Selinger: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, no amount of suntan lotion can cover up that bad performance.

The reality is this—the reality is this: best job creation in the record—in the country last year; one of the lowest unemployment rates, partly—a good, large measure, in part, because of the investments in infrastructure, over 9,000 jobs; partnerships with the private sector to train people; partnerships with the non-profit sector to provide services Manitobans need; growing Hydro in northern Manitoba, over 1,300 people working in the North right now.

The leader's plan for Hydro: cut exports. There's 1,300 jobs gone. The leader's plan for health care: less nurses at the bedside. More jobs gone there. They did 1,000 in the '90s, why would they stop now?

What about the classrooms? They eliminated 700 teaching positions in the '90s, and what's his promise today? I won't cut any teachers, but school divisions might. They will because he will be giving them less funding. That's how he plays it: I won't do it; I'll just take the funding away from them and they'll have to do it because I will be giving them less resources.

Private daycare, private social welfare, laying off people: no future for Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: Mr. Speaker, a significant majority of his own members don't believe a word out of his mouth, so I don't think that Manitobans are going to believe it either.

The Premier's had his distractions. He had a member organize a partisan protest rally using independent-thinking civil servants and deny it, and then he knew about it and covered it up for a full year. He did nothing about that. He had a member as Deputy Premier calling volunteers at a women's shelter fundraiser do-good, ignorant white people, and he did nothing about it. He said not a word about it.

He had a member giving contracts to his buddy, a party donor, millions of dollars without tender, and covering it up. And he did nothing about that either. He took Jets tickets and reprimanded his colleagues, but I guess he was above reproach himself, Mr. Speaker. And then he went to an indigenous community where they're really looking for opportunities and he tried to trade votes for jobs.

He's kept everybody in Manitoba working harder and getting less, including the members of his own caucus, many of whom have totally given up on him, and, Mr. Speaker, I think Manitobans are ready to do that too.

Will the Premier admit that his agenda is nothing more than selfish?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the height of selfishness came when the Leader of the Opposition served in the government in the '90s. He sold off the telephone system and enriched his cronies. He has not yet declared today how much money he made off privatizing the telephone system.

He rigged the election in 1995 and used the indigenous community to split the vote so that he could retain his government. That is the height of selfishness, and we have never yet seen an apology for that by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Our plan takes the Throne Speech with a five-year vision for Manitoba and lays it out with a down payment this year: 2,000 more daycare spots so families can work; investments in education so young people can start at college, university or trades program right while they're in high school; more investment in health care to ensure that we have the doctors. We said we'd have 200 more doctors in Manitoba; we got 220. We said we'd have 1,000 more nurses; we have 1,000 more nurses.

What do they plan to do? Lay off nurses, fire teachers, cut daycare and privatize it. A dark, dark future for the future of Manitoba. And where's their fiscal plan for the future of the province?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

NDP Fiscal Management Impact on Employment

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): The only person that should be apologizing in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, is this Premier (Mr. Selinger), who broke a whole bunch of promises to Manitobans after the last election.

Mr. Speaker, I hoped that the NDP government would change their mind and do the right thing and table a budget for all Manitobans to see. Instead they will introduce a phony financial forecast, keeping Manitobans in the dark about the harsh realities of the last 17 years of NDP mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister just admit that his mismanagement has caused a decline of 6,600 jobs in Manitoba in the last year alone?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I'll have the rare privilege and honour of presenting the government's fiscal outlook, hopefully within the next hour. And as I said, that will build upon the fine work of our government, the government that has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada, a government that has the—created 10,000 jobs last year, which was a record, a government that the Conference Board of Canada just put out today—said, Mr. Speaker, that our economy will be one of the fastest growing economies in Canada in the next couple of years.

Contrast that to the members of the opposition. We know the Leader of the Opposition, when he's not in Costa Rica, he's drafting up a secret plan to fire nurses, to fire teachers, to kill our infrastructure plan, to kill Hydro. We reject that plan.

Mrs. Stefanson: What we are, Mr. Speaker, is developing a plan to clean up the mess of the last 17 years of this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves: 6,600 job losses over the last year, 5,300 job losses in the last month alone. And this is nothing to be proud of.

Manitobans, more than ever, deserve to know: What is the NDP government planning to hide from Manitobans in their phony financial forecast? How can Manitobans trust anything that they say?

*(14:10)

Mr. Dewar: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'll have a chance to present that plan to Manitobans in the next short time-period of time. As I said, we—a plan that created 10,000 jobs last year, a plan that has the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada, a plan that has some of the strongest economic growth in Canada.

But I would ask that member, and she can answer the question in her next response, Mr. Speaker, of what exactly is their plan. People have asked me; they know our plan. They know our plan to grow the economy; they know our plan to have one of the lowest unemployments. They want to know: What is the Leader of the Opposition's plan? Is it half a billion dollars in cuts? Is it a plan to fire teachers? Is it a plan to fire nurses? Is it a plan to kill our child-care program? Is it a plan to shut down Hydro? Is it a plan to kill our infrastructure program? I'm eager to hear that.

Mrs. Stefanson: It's a plan to clean up the fiscal mismanagement of this NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, broken promises, broken trust from an NDP government that can't manage government finances, and now they want to hide the dismal truth from Manitobans about how has—the state of the finances are in the province really are.

Will the minister just admit that the NDP fiscal mismanagement has cost Manitobans more than 6,600 jobs in the last year and 5,300 in the last month alone, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Dewar: I'll repeat again, as I stated, our plan is to grow the economy.

Second lowest unemployment rate in Canada, some of the strongest job growth, Mr. Speaker. The Conference Board of Canada said Manitoba will be one of the nation—one of the leaders when it comes to economic growth. The Bank of Montreal—excuse me, the Royal Bank of Canada, as well, just made that projection. We're proud of our plan. We're proud of our record when it comes to growing our economy.

Mr. Speaker, again, contrast that to the Leader of the Opposition who wants to fire nurses; they want to fire teachers; they want to kill our Hydro plan; they want to kill our infrastructure plan. Contrast that to the Leader of the Liberal Party, who wants to fire 855 liquor workers and give tax breaks to the big banks, who made \$35 billion in profits. I say shame on them.

Government Spending Record Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, shame on a government that, after 17 years, only has misinformation and fear. Shame on them.

Mr. Speaker, in 2015, when Moody's downgraded Manitoba's credit rating, the first downgrade in 30 years, they issued a caution. They said that Manitoba's credit rating could face further downward pressure in the event of further erosion of its fiscal position leading to the substantial increase in deficits, debt beyond the existing plan.

Mr. Speaker, the opinion of international bond rating agencies affects the cost of borrowing for Manitoba. The NDP took no action in the face of these cautions to alter their course. The warnings were not heeded. Manitobans will pay the price.

Why did the Finance Minister not listen to the experts when they warned the NDP to avoid exactly this situation?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I'll remind this member and I'll remind the House when we came into office Moody's—the Leader of the Opposition was part of the stewardship of our economy. The rating—Moody's ranked Manitoba at a Aa3, Mr. Speaker. We improved that ranking to Aa1; now we're at Aa2.

Mr. Speaker, both Dominion bond rating agency and Standard & Poor's maintain our high ranking,

and our ranking with Moody's is still one of the highest that they have and in the world.

Our plan, Mr. Speaker, is to grow the economy. Our plan is to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada, and we're succeeding.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister has not succeeded and he said it so himself. He said the deficit is still not going in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I remind the House that the latest financial numbers show that government spending is up, again, \$139 million. The deficit projection is revised 30 per cent higher, going in the wrong direction, and all—after all this time the NDP has decided that it's in their best interest to hide any further news from Manitobans. But it's not in the best interest of Manitobans, who deserve nothing less than a full budget.

What are they hiding? What is their secret agenda? They've hid it in the past; they will hide it again. Will the Finance Minister admit that this path he is on is a path that leads to escalating debt payments, crippling debt and less money in the hands of hard-working Manitoba families?

Mr. Dewar: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member will see our plan in the next hour and a half, presumably, a plan that builds upon the great work that we've done over the last number of years, a plan that put more money back to Manitoba families.

The member knows we brought in a tax cut for seniors in terms of their education. We brought in a tax cut for small business. We now have—we are the first and only province who have completely eliminated the small-business tax. It was 8 per cent under the—when the Leader of the Opposition was in government; now it's zero. The corporate tax rate was 17 per cent, the highest in Canada under the Leader of the Opposition, now it's 12 per cent, one of the lowest in Canada.

We're still going to continue to grow our economy, Mr. Speaker. We want to have the lowest unemployment in Canada. That is our goal.

Mr. Friesen: I'm so pleased the Finance Minister wants to talk about taxes.

Manitobans pay the highest taxes of any Canadian jurisdiction, the highest west of Quebec. Now the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) new ad absurdly states that he wants to leave a little more money in the pockets of Manitobans. Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense, it is ridiculous.

The NDP promised they had a plan to eliminate the deficit. Did they do it? No. The NDP promised they had a plan to not raise taxes. Did they do it? No. The NDP promised that they had a plan to drive down the number of kids in care. Did they do it? No. They broke their word on all their fundamental promises and Manitobans do not believe them anymore.

Why would Manitobans believe him today?

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to Manitobans to be—to provide them with a very robust economic update—outlook and you'll see that in the next short period of time.

I'll remind the member when his own leader served in the House of Commons he was the chair of the finance committee, Mr. Speaker. The decision was made that the Harper government, presumably at the—on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, to in that year table economic statement which is what we're going to be doing today.

NDP Leadership Campaign Elections Manitoba Investigation

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) in recounting the leadership issues a year ago said this: We tried our best to make sure our party knew some of the shady decisions that had been made. At almost the same moment that the member for Dauphin was making those comments, news was breaking that the Commissioner of Elections was again launching another investigation against this Premier this time for using civil servants for partisan purposes.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't a question of the member for Dauphin's integrity. His integrity is fully intact.

This is a question about the Premier: Why can the Premier just not stay out of scandal?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): It is a bit odd that the member is taking a complaint that was made to an independent body and already trying, accusing and hanging someone, Mr. Speaker, which is normal for members opposite.

But I want to remind members opposite that the worst taint and the worst scandal in the history of Manitoba, even worse than the Roblin scandal that toppled the government in 1919 or the early century, was the vote-rigging scandal when, unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition was in a Cabinet that actually, literally tried to fix an election. Something

that maybe happens in third-world countries, maybe Costa Rica, maybe other places, Mr. Speaker, but I never thought in this—in my lifetime that we would have a vote-rigging scandal in the province of Manitoba, and it's deplorable that members opposite accuse anyone, would have the temerity—

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

Mr. Goertzen: Actually, Mr. Speaker, the comments weren't from me, they're from the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers). And the member, of course, was a senior member of the Cabinet and he said yesterday, he said that what he was trying to do was trying to avoid electoral disaster.

Now that's something that's political, but he also said that he was trying to ensure that party members knew of the shady decisions that were happening within the NDP; that's not about politics, that's about integrity.

And it's not our integrity that was called into question. It wasn't the member for Dauphin's integrity that was called into question. It was about the integrity of the Premier (Mr. Selinger), Mr. Speaker. And perhaps the Premier would actually like to respond since it was his integrity that was called into question.

Which shady decisions were being referred to by the member for Dauphin that happened last year? And how many have happened since, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: I need not remind members opposite it was Judge Monnin who said, and this is something, Mr. Speaker, never in his lifetime has he seen so many liars—so many liars as he has from members opposite with regard to the vote-rigging scandal.

Mr. Speaker, for people fire integrity questions back and forth in this Chamber on a regular basis. But you know, I was proud of this House yesterday when we passed bills that dealt with TRC and reconciliation. I was proud of this House yesterday when we passed bills that dealt with First Nations families and providing care.

* (14:20)

I was proud of this House when we passed bills with relations to the Teachers' Society. I was proud of this House and the integrity we had to put forward the agenda of Manitobans and get away from the petty accusatory politics that we're seeing from members opposite.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, in the time that I've been elected, I've made far less accusations about the government than they've made about themselves in the last year.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have had enough of the endless scandal. We've had enough of the endless scandal. I believe that many NDP members have had enough of the endless scandal. The member for Dauphin said yesterday what most Manitobans already know, that there are shady decisions, that there are questions of integrity with this NDP government.

The question that I have about the Premier, Mr. Speaker, it isn't why it is that Manitobans believe what they believe. We know why they believe it. We know why the member for Dauphin believes it. We know why the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) believes it. We know why the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) believes it. They all know that Manitobans have lost trust with this Premier.

What I want to know is: Why hasn't the Premier figured out yet that he's lost the trust of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I'm tempted to call members opposite the know-it-all party. They seem to know it all, except when you listen to the member from Seine River and she talked about the heart transplant that she was able to provide in terms of the budget; when you hear it from the member, my colleague from Fort Rouge, when she talked about the compassionate caring of this government; when you heard it from the speakers last night, like Murray Sinclair who came here and said that is good legislation we're bringing forward; when you hear it from people in my constituency who get the senior citizens rebate.

Mr. Speaker, this government has tried to care and provide for Manitobans. This government has tried to share resources in the province of Manitoba. And members opposite, who are measuring curtains and talking like they're going to be government, ought to pay attention to what the voters say. We care for what the voters say and what people want. I'll stand by that any day. That's why we're New Democrats.

OCN First Nation Manitoba Hydro Contract

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, in a letter to the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, Chief Michael Constant wrote, and I quote: I

clearly understood support would be given to us if we, OCN nation, would support the Premier in the election process. End of quote.

Today we found out from a member from the NDP government that some of these shady decisions have been made by this government.

Is this one of those shady decisions?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Let me repeat that this matter is not new, Mr. Speaker. I responded to this question earlier in this session and I stand by what I said earlier.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we tried our best to make sure our party knew of some of the shady decisions that had been made. That is what a member of this Assembly said about the operations of his own government.

Chief Constant described in exchange for his work on Bipole III transmission line, they would support the First Minister's re-election bid for his election race.

Was this or was it not one of those shady descriptions described as a member of this House?

Mr. Robinson: No, Mr. Speaker, that is not accurate.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the NDP have broken the trust of Manitobans and they are clearly a broken government.

I'll give the minister another opportunity to set the record straight. I hope he'll take advantage of that opportunity today.

Did the First Minister promise jobs on a hydro project in exchange for support for the leadership bid?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, no.

Mr. Speaker: Any further questions?

Science and Technology Budgets Government Funding Record

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, science and technology are rapidly changing areas of development offering endless opportunities for Manitoba. And, for this reason, it's vital to invest in science and research and in innovation. And yet, since 2012, the total budget for what was the Manitoba Research and Innovation Fund, the Manitoba Health Research Council and the Manitoba

Centres of Excellence Fund and, of course, is now Research Manitoba, that budget has been cut from \$20 million down to \$17 million.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Premier cut \$3 million, or 15 per cent, from the funding of science research and innovation?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question on innovation.

It is an important part of our future agenda, which is why we've increased the Research and Development Tax Credit 20 per cent with refundability, one of the best in the country; the small-business enterprise tax credit, up to 45 per cent refundable for people that invest in local activities that create jobs in their communities, one of the best in the country. We funded the accelerator programs down in the Exchange District. We work with the technology centre that works on transportation at the University of Manitoba. We just funded a 'plairie'-prairie climate change adaptation centre at the University of Winnipeg to deal with issues of drought and floods in the prairie region. State-of-the-art centre there, Mr. Speaker, with highly qualified scientists that will be working on that.

Mr. Speaker, we just funded the Churchill Marine Observatory in northern Manitoba along with the federal government to take a look at the impact of global warming on ice and formations of ice and what that will mean with respect to transportation going through there and how we'll protect the environment on that. We think innovation is an important part of the future, and I would only hope that the member from River Heights will support that by voting for the economic outlook that we're putting in front of the Legislature.

Mr. Gerrard: In the last three years, the Premier has also cut the funding for the Industrial Technology Centre by 19 per cent.

Science, innovation and research are so critical to the future of our province, and yet the Premier has cut, cut and slashed instead of investing in the future.

Why has the Premier been so intent on cutting the science, innovation and research which paves the way for the development of future products, services and businesses, as well as a new knowledge base which we so much need for the years ahead?

Mr. Selinger: The government of Manitoba funds The Eureka Project, \$300,000 a year, a three-year

agreement; the Manitoba Technology Accelerator, \$300,000 a year, a three-year agreement; Innovate Manitoba, \$300,000 a year, Mr. Speaker; Startup Winnipeg, \$100,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, if the member from River Heights is truly interested in innovation, why is he cutting \$471 million from the health and education levy? That's \$471 million less to educate people, less to provide innovative solutions in health care. That would be the single biggest hit on innovation and job creation in the history of the province.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the combined budgets for science, innovation and business development, and for the Industrial Technology Centre, were \$22.4 million three years ago, and they were reduced to \$19.6 million in this last year, a 12-and-a-half-per-cent cut.

I ask the Premier: Is he planning to continue cutting one of the budget lines most important in our future this coming year, or will his mini budget even give us enough detail to know?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member from River Heights is getting up and asking a question about investments and innovation and technology, and we are committed to doing that.

A very innovative technology company called SkipTheDishes has just received a job-creation grant. They're planning to create over 500 jobs in Manitoba on a very advanced software algorithm that will provide rapid delivery of food into midwestern communities all over North America, Mr. Speaker. Five hundred jobs right here in Manitoba. The people that owned that company moved to Manitoba from another jurisdiction to the west of us because they thaw-saw this as the place to do business.

I think, if the member opposite does not repudiate his political party's desire to reduce the health and education levy by \$471 million, Mr. Speaker, we will not have those innovative opportunities, and we will not have those jobs in Manitoba, and we will not have the training that allows the people to do those good jobs in 'Manimatoba'.

So I say to the river-member from River Heights: Reverse that commitment to eliminate the health and education levy for \$471 million.

Economic and Fiscal Outlook Presentation of Plan

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Our NDP government is making steady progress for the working and middle class.

We know that the members opposite speak against things that matter to people, like sick notes. They speak against things that matter to people, like one-metre bike legislation. And they speak about things like privatizing child care in Manitoba on this, the international day for women.

We know why they don't want to talk about their own plan: because it's a terrible plan for Manitobans.

Can the Minister of Finance please inform the House about our plan to keep Manitoba affordable and keep our economy steady and growing?

* (14:30)

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I want to thank the member for St. Norbert for that excellent question, Mr. Speaker, because today, following question period, I'll have the great privilege and honour to present our government's economic and fiscal outlook.

Our government is putting forward a smart plan that moves Manitoba forward. We're making record investments in infrastructure that creates new jobs; 10,000 jobs last year, Mr. Speaker, which was a record, the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is committed to reckless cuts to education and health care. These cuts will lead to crumbling infrastructure, job losses that'll hurt hard-working Manitobans.

And the Liberal leader, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader wants to fire 800 liquor workers, put them on the unemployment run-line and give tax breaks to the big banks.

Mr. Speaker, we reject their plan. Manitobans reject their plans.

Hydro Transmission Line Farmland Acquisition

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, speaking of shady deals, we know the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his Cabinet did a secret order-in-council deal to expropriate over 100 farm families for the west-side waste line of Bipole III.

But my question is really to the Agriculture Minister: Why would he defend this decision of Cabinet when he was part of Cabinet and was part of this secret expropriation deal? Where was the Agriculture Minister when he should have been standing up for hard-working Manitoba families?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): It's always a privilege for me to stand up and speak about the great things that agriculture brings to the province of Manitoba.

It's very appropriate that International Women's Day is officially today. And I want the members from all sides of the House to acknowledge the hard-working farm women when we have—that we have in agriculture society today.

Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things that members opposite tend to forget what agriculture brings to the economy in the province of Manitoba: 2014 the sector brought in a total of \$13.4 billion of international trade from this province alone, from all sectors, and agriculture was 25 per cent of that, adding up \$3.4 billion.

And that is only a start where we, this side of the House, seize opportunities of economic growth, and Manitoba Hydro is one of those major links towards supporting farmers—

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

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, it makes my point. Why would this Agriculture Minister expropriate hard-working Manitoba farm women?

Why would the Agriculture Minister pick on women, 'discrimin' against women in the farmland education tax rebate that is shutting out women from applying for that rebate?

Where is this Cabinet minister when it comes to secret deals to expropriate hard-working Manitoba farm families?

Where is this minister when it comes to standing up for Manitobans?

Mr. Kostyshyn: We talk about the school tax credit. When the members opposite were in government, the poor accounting skills on their part should be accounting for the fact they were at zero. This side of the House today is at 80 per cent, so, yes, let's talk about the mathematical, the financial commitment with this side of the House.

And, quite ironically, Mr. Speaker, the critic for Midland says to the Carman Valley Leader that the Conservatives don't care about rural issues because they won't win the next election.

So this is what it's all about, Mr. Speaker. It's not about sticking up for agriculture. It's a political point that they're trying to make some opportunities to win some political points. That's the sad reality. That's all they care about, is political wins. Not this side of the House—sticks up for agriculture producers and farm families.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for 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:

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

(2) 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.

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

(4) 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.

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 D. Voth, R. Willetts and J. Klement 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.

Further petitions?

Budget 2016

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these—this is the background of this petition:

(1) On April 30th, 2015, the Finance Minister clearly stated: There will be another budget before the next election.

(2) The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans at significant taxpayer expense with the clear understanding there would be another budget before the next election.

(3) Just two days after the Public Accounts for the fiscal year 2014-2015 were released, showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by an additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Finance Minister stated: I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but the fact of the matter is we're weighing our options as to whether or not we will introduce a budget prior to the election.

(4) After months of misleading Manitobans, on February 4th, 2016, the provincial government finally admitted they would withhold the budget.

(5) Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding true state of the provincial government's financial mismanagement.

(6) The budget has been prepared by the provincial government is hiding it and the facts from Manitobans instead of being transparent and accountable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to keep its promise to the people of Manitoba and immediately bring forward the completed budget they are withholding from public scrutiny.

This petition is signed by P. Harms, L. Hildebrant, J. Rempel and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) On April 30th, 2015, the Finance Minister clearly stated: There will be another budget before the next election.

(2) The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans at significant taxpayer expense with the clear understanding there would be another budget before the next election.

(3) Just two days after the Public Accounts for fiscal year 2014-2015 were released, showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by an additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Finance Minister stated: I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but the fact of the matter is we're weighing our options as to whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election.

(4) After months of misleading Manitobans, on February 4th, 2016, the provincial government finally admitted they would withhold the budget.

(5) Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding the true state of the provincial government's fiscal mismanagement.

(6) The budget has been prepared, but the provincial government is hiding it and the facts from Manitobans instead of being transparent and accountable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (14:40)

To urge the provincial government keep its promise to the people, to Manitoba and immediately bring forward the completed budget they are withholding from public scrutiny.

This petition is signed by S. Yatsko, S. Maxymowich, H. Mark and many more fine Manitobans.

Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route—Information Request

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 500-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located in southeastern Manitoba that will cross into the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

The line has an in-service date of 2020 and will run approximately 150 kilometres with tower heights expected to reach between 40 to 60 metres and be located every four to five hundred metres.

The preferred route designated for the line will see hydro towers coming in close proximity to the community of La Broquerie and many other communities in Manitoba's southeast rather than an alternate route that was also considered.

The alternate route would have seen the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and eventually terminate at the same spot at the US border.

The Progressive Conservative caucus has repeatedly asked for information about the routing of the line and its proximity to densely populated areas and has yet to receive any response.

Landowners all across Manitoba are concerned about the impact hydro line routing could have on their land values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation to all members of the Legislative Assembly regarding what criteria were used and the reasons for selecting the preferred routing for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represented the least intrusive option to residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

And this is signed by J. Gibson, M. Vondeobaude, H. Lyss and many others, Mr. Speaker.

Budget 2016

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

On April 30, 2015, the Finance Minister clearly stated, and I quote: There will be another budget before the next election. End of quote.

(2) The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans at significant taxpayers' expense with the clear understanding that

there would be another budget before the next election.

(3) Just two days after the provincial—after the Public Accounts for the fiscal year 2014-2015 were released, showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by an additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Finance Minister stated, and I quote: I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but the fact of the matter is we're weighing our options as to whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the next election. End of quote.

(4) After months of misleading Manitobans, on February 4, 2016, the provincial government finally admitted they would withhold the budget.

(5) Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding the true state of the provincial government's fiscal management; and

(6) The budget has been prepared, but the provincial government is hiding it and the facts from Manitobans instead of being transparent and accountable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to keep its promise to the people of Manitoba and immediately bring forward the completed budget they are withholding from public scrutiny.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by C. McDougall, C. Thiessen, S. Fisher and many, 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.

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 have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hotspot 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 R. Remillard, K. Lemoine, J. Levy and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Applied Behavioural Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes the importance of early intervention and ABA therapy for children with autism.

(3) The preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 68 children waiting for services. That number is expected to exceed 148 children by September 2016 despite commitments to reduce the waiting list and provide timely access to services.

(4) The current provincial government policy now imposed on the ABA service provider will decrease the scientifically proven, empirically based and locally proven program and force children to go to school at age five before they are ready, thus not allowing them full access to ABA services promised as they wait on their wait-list.

(5) Waiting lists, forced decrease in service and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or age out of eligibility for ABA services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the ministers of Family Services, Education and Advanced Learning and Health

consider making funding available to address the current waiting list for ABA services.

This petition is signed by F. Spence, P. Jundt, C. Pruden and many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Community-Based Brain Injury Services and Supports

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

Brain Injury Canada, cited at braininjurycanada.ca/acquired-brain-injury/, estimates that 50,000 Canadians sustain brain injuries each year, over 1 million Canadians live with the effects of an acquired brain injury, 30 per cent of all traumatic brain injuries are sustained by children and youth, and approximately 50 per cent of brain injuries come from falls and motor vehicle collisions.

Studies conducted by Manitoba Health in 2003 and in 2006 and the Brandon Regional Health Authority in 2008 identified the need for community-based brain injury services.

These studies recommended that Manitoba adopt the Saskatchewan model of brain injury services.

* (14:50)

The treatment and coverage for Manitobans who suffer brain injuries varies greatly, resulting in huge inadequacies depending upon whether a person suffers the injury at work, in a motor vehicle accident, through assault or from medical issues such as a stroke, aneurysm or anoxia due to cardiac arrest or other medical reasons.

Although inpatient services including acute care, short- and longer term rehabilitation are available throughout the province, brain injury patients who are discharged from hospital often experience discontinuation or great reduction of services which result in significant financial and emotional burdens being placed on family and friends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to develop and evolve community based brain injury services that include but are not limited to: case management services, known also as service navigation; safe and

accessible housing in the community; proctor or coach type assistance for community reintegration programs; improved access to community based rehabilitation services; and improve transportation, especially for those people living in rural Manitoba.

To urge the provincial government to encompass financial and emotional supports for families and other caregivers in the model that is developed.

This petition is signed by J. Ledoux, J. Kingdon, D. Carter and many more fine Manitobans.

Budget 2016

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) On April 30, 2015, the Finance Minister clearly stated, and I quote: There will be another budget before the next election. End quote.

(2) The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans at significant taxpayer expense with the clear understanding there would be another budget before the next election.

(3) Just two days after the Public Accounts for fiscal year 2014-2015 were released, showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by an additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Finance Minister stated, and I quote: I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but the fact of the matter is we're weighing our options as to whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election. End quote.

(4) Months after—after months of misleading Manitobans, on February 4, 2016, the provincial government finally admitted they would withhold the budget.

(5) Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding the true state of the provincial government's fiscal mismanagement.

(6) The budget has been prepared, but the provincial government is hiding it and the facts from Manitobans instead of being transparent and accountable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government keep its promise to the people to—of Manitoba and

immediately bring forward the completed budget they are withholding from public scrutiny.

This petition is signed by F. Wayte, R. Hunt, E. Drinkwater and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is follows:

(1) On April 30, 2015, the Finance Minister clearly stated, there will be another budget before the next election.

(2) The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans, at significant taxpayers' expense, with the clear understanding there would be another budget before the next election.

(3) Just two months after the Public Accounts the fiscal year 2014-2015 were released showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Finance Minister stated, I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but in fact of the matter is whether weighing our options as whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election.

(4) After months of misleading Manitobans, on February 4, 2016, the provincial government finally admitted they would withhold the budget.

(5) Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding the true estate of the provincial government's financial mismanagement; and

(6) The budget has been prepared, but the provincial government is hiding it, and the facts, from Manitoba instead of being transparent and accountable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to keep its promise to the people of Manitoba and immediately bring forward a complete budget they were withholding from public scrutiny.

And this petition signed by J. Dunfield, L. Dunfield, J. Cochrane and many fine Manitobans.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On April 30, 2015, the Finance Minister clearly stated: There will be another budget before the next election.

(2) The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans, at significant taxpayer expense, with the clear understanding there would be another budget before the next election.

(3) Just two days after the Public Accounts for fiscal year 2014-2015 were released, showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by an additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Finance Minister stated: I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but the fact of the matter is we're weighing our options as to whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election.

(4) After months of misleading Manitobans, on February 4, 2016, the provincial government finally admitted they would withhold the budget.

(5) Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding the true state of the provincial government's fiscal mismanagement.

(6) The budget has been prepared, but the provincial government is hiding it, and the facts, from Manitobans instead of being transparent and accountable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to keep its promise to the people of Manitoba and immediately bring forward the completed budget they are withholding from public scrutiny.

And this petition is signed by B. Grawberger, H. Grawberger and B. Smith and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And this is the background to this petition:

(1) On April 30th, 2015, the Finance Minister clearly stated there would be another budget before the next election.

(2) The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans, at significant taxpayers' expense, with the clear understanding there would be another budget before the next election.

(3) Just two days after the Public Accounts for fiscal year 2014-2015 were released, showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by an additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Finance Minister stated: I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but the fact of the matter is we're weighing our options as to whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election.

(4) After months of misleading Manitobans, on February 14—on February 4th, excuse me—2016, the provincial government finally admitted they would withhold the budget.

(5) Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding the true state of the provincial government's fiscal mismanagement.

(6) The budget has been prepared, but the provincial government is hiding it, and the facts, from Manitobans instead of being transparent and accountable.

* (15:00)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government keep its promise to the people to Manitoba and immediately bring forward the completed budget they are withholding from public scrutiny.

And this petition is signed by S. Bowman, S. Parago, C. Dick and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route—Information Request

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 500-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located in southeastern Manitoba that will cross into the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

(2) The line has an in-service date of 2020 and will run approximately 150 kilometres with tower heights expected to reach between 40 to 50 metres and be located every four to five hundred metres.

(3) The preferred route designated for the line will see hydro towers come in close proximity to the community of La Broquerie and many other

communities in Manitoba's southeast rather than an alternate route that was also considered.

(4) The alternate route would have seen the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and eventually terminate at the same spot at the US border.

(5) The Progressive Conservative caucus has repeatedly asked for information about the routing of the line and its proximity dense-to densely populated areas and has yet to receive any response.

(6) Landowners all across Manitoba are concerned about the impact hydro line routing could have on land values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation to all members of the Legislative Assembly regarding what criteria were used and the reasons for selecting the preferred route for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represented the least intrusive option to the residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

Signed by T. Pow, J. Arnold, M. Juce and 'maymy'—many other fine Manitobans.

Budget 2016

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) April 30th, 2015, the Finance Minister clearly stated: There will be another budget before the next election.

(2) The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans at significant taxpayer expense with the clear understanding there would be another budget before the next election.

(3) Just three days after the Public Accounts for physical year 2014-2015 were released, showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by an additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Finance Minister stated: I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but the fact of the matter is we're weighing our options as to whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election.

(4) After months of misleading Manitobans, on February 4, 2016, provincial government finally admitted they would withhold the budget.

(5) Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding the true state of the provincial government's physical management.

(6) The budget has been prepared, but the provincial government is hiding it, and the facts that—from Manitobans, instead of being transparent and accountable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government keep its promise to the people of Manitoba and immediately bring forward a completed budget they are withholding from public scrutiny.

And this petition is submitted on behalf of B. DeBaets, M. Martens, N. Desrochers and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes petitions.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 36(1), I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that the regularly scheduled business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the provincial government's refusal to table a budget as previously promised.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Morden—just before I get to the honourable member, I just want to indicate that those wishing to speak to this, including the member for Morden-Winkler, has 10 minutes to explain the urgency of this matter, as do other members that will be recognized by the Chair.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, this is an urgent matter that I bring before the House this afternoon; namely, that the provincial government has refused to table a budget, and Manitobans deserve nothing less than a full budget at this time.

Mr. Speaker, it was almost a year ago in the last provincial budget that the Finance Minister said there would be another budget before the next election. He indicated that Manitobans would know their full plan before they went into the election.

On the day that Public Accounts were released last fall, showing a deficit that was \$100 million greater than budgeted in the last year, the Finance Minister said, again, there would be a budget.

However, he started to waver after that time when he told people that, we were weighing our options as to whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP were serious about Manitoba's finances, they would table a full budget today with real accountability in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP are trying to avoid a full accounting of the expensive promises that they have taken weeks and weeks in January to make. These promises undoubtedly have consequences for Manitobans. These promises obviously come with the promise of higher taxes for Manitobans and more debt for future generations.

Indeed, the Finance Minister even conducted public consultation meetings on the budget. He invited Manitobans to come and present. He indicated that the NDP wanted to hear their ideas and their views so that they could build a strong budget that focuses on what matters most to Manitobans. That was the commitment of the NDP. And yet, that commitment was then followed up by a major breach and they did not bring a budget after all. They were happy to receive the publicity; they were not happy to do the work of government to bring a budget.

Mr. Speaker, it is simply unacceptable to Manitobans that the NDP would conduct bogus consultation meetings that did not produce a budget. It is additionally unacceptable to all taxpayers that this self-promotional consultation road show cost over \$40,000.

Mr. Speaker, in the month of January alone, the NDP held 113 announcements. The government used government resources to identify these priorities, I assume they calculated the cost of these expenditures, they staged the public announcements. All of this was done on the taxpayers' dollar.

Yet when the time comes to provide a financial accounting to indicate how would—they would pay for any of these things, they take a pass. They decline to comment. They decline to provide a full accounting to Manitobans.

It is without precedent in the province of Manitoba for a sitting government to offer up a fiscal update in the place of a full budget.

Why? This NDP government with its record of self-promotional tendencies surely would not miss an opportunity to take credit. Obviously, if it was good news that they had to share, they would be sharing it.

* (15:10)

Mr. Speaker, instead, undoubtedly, Manitobans are expecting further bad news, further confirmation of the unsustainability of the high-spend, high-tax, high-debt path chosen by this NDP. What the NDP is arrogantly choosing not to disclose is what taxes will undoubtedly follow that pay for all of this spending. Manitobans deserve to know the truth.

Now, in the Throne Speech just last November, the NDP announced \$6.6 billion of new spending priorities. The NDP are clearly trying to buy Manitobans off before the election but are refusing to tell them what the cost would be. It is a fraud, Mr. Speaker. The NDP want all of the benefits of making budgetary commitments in publicly staged events, but they do not want the responsibility that comes with it, the responsibility of a sitting government to table a budget. No legislated debate, no details, no accountability for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, if you care, you care about results. The financial record shows that this NDP government does not get results. They do not meet their financial targets. Chronic deficits have piled Manitoba's debt up to new heights. That debt now sits at \$36 billion. In just the past eight years, the NDP has doubled the provincial debt. They have drained the Fiscal Stabilization Account. They will spend almost \$900 million this year just to service that debt. And those numbers will only get more as Manitoba's debt rises.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP promised to balance the budget in 2014 without raising taxes. Within weeks of making those pronouncements, the NDP extended the PST, first of all raise—or, first of all, widening the retail sales tax and then finally applying the biggest tax hike in modern history in Manitoba, raising the PST to 8 per cent, 'broking'—breaking their fundamental pledge to taxpayers before the election and actually breaking the laws that were in place to protect Manitobans' right to vote on such measures.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans now pay \$500 million every year more in new taxes compared to just six years ago. And yet, even with these record-high revenues, the government cannot balance the books, even though they said they would do it. Because of this NDP propensity for overspending, they are

hungry for revenue, and therefore the government fails to address even the most basic, the most fundamental fiscal issues.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP has the least competitive basic personal exemption of any province west of Nova Scotia. The NDP does not index tax brackets. They've remained unchanged for almost 10 years, even though incomes rise due to inflation. It's bracket creep. It's essentially an NDP tax loophole used to glean even more money from unsuspecting taxpayers.

Manitobans, young people, moneylenders, all of these, seniors on fixed incomes, marginal income earners, they are all watching for cues that the NDP is heading in the right direction. And they are getting no such cues. As a result of the unfairness of the tax system, the average Manitoba family pays more than \$3,300 more each year in taxes than the same family living in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's a structural deficit. The government has shown they cannot or will not take control of the situation. It is spiralling out of control. And that's why I call for the urgent focus of this Chamber on this matter today.

Mr. Speaker, the second quarter financial results show that the NDP cannot or will not meet its own spending targets. These are the targets that they themselves set out. What does the report show us? That the government deficit is revised 30 per cent higher than the target, that the deficit is now projected to be \$100 million over their own target. And it reveals that the NDP has overspent its planned budget once again by \$139 million.

This is not a solid fiscal track record. Trust has been betrayed. Manitobans are consequentially suspicious of this government's activities, deeply mistrustful of any new promises that are being made. This is not a government that can ask for leniency in financial matters. Manitobans need to scrutinize more closely and not less closely the financial management of this NDP government. It is a broken government with a broken financial record.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier in the Chamber how Moody's downgraded Manitoba's rating but warned that if there wasn't a willingness and demonstrable progress in going in a new direction, further downgrades would happen. I would submit that we are at that place now where the real threat looms of further downgrades.

Mr. Speaker, it comes to this, the government instead of leading, instead of being transparent, they are hiding, they are hiding from Manitobans; they are hiding the bad news from Manitobans. I would add that the NDP keeps changing its targets to avoid meeting their targets. They have—at this point in time they need to produce a budget. Manitobans deserve to know what the government is planning for the future.

Mr. Speaker, the way for the government to be accountable is to bring a budget, not a fiscal snapshot. This is not a budget; it is a fantasy budget. It is not budget day; it is no budget day. And Manitobans deserve nothing less than a full and comprehensive budget that details where this government will once again overspend.

Accountability matters, trust matters. The budget is about trust, and the NDP has broken the trust of all Manitobans. It's why we call for an urgent debate on this matter today.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the matter of urgent public importance.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Notwithstanding the veiled attempt of the member opposite to make this an issue, Mr. Speaker, it's not even close to being a matter of urgent public importance according to the rules of this Legislature, according to The Financial Administration Act, and according to the practice of this Chamber. We are waiting for federal budget in order to determine the kind of revenues, which is a tradition, that Manitoba will be receiving.

Members opposite love, they love Saskatchewan so much I'm surprised that they don't have little Brad Wall posters on their desks, Mr. Speaker. But Saskatchewan just introduced a economic update; it was 13 pages. Members will soon find out that our fiscal update is 10 times that.

And, you know, the Leader of the Opposition, you know, there's a thing that, members talked about arrogance and I don't want to go there, Mr. Speaker, but you know they're not even at the polls and they're already acting in a fashion that scares me. They scare me.

When the Leader of the Opposition was on the federal Finance Committee, Mr. Speaker, he chaired the financial Finance Committee, and what did the Harper government of which he was a part did? They brought a fiscal update. They brought a fiscal update, and now that we're here, we're ready, we want to

bring that the member's got his speech all ready, we have the fiscal update all printed and ready to go, and members opposite, what are they doing? They're blocking it. They're blocking it.

Why are they blocking it, Mr. Speaker? I suggest that there's a touch—I don't want to be cynical, but I suspect there's a touch of politics in what they're doing. You know, members opposite have not offered one single positive reason, one single part of their platform in the question periods that we've been going through. You know, during this session, we heard an agricultural question, one measly agricultural question.

You know, Mr. Speaker, they're hiding, they're hiding the reality of what the Leader of the Opposition said today. He said he would fix the \$6 million in deficit we're paying every day. That would be job one. Well job one means no jobs for Manitoba. Job one for member opposite means less nurses for Manitoba. Job one for members opposite is meaning cutting the incentive that the country needs, that the province needs, that everyone recognizes in this country we need to build jobs to build the economy.

Now is not the time to slash and cut; now is not the time for a Conservative government; but they're afraid to show their agenda. The Leader of the Opposition has already said he will slash \$500 million out of the budget, Mr. Speaker. He's already said they want to privatize daycare. He's already been part of a government that came and said, well, we won't touch MTS, but then they sold off the Crown corporation in order to pay off the deficit and then use the money so they could show a balanced budget. And not only that, they ran with different books.

* (15:20)

So I know why they're afraid of dealing with a fiscal update. They are afraid of the truth. They are afraid for us to present in this House the financial status of the province. They are afraid, Mr. Speaker, to offer what their platform actually is, which is a platform of, to use the phrase of a former premier, acute protracted restraint. How many times did we hear that in this Legislature? Acute protracted restraint. That was code; that was Tory code for, like the former government years, the laying off of 1,500 nurses, the cancelling of programs, the closure—the attempted closure of my local hospital—the attempted closure of my local hospital. They were going to close Grace. They

closed Misericordia Hospital. They closed the largest hospital in the history of the province of Manitoba, and now they say trust them.

Trust that group of people, Mr. Speaker? And they're saying that it's urgent public importance to block our fiscal update. They are using a tactic to block our ability to provide the people of Manitoba with the fiscal framework. The leader—our Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) is ready. We're ready to proceed, and they're using a tactical maneuver which, by the way, is not valid. It's not urgent in any sense of the word. We're here, ready to do our financial update that provides for the information, and, besides, we just had new rules in place. We intend to come back if we're re-elected. We'll bring the budget in. After the federal budget, we will do that, and we will be following the regular calendar that we have all agreed to, where there'll have to be a budget and there'll have to be a certain number of dates applied to it. The members know that.

The members know we've agreed to rule changes. The members know that's coming. The members know that the former Harper government did what we're doing. Members know that Saskatchewan did what they're doing. Members know we have a fiscal update.

They're afraid. They're playing politics—pure politics. We're here, ready to debate the fiscal update of the province, and they're using tactics. How often have we heard so many slow petitions—14 petitions, slowly read into the Chamber, followed—and the matter was of such urgent public importance they had to call it after having 14 slow speeches in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, they are not acting like a proper opposition. I fear how they will act as a government. We want to present an update to the province's fiscal situation today. We will present it today. We'll ask for extra hours if we have to. We'll stay here because we want to present—we want to present a financial update to the Province before certain automatic dates kick in.

And, it is not only our right, Mr. Speaker; it's our duty to do that, and I suggest to members opposite, failure to do their duty, failure to provide this information to the public will be indicative—be indicative of the harsh, and I daresay, acute protracted restraint orientation—I used to say mean and lean, but following advice from my colleagues, I'm just going to say their tendency toward acute

protracted restraint—no, really their tendency to hide their true agenda. We're prepared to put it on the record what our financial situation is.

They want to talk about motions. They want to stretch it out, Mr. Speaker. They want to debate motions while their leader goes about saying that he knows how to do things better.

Mr. Speaker, better? Better? Leaner and meaner; that is the credo of members opposite. They want to cut half-a-billion dollars from the budget. They want to privatize daycare; they've already said so. They want to lay off nurses. And you know, they had a speech from the Throne, by invitation, in a closed room. Their leader was elected in a closed room, the only one running, and they're talking about democracy when we're here today, ready to present our fiscal update, and they're bringing in jurisdictional motions. They're bringing in administrative slowdown. They brought in 14 petitions before they decided that a matter of urgent public importance was to table this motion. I daresay it's not a matter of urgent public importance, particularly because we are ready to table our economic and fiscal outlook. We think it's important that we have time to debate this in this Chamber and not get caught up in little slowdown procedures of the members opposite because they want to do things their way.

Mr. Speaker, they have an opposition day tomorrow. They have a couple opposition days. We give it to them, their opposition days. They know we have a session coming after the election—

An Honourable Member: In the rules.

Mr. Chomiak: —in the rules, Mr. Speaker, that'll allow for a budget. They know we haven't heard from the federal government. They know how significant those issues are with relation to a budget. They will get today the most update, robust, proper accounting of the fiscal and economic outlook of the province of Manitoba. They'll get it today. We want it debated today. Their motion is not a matter of urgent public importance; it's an attempt after 14 petitions to try to slow down this House to try to prevent our ability to provide the information to the public.

I'm going to close my comments by tabling for the House, Mr. Speaker, three copies that'll be delivered to all members of the Manitoba economic and fiscal outlook dated March 2016, I'm going to table it in the House for all members to review, and

it'll be divided to all members so even though they're trying to stall it and block it Manitobans will have a chance to look at what is the fiscal and economic update of the province of Manitoba despite their attempt to block it, and I think we should be proud of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Is the honourable member for River Heights rising to speak to the matter of urgent public importance?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I have a brief comment on the matter of urgent—

Mr. Speaker: One moment please.

I'm asking a question of the honourable member, are you rising to speak to the matter of urgent public importance?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Then the honourable member will leave—leave of the House. Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to speak to the MUPI?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, there should have been a proper budget, of that there is no question. The NDP have had more than enough time to produce it. In not producing a budget, the NDP are shortchanging Manitobans. The lack of a proper budget is indeed a matter of urgent public importance. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: On the matter of urgent public importance, I want to thank all honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion of the proposed—on the motion proposed by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) should be debated today.

I would note that the notice required by rule 36(1), as provided under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

I do not doubt that this matter is one that is of keen concern to all members of the House as

consideration of budgets is a key function of this Legislature. However, I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward and I was not persuaded that the ordinary business of the House should be set aside to deal with this issue today.

I would note that there are other avenues for members to raise this issue, including questions-in-question period and the-raising the item under members' statements and also grievances. I must also note that this motion anticipates debate on another motion on the Order Paper.

Our rule 36(5)(d) states that a motion to bring forward a matter of urgent public importance "shall not anticipate a matter that has previously been appointed for consideration by the House". End of quotations. There is currently an opposition day motion with a very similar content to this motion listed on the Order Paper in the name of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen). Therefore, with the greatest of respect, I rule that the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: Grievances, the honourable member for Spruce Woods on a grievance.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I somewhat regret that I have to rise today to grieve over the NDP government's refusal to table a budget, especially when they previously promised all Manitobans that they would do that.

* (15:30)

As you made your comments there, it is contingent on a government to bring forward a budget. It's one of the most fundamental and most important documents that a government could bring forward, and, really, the budget represents to all Manitobans where their tax money is going and how it's going to be spent. And many Manitobans were under the belief that this NDP government was going to bring a budget forward. And then, at the last minute, they decide they're going to put forward some kind of an economic fiscal statement. And, clearly, that's nothing close to what a budget would be, Mr. Acting Speaker—Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we all got invited to the consultation that the government was hosting last fall. I know I got a letter from the government asking me to go to Brandon. So, well, I better take the opportunity to go to Brandon and see what the

Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) had to say. I could offer my views in terms of what the budget should look like. And there was other members from western Manitoba that—at that event. There was probably 24 to 28 other members of the community there to hear what the minister had to say. And, I think, the interesting part was they all said the opportunity to provide input to the Minister of Finance, and, I think, we were all there with the understanding that we were going to give input into a budget.

You know, the NDP have had—well, they've had four and a half years in government; they should know how to put together a budget. I know there's been turmoil over there in the NDP caucus, with members retiring and some internal turmoil, and maybe that's taken their eye off the ball here. Maybe that's why their eye is not on the fiscal ball, and they haven't been able to put together a budget for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. That's just—that's one thing that could possibly lead to why they haven't produced a budget.

But, to get back to the consultation, and we know that the government spent over \$40,000 in this consultation process last fall, Mr. Speaker, trying to engage Manitobans. Unfortunately, they appear that they're not listening to what Manitobans said.

Now, at the event in Brandon, for instance, Mr. Speaker, there was people from the school board there. And, clearly, they wanted to have an input in—terms of what the school budget would look like. Obviously, that has a very significant impact in terms of what they're going to have to raise for local taxes to operate the school districts.

So, if this particular economic fiscal outlet doesn't provide the sort of framework for school taxes, then where are we at? And that's really the intent of a budget, is to provide that framework so that those sort of groups can make those decisions.

And, certainly, the school board members that were there raised, I think, very valid issues, very valid questions around where the government was headed in terms of education and trying to get some input in terms of what their budget would look like as well.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, we also recognize health care being a very substantial expenditure within the budget. There—we also had some health-care professionals there, and they were asking the same questions in terms of where the provincial

budget was headed. And there was, unfortunately, very few answers there at that particular time, but at least the opportunity was there to share some advice in terms of health care moving forward.

There was also municipal people there from a few different municipalities in that particular area of the province. And, clearly, provincial budget has a very significant impact on municipal budgets as well, especially when it comes to some infrastructure financing. So they were trying to get a sense in terms of where the NDP was going on that, and they also had suggestions in terms of what might work better for them in terms of delivering a provincial budget.

So those types of people were there, but there was also people from the community in the child and family services community. And there was a lot of questions raised from people in those communities, too, in terms of what the provincial budget was going to look like and some ways that the Province could enhance delivery of some of those services to that particular community.

So all those people there, again, were there under the guise that they were—this was a consultation, that the government was actually going to be listening to them and then provide some kind of a document in terms of budget. But, Mr. Speaker, it's not there.

And I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, the—many Manitobans are looking forward to what the NDP is going to do with the provincial sales tax. You know, we saw, after the last election, they went door to door during the campaign, said they weren't going to raise provincial sales tax or any other major taxes. But they did just that after the election. In fact, they raised the provincial sales tax to 8 per cent, and they also expanded sales tax, provincial sales tax, to a number of goods and services that were previously not taxed under the provincial sales tax. So it's been a huge tax grab for them. But we know, prior to the announcement of the 8 per cent, this government here and the Cabinet actually considered raising the provincial sales tax to 9 per cent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would say this economic and fiscal outlook probably doesn't talk about sales tax, but if the government is thinking about raising our provincial sales tax, that is the sort of signal that would be sent in the actual budget document. And that is really what Manitobans are looking for. They are looking for a government that is open and transparent, and this government doesn't have a very good track record in that regard.

This election, which is coming very, very close, Manitobans deserve the right to know what the financial state of our province is, and that is probably one of the most important and fundamental things that a government should be producing. For some reason, Mr. Speaker, this government has chosen not to deliver an open and transparent document in a budget.

Mr. Speaker, we're wondering why that is. Clearly, this government is hiding something behind this economic outlook, and why would Manitobans be nervous about not seeing a provincial budget?

Well, if we look at the track record of this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, it's not very overwhelming—we'll put it that way. You know, we look at their track record just on balancing budgets. We haven't had a balanced budget for years, and, in fact, the government here can't even manage to hit their own marks on their own budgets. In fact, the last estimate we had, the deficit was \$128 million higher than what this government projected. So that was going to provide them a deficit of \$550 million, a substantial increase from where they told us they were going to be not that many months ago.

And the lead-up to this campaign prior to the blackout, we heard 113 announcements in the month of January alone, a substantial amount of money that this government has committed to spend on behalf of taxpayers in Manitoba. And we go back to the Throne Speech. They announced \$6.6 billion of new spending, and, really, it becomes pretty clear to me the government is trying to buy votes using our own tax money, Mr. Speaker.

So the question is: Can the government show us in a budget document that 113 announcements they made? Can they show us where that \$6.6 billion of promises was made in the Throne Speech? Can they show us that in a budget document? That's what Manitobans are looking for, and that's why we're so concerned about this now, Mr. Speaker, and this is why I'm raising it as a matter today.

Mr. Speaker, it's a significant document that should be provided. We believe Manitobans have the right to see that. They should have the right to see what major increase in taxes this government is going to be before them and is very substantial.

Now we know there was some commitment by the NDP to balance the core budget by 2018-2019. We really have no idea if they're on track to do that. It's, in fact, Mr. Speaker, not even talking

about just core budget, but there was a—Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board actually just provided—the third quarter report just came out, and Manitoba Hydro, for the first three—sorry—the first nine months of the year, showing a \$48-million deficit in Manitoba Hydro. So not only speaking about core budget, but there's significant losses occurring in Manitoba Hydro, and that's something that all Manitobans should certainly be aware of.

And, if you look at the debt servicing costs of Manitoba Hydro, they've increased from \$398 million to over \$438 million, so certainly a significant change there, Mr. Speaker, and those are the kinds of information and financial information that Manitobans should be looking for if this government was going to be open and honest and transparent and provide those kinds of information, those fiscal numbers to all Manitobans. If this government was really an open and transparent and a trustworthy government, they would provide that kind of documentation—

* (15:40)

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

The honourable member for Midland, on a grievance?

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): On a grievance, Mr. Speaker.

There—the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba is standing up for Manitobans. This shell game that this NDP government is playing with their so-called fiscal statement is not being true to Manitobans, is not presenting Manitobans with the real financial picture of this province. They want to give a glorified happy news story just prior to the election. The Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) himself stood up today and said that, should they be re-elected, he—they would produce a budget then. You mean to say that it's not done now? This—it's been our question. They want to hide it until after the election.

So one can only assume, and rightfully so, that this budget that they're not bringing forward is not good news for Manitobans. And we know this is—this would be the continuing tract of what this government has done over the last number of budgets. They keep pushing their projected balanced budget off into the future. They really have no clue, and I really don't think they have any intention of

ever balancing a budget because either they don't know how or they're not willing to do this.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is unfortunate because it's all Manitobans that pay the price of this. This is the NDP MLAs who went to the door in the last election and promised not to raise taxes. When—they promised not to raise taxes when they were already planning to do so. There—we have documents showing that they were planning to raise—there was plans to raise the PST prior to the last election. And yet they went to the doors and they promised Manitobans. They looked Manitobans in the eye and said: We will not raise taxes.

And the ink wasn't even dry on that promise, and after the election, they first increased—or broadened the PST to things like home insurance, your disability insurance, things that Manitobans have to pay for. It's not an option to have insurance on your home or carry disability insurance; these are things that Manitobans have to—and yet, this 'insatiable' appetite for new tax revenue wasn't enough just broadening the PST; then they increased the PST.

And on top of increasing the PST, they did it without allowing Manitobans to have a say in it, to have a vote on it, which was in legislation, but this government is never one to go by the rules. They practise their own rules in this.

So there is lots to grieve about, Mr. Speaker. There's just not enough time to grieve about everything that this NDP has done. And this government—this NDP government's refusal to table a budget when they previously promised to—and it's another hollow promise by this government. The Finance Minister went about last fall saying, yes, we'll produce a budget. And he even went so far as to spend \$40,000 on budget consultations. Those are pretty expensive cookies when you start adding up the cookies and juice for \$40,000 and then not to produce a budget out of that.

This is—it—so what it became, then, their budget consultation became a publicity tour at taxpayers' expense. And this government—this NDP government is very good at spending taxpayers' money for their own purposes. They pretended to listen to Manitobans when they did their budget consultation, and then they turned around and ignored what Manitobans have to say because either they are afraid to bring forth a budget or they don't have a budget presented. And either way, it's total mismanagement on the part of this government.

Manitobans have a right to be angry. They were told they were being consulted on a budget. They gave up their time to have input onto this. And yet, no budget to be seen. Instead, we get this fluffy piece of economic statement that the Finance Minister wants to present here today.

So it shows how this government, this NDP government, is going to avoid a full accounting of the expensive promises. We only have to go back to their Throne Speech of last fall at the beginning of this session. The NDP announced \$6.6 billion of new spending, not a word of how they're going to pay for that. And then in the race for the blackout period prior to the election being called, the 90-day blackout, they went about announcing 113 different spending announcements, but, again, no idea at all how they're going to pay for this. In fact, in many of these announcements, there wasn't even a timeline for doing them. This—oh, we'll just promise you we'll do this sometime in the future. Well, Manitobans are smarter than that. Manitobans deserve to have respect; they deserve to be listened to. And this NDP government is—just doesn't understand that, or, apparently, they've—if they ever did understand it, they've forgotten about it now, that Manitobans really do count.

So the NDP have broken their election promise that they would balance the budget by 2014. Instead of balancing or attempting to even come close to balancing the budget in 2014, they've increased their revenues. They've hiked taxes, which I've already said was another broken promise. They've implemented the biggest tax hike in Manitoba history when they raised the PST to 8 per cent, a 14 per cent increase, and it makes Manitoba very uncompetitive with our neighbours to the south and to the west of us, and this is hurting our communities across Manitoba. It's hurting our industries here. And yet this government has a—has no plans at all to be able to—they don't—they won't—refuse to bring in a budget.

So all we can assume, and rightly so, Manitobans will assume, is that they have no idea how they will ever bring their spending under control unless, really, they—what the NDP is planning to do is to raise the PST once again. I think it's getting pretty hard to actually broaden the PST. They've pretty well taxed everything that's possible to tax. So they—the only option they'll have now—so what is it going to be? When the Premier (Mr. Selinger) goes to—and his NDP candidates go to the doors this time, are they going to say, no tax increases? But what are

they really planning? Manitobans have the right to ask them, so, what are you really planning? Is it 9 per cent? Is it 10 per cent? And when will you try to curb your spending and bring a balanced budget in? Because this financial statement that they're pretending to present here today will not—will not—address how they will begin to balance a budget, when they will begin to balance the budget, because I'm not sure they really know themselves, or perhaps they really don't care. Maybe that's what it is more than anything. They just don't care about Manitobans and don't care about balancing the budget down the road. They've only known how to increase taxes, so that has been the only way that they have done this.

The NDP needs to present a credible plan to balance the books. Manitobans deserve to know what this government is planning. And the only way they can do that is through a budget, presenting a budget in this House for all Manitobans to see where each department is being—where each—where the spending is in each department and how this will affect every citizen of Manitoba. Municipalities and school divisions have tabled their budgets. Just so that everyone knows, municipalities also have to balance their budgets on an annual basis, unlike this government.

* (15:50)

Manitoba is last in reading, math and science scores. We have the longest ER wait times in Canada. We have the most kids in care in Manitoba history. All this thanks to the NDP government. And I understand why they don't want to run on their record. With a record like that, no government would want to run on that. And perhaps that explains why they continue to not present a budget, because either they haven't got one or else they will continue to hide it because they don't want Manitobans to know the truth.

So, Mr. Speaker, this—it's time for the—

Mr. Speaker: Honourable member for River East, on a grievance.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I rise with some sadness today to have to grieve over the NDP government's refusal to table a budget when they previously promised to do so. But, you know, I don't think anyone has come to expect that the NDP government will keep any promise that they make.

Mr. Speaker, how can Manitobans believe anything they say when they don't keep their word,

and time after time, we've seen examples in this Legislature how they say one thing and do another?

And, Mr. Speaker, we just have to go back a little bit in history, not too far; back to just before the 2011 election to point out why Manitobans have lost confidence in this government. And it is certainly as a result of their lack of fiscal management and the lack of transparency accountability and comments that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) put on the table before the last election, when he stood in the hallway when he was asked the question about whether he was going to raise the PST, and what did he say? He said that's nonsense.

An Honourable Member: It's ridiculous.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We will—it's ridiculous. We will not raise the PST.

And that's when he went into the election, Mr. Speaker, with a promise to Manitobans. And not only did the Premier say that, but every single one of the NDP candidates on that side of the House that are sitting there today and those that didn't have the good fortune, I guess, of being elected, what did they do as a result of the direction and the leadership from their Premier? They went door to door to every door. They knocked on people's doors. They looked people in the eye and they said trust us, believe in us, vote for us and we will not raise your taxes. We won't raise the provincial sales tax.

And, Mr. Speaker, that was the promise and the commitment that they made to Manitobans. They ran on that province—promise, and many over there got elected on a promise that they would not raise the PST. Well, fast-forward to just a few months, a few short months after that election in 2011, and they broadened the provincial sales tax to include things like insurance. And, you know, I still today get my statement and my bill from my insurance company that says, you know, unfortunately, you're paying an extra 8 per cent more on your insurance premiums because of the NDP government's broadening of the provincial sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, that's hit every single Manitoban that has to buy insurance. And that's unfortunate. It's unfortunate that people couldn't trust the NDP to tell them the truth. It's unfortunate. But not only to add insult to injury in the next budget, they increased the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent.

And people in Manitoba were outraged. They were outraged, and we heard from many, many Manitobans—ordinary, working people—from places

like Transcona that you represent, Mr. Speaker, people from Transcona that came forward, hard-working Manitoba families that said that they could not trust this New Democratic government, that they may have voted for the New Democrats in the past, but they weren't going to vote for them again because they'd lost faith in them. They couldn't believe a word that they say.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's shown in what's happened in the demise of the NDP party. And we've seen the unrest over on the government benches in the House, when we've seen five senior Cabinet ministers jump ship and leave Cabinet as a result of not being able to believe and work with a Premier who they said put his interests ahead of the interests of Manitobans—what a horrible thing to happen to our governing party here in the province of Manitoba. I'm almost embarrassed to be sitting in this Legislature, to see what is happening, as the government in the province of Manitoba implodes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans, and justifiably so, are extremely upset—extremely upset—with their government. And it does shed a negative light on all of us as politicians when we see the kind of activities that have been happening on the government side of the House. It's deplorable. It's not something that I want to be associated with. And I'm sure that that is why there is so much unrest and so much dissension on the government benches of the House today.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is all because of the misleading statements that were made by the Premier and all of his candidates as they went door to door last election. And, you know, I hear very often from people out there, from Manitobans, you know, how can we believe a word that they say? We can't believe anything that they say, when they can stand and, you know, as a government, and lie to the people of Manitoba. How—and it does—it sheds a negative light on all of us as politicians. And that is unfortunate. That is extremely unfortunate.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've always sort of prided myself in going door to door and, you know, when we were in government, did we do everything right? No, we didn't. But I was—I would stand up and take the blame or the credit for what we did right and what we did wrong. I never ever misled my constituents. And I think that it's a sad day in the province of Manitoba when we've seen a government stoop to the level that they have.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, I did go to the budget consultations that were announced with great

fanfare by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), when he said he was going to bring a budget in and he wanted to do budget consultations. Well, I went to the one in northeast Winnipeg, and, I think, there were more political staff there than there were residents that came to make a presentation to the government. I mean, they were—I think there was less than a handful, or maybe there was a handful of people, maybe five, maybe six people that came to make presentation that filled out—*[interjection]* Well, the Minister of Finance says I was there, and I was there, yes. And I saw the number of people that came out.

And maybe it was because no one showed up that they decided not to bring in a budget. I don't know if it was the same right across the province, but I know in northeast Winnipeg—and I would believe that Manitobans didn't go to those budget consultations, because they knew they were just a sham, because they may have gone to budget consultations before the 2011 election and told the government not to raise the PST, but what did they do? They didn't listen to Manitobans and they raised it.

So, you know, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have become very cynical. They've become cynical about this government. They've become cynical about what they say and what they do, because they are two different things. The Minister of Finance has stood up before in his place and in front of the media and said, yes, we will bring in a budget before the next election. Well, that has changed. And now they're looking at a financial forecast.

* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans aren't buying what this NDP government has to say. And we're seeing that in the polls, too, that is showing that we have a government that's in a state of disarray, a government that Manitobans can't trust, a government that—it can't be held accountable for any of its actions, because what they do and what they say are two different things.

So, Mr. Speaker, we can—you can understand why we are having to stand in our place today and ask that they live up to their commitment to bring in a budget before we go to the polls on April the 19th. Manitobans deserve no less than a government that can be transparent and be held accountable for its actions. And what we're seeing here today is a government that isn't accountable, isn't transparent, isn't being held to account for its actions.

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

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): On a grievance.

I find it quite interesting listening to my colleague from River East who has been in this wonderful building of ours, this wonderful Legislature, the government—governing building of Manitoba, for many years, and I'm sure I can see her pain and her anxiety. She's been here all those years and she has never seen something like this before: an economic update when the government had promised—had promised—to bring forward a budget. And an economic update, it's whatever you want to put down on the paper. It has—it doesn't give you figures; it gives you estimates.

You know, this may well be one of the last times I actually speak in this House, and I think it's very unfortunate that I have to once again stand and speak on a broken NDP promise. I would've hoped that the last thing I would be speaking to would be something that was positive in this House. This certainly isn't.

You know, so many lies are told that we sometimes just plain lose a reference point to the truth, and we've reached that point where the confusion and the smoke and mirrors and all the spin that's put on everything has got the point where we can't even tell what the reference point is to the truth. You know, I've read this statement before, and I'll read it once more: You measure results by measuring results, not by weighing best efforts, not by counting good intentions and not by calculating inputs. And it was John Baird that actually said that. But it's got a lot of truth to it. You measure results by measuring results, and the results we're measuring from this old and tired NDP government are not that good.

You don't measure results by weighing best efforts. We all will put forward our best efforts, but it's important that those best efforts turn into some meaningful results, and we've seen over and over again from this government their inability to get results for the money that they spend, for the Manitobans' taxpayer money that they spend. It's not their money; it's the people of Manitoba's money, and over and over, in question period and in other in times in this House, the answer from a minister has been, oh, we put another \$40 million into that, or, we put another \$7 million into that. And we hear it again, over and over, from the Minister of Finance. They don't go back and look and see if they got results for that money. They feel that if they

just dump more money into something that it'll automatically give results. There's so much waste.

The—you know, we've got wonderful people working on the front lines in this province: the police, the firefighters, the nurses, the teachers, the health-care providers, military. They do a marvellous job of the things that need to be done in this province to protect us, to educate us, to help in—when we have health issues, but we've gone way out of whack on levels of bureaucracy, especially in things like the RHAs, and it's got out of hand, and it's got too costly. Front-line services need to be there. They're the—front-line services are the ones we need. A lot of the others are just kind of icing on the cake, at times.

You know, something that we need to do and don't do very well—and I probably would point to almost all of us in here—we need to separate partisan loyalty from good governance. A lot of times, in Manitoba, and, I think, in a lot of other places, we're not getting good governance simply because of partisanship and decisions being made on the basis of how many votes does that win me, how many votes does that lose me? And it's not—the decisions aren't made as being the best for the people of Manitoba or good common sense in a lot of cases.

We've seen a lot of, kind of, fluff bills and trap bills and things like that that aren't necessarily good legislation. They're put there to try and get a rise out of somebody, try and get a reaction.

You know, every single day since the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) became Premier, our debt in this province has went up by close to \$6 million, every single day. And that's every day of the year; they don't take time off for weekends; they still rise up the debt on the weekends.

You know deficits are not caused by revenue shortfalls. Deficits are deferred tax hikes, and when you see our debt going up by just about \$6 million a day, every day, when you tell the people of Manitoba that number, they're amazed. They have trouble believing that our debt would go up by that much every day of the year and every day for the past six years. It's just unreal that that can happen.

The so-called economic update that we're supposedly seeing today is—it's just a bundle of empty promises to bridge—to bridge—the NDP past the election. After the last two elections—after the last two elections—the NDP immediately went out and started breaking promises. They said, we will not raise taxes. They immediately, after the election,

raised taxes. And then a year later, they really raised taxes. And the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had said—he went door-to-door in the province, and he'd said, we will not raise taxes; that would be nonsense. That would be nonsense. And then it happened.

Now, you know, I heard the excuse in the House here just the other day, part of their problem this past year was the extra cost of forest fires. Well, you know, for many, many years, in fact, several decades in here, we had a Fiscal Stabilization Fund that was designed to pick up some of those unbudgeted, unthought-of expenses. And I can't remember the figure that was used on the forest fires, but it was certainly well handled out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in most years, except our Fiscal Stabilization Fund's just about gone too. We, like, we're—it's going into the ground, our fiscal stabilization; we're running up more and more debt. It just—they just can't get by.

* (16:10)

You know—and the respect for the people of Manitoba just isn't there.

I was raised where a handshake was good, your word was good, that's all you needed to do. What we're seeing here is broken promises over and over again and total lack of respect for the people of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a grievance. On a grievance?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): On a grievance, yes.

I waited a couple of seconds because I figured maybe the—some of the government side members wanted to stand up and put a grievance in the fact that maybe they want to voice their concern because I know that there's a few of them that have been voicing their concerns over the last year and a half in regards to the way that the Premier and his side of the House has been governing our province, Mr. Speaker.

So many things to grieve, so little time, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the member from Logan continually says, you know, slow down, slow down, but whether it's slow or fast in grievance, and I know maybe he should read the rule book as well, you're actually

only given 10 minutes. So it depends on the speed if you only have the 10 minutes to grieve.

So, with that being said I'm going to get on with my grievance, and it is in regards to the fact that the Minister of Finance, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), did not bring in a budget this year, and I believe that it is at the wishes of the Premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), that the member from Selkirk didn't bring in a budget.

I know that—I'm a little bit disappointed, Mr. Speaker, and I guess what I'm disappointed about is that the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) decided to, when he had found out that I guess we were going to do some grievances this afternoon, the Government House Leader decided to take the economic and fiscal outlook, which the member for Selkirk was going to read sometime this afternoon, and he decided to table it. He decided to steal the pomp and circumstance of the minister—of the Finance Minister.

So the member from Selkirk had waited, you know, as a representative of—MLA for the city of Selkirk, 24 years or so to get into Cabinet, and he got into Cabinet and he brought forward a budget last year. I mean, it was a budget with various forecasts and that that were again broken promises, but it was a budget nonetheless, Mr. Speaker.

This year, I guess under the purview of the Premier, the member from Selkirk was going to bring this economic and fiscal outlook document, which isn't really a budget—it's basically some numbers that they're putting together so that they can potentially say—to verify some of their various promises that they had went on the campaign trail in the fall, Mr. Speaker.

Now I know that the member from Selkirk is talking about the economic and fiscal outlook, but it is a very important point that I want to put on the record here today, Mr. Speaker, is that on page 52 of this economic and fiscal outlook—this is the document that the Minister of Finance, you know, gets to stand up in the House and gets to read and share with the Province, you know, what his department has basically put together, and I can't believe again that the Government House Leader would stand up in this Chamber and basically take that away from him.

So what do I find on page 52? I find, Mr. Speaker, that in 2015-2016 budget they had

budgeted a deficit of \$421 million. Now keep in mind I am reading from the economic and fiscal outlook booklet, so this is not a real budget. What this is are some numbers that are projected. So the budget in 2015-2016 was \$421-million deficit; the forecast is actually \$646 million.

So, if this is a economic and fiscal outlook, this is actually—these aren't even the real numbers. So they missed their projected deficit by \$225 million worse. And this is the numbers they're showing us. This is the economic and fiscal outlook. This isn't even a budget, so how bad can it actually be? I bet you it's a lot worse.

And I see the member from Selkirk, I know the wheels are turning and I'm sure that eventually, when, you know, again, unfortunately, the Government House Leader stood up and he took that wind out of the Finance Minister's sails and tabled the budget, the media have gone and I guess the Finance Minister will get a chance to say what he has to say in the upcoming days when the media maybe calls him out to ask him some questions.

But then, I guess, what's the point, Mr. Speaker, I guess they can read it for themselves and say what they have to say whether it's on Twitter. I know that the member from St. Norbert is probably busy tweeting as it is as far as how outrageous that the Government House Leader had took that privilege away from the Finance Minister.

We look at this budget, at the no budget, Mr. Speaker, at the no budget, as another broken promise to Manitobans. In 2011, October 2011, we were all running as candidates throughout the province and what did we find? We found that in the October, in September of 2011 we found that there was 57 candidates, the NDP candidates, they were going door to door, and they were going door to door promising and pleading with Manitobans to re-elect them.

The Premier and his 56 other candidates on the NDP side had promised Manitobans that they were not going to raise taxes. And the Premier said on more than one account that it was absolute nonsense and it was ridiculous, to the thought that they were going to be raising those, raising the taxes, the provincial sales tax.

Now we found out over the last couple years here that in fact, Mr. Speaker, that their government side, the NDP side, were actually looking at raising the PST all along. But they weren't just thinking

about raising it from seven to eight as they did in 2013, they actually went ahead, or they were actually thinking about raising it all the way to nine. And many of us on this side of the House and many Manitobans are wondering if maybe when that, if the budget would have been brought forward, maybe their idea to raise the tax would be maybe to 10, maybe 11, we don't know. Because again, this is just a economic and fiscal outlook, it is not a real budget. And again, it's showing that their forecasted deficit is \$225 million worse than they had projected just last spring.

We know that the Selinger government in the 2012 had gone ahead and they didn't just raise the taxes, they actually expanded the various goods and services that hard-working Manitobans absolutely need, Mr. Speaker. They decided to expand the PST on those goods and services to a tune of almost \$200 million of increased revenue into the NDP coffers. Such things as home insurance, automobile insurance, birth and death certificates, beer and wine, various things that hard-working Manitobans absolutely cannot do without; well, maybe the beer and wine, but home insurance and the automobile insurance, for sure, it's not—it would not be good advice for people to have a home, to be living in a dwelling without having some sort of insurance.

* (16:20)

And this government, even though they pat themselves on their—on the backs for, apparently, looking out for the hard-working Manitobans, they're absolutely showing the opposite, Mr. Speaker.

And then, Mr. Speaker, what do they do? In 2013, they decided to increase the PST by one point or 14 per cent. It wasn't good enough that all 57 candidates went to the doors and, basically, lied to Manitobans. They went and they expanded the PST to a tune of approximately another \$500 million of revenue.

I just don't know, Mr. Speaker, why this government would decide to continue to—

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

The honourable member for Emerson, on a grievance.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to grieve on this particular issue today, and I thank you for the opportunity.

I can honestly say I regret to have to rise today to grieve, to grieve on this NDP government's refusal to table a budget when they previously promised to do so. And, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve so much better. They deserve so much better than what this NDP government has done to them. Manitobans deserve a hand up, not a handout, and they don't need to be stood on. That's what this NDP government's doing. It's standing on top of Manitobans. It's not letting them do what they need to do.

See, Mr. Speaker, you may have heard this before, you may not have, but in 2011, prior to the 2011 election, the NDP went door to door, and they knocked on the door, and they suggested to Manitobans that they were the only government that could do the right thing for Manitobans; they would not raise taxes.

They accused us on this side of the House of doing a lot of things that would damage Manitoba. Those were false. Those were false, and we on this side of the House knew that. We also predicted that they would raise the taxes, Mr. Speaker, which they did. Immediately after the election, they broadened the taxes to cover so many things that affected Manitobans directly.

That wasn't enough, though, because when they went door to door, they also said that; knocking on the door, they also said that they would not raise the PST, that that was ridiculous. And they emphasized that. And, Mr. Speaker, what did they do? They broadened the PST to cover so many things. They raised the cost of insurance on cars, they put the PST on house insurance, on many, many other things. And then they raised the PST by 14 per cent, exactly opposite of what they would do.

But their credibility, Mr. Speaker, had slipped very badly. Manitobans didn't realize the dissension in the backroom at the time. Manitobans took the NDP government at their word. Even though they had been misled by them, they took them at their word that they would not raise the taxes and that they would not raise the PST. And I would say that there were a handful—maybe it was a small handful—in opposition—or in the government's chambers, that disagreed with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) on doing this, on breaking the promises that they had made to the good, honest, caring Manitobans who had gave them their trust.

Those individuals put up with quite a bit in the backroom while Manitobans were being dragged down. They were being dragged down by this

government's taxation. The difference is \$5,000 a year from Manitoba to Saskatchewan, and they're proud of this. They're proud of it. But, at the same time, they took a million three out of the coffers to finance their door knocking.

And one of my favourite songs, Mr. Speaker, you may have heard that: If I had a million dollars, I wouldn't have to knock on doors anymore. It might have been heard in this house in the past, but that's what they were relying on to finance their campaign going forward because they knew that if they knocked on doors and asked for money, the chances were that they weren't going to get it.

Mr. Speaker, they have broken many, many more promises and many, many trusts. When they flooded—when the Interlake flooded—by the man-made flood of the NDP government, the Minister of Agriculture said, you will be covered with insurance for years until this has been fixed.

Quite frankly, there's almost 2,000 people that are not in their homes today. Two thousand people that are still displaced. Many of these, families. Their children never got to go to school, in the same school, month after month. Their culture is being lost. They don't have friends, they're separated from their families. While every one of those members on that side of the House get their weekends off, they enjoy their Christmases, they enjoy their Easters, they enjoy their holidays, they enjoy their time at the lake with their families. They take in all of the events that their children do at school, but they do not care about the Manitobans that were displaced.

They don't care that they're stuck in hotels, or that they're moved from school to school. We also know that the children in care have doubled under this NDP government. And they were being housed in hotels and in an—in inappropriate places.

And then they fudged the numbers to try and make themselves look good before an election. They said, no, no, this is how we do it. And when they got caught, what did they do? They come out, they made an apology. The thing that—the apology didn't look as sincere as the one that had come before from that minister because there wasn't a tear in her eye this time. The time before, there was.

But Mr. Speaker, we've had many, many other promises. And adding insult to injury, they promised to balance the budget by 2014 without raising taxes. However, they had raised the taxes. You can't keep lying to Manitobans without repercussions. This

was—they are going to notice what you have done to them. You've taken money out of their pockets, you haven't—you have done nothing.

We've had an exodus of workers, of 6,000 a year. It's horrible, Mr. Speaker, because that's our young people. Our young people are leaving this province to go to other provinces for employment. And sooner or later, they end up finding a mate in another province and the grandchildren come along in other provinces. Where does grandpa and grandma go? They go to another province.

This is a direct result of the mismanagement of this NDP government. They mismanaged our money so terribly bad. It wasn't a shortage of money; they had a lot of money coming in, but they mismanaged it so terribly bad, Mr. Speaker. And there's nothing to show for it. They didn't put out any tenders. In fact, what caused the big rebellion, apparently, was when a member on that side of the House tried to ram something through where he was sole-sourcing Tiger Dams from a friend—a donor.

Mr. Speaker, that's unacceptable. On this side of the House, we've promised open government. We have promised that we will do the right thing with Manitobans. We have also said that we would lower the PST in the first term. We have made solid, solid commitments to Manitobans, where on the other side of the House they have made commitments, one after another after another. And their commitments are hollow. They're as hollow as a big old tube, because they don't keep their promises. They have no intentions of keeping promises.

* (16:30)

And, when they promised that there would be a budget, people were—people on this side of the House were taking them at their word. We expected a budget, but then all of a sudden they found out that we have a larger deficit by \$100 million than we had budgeted for. Wow, things can't be in good shape, we have to change what we're going to do and the way we're going to do it.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to let them change that. In fact, we're going to change it for them. We're going to change it for them on the 19th of April.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin), on a grievance?

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in the House today and speak unfortunately on a situation I don't think any MLA in this House wants to be able to speak to, and that's the fact that we're before this Chamber grieving that there is no budget being presented to Manitobans on the eve of a provincial election that will ultimately be before Manitobans on April 19th. Despite commitments made by ministers, or ministers opposite, and all MLAs that there would be the provision of a budget, a fully costed plan, a—as a normal course of business, not surprisingly, the government, once again, has broken that budget commitment.

And it adds just to a pile of commitments and promises broken by this government. I go back, and it's almost with a sense of sad irony, Mr. Speaker, that their former Premier Doer was fond of quoting in the House that a promise made is a promise kept. Unfortunately, with the change in leadership across the way to the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), it seems that the adage just simply is a promise made is a promise broken.

Mr. Speaker, really at the core of this is I think what Manitobans are hoping to see in a—in this government's 2016-2017 budget, is action on the legal PST hike. A PST hike that I'll quote from their star candidate in Fort Rouge, who said in relation to the PST, how does raising the PST help grow the economy? How is a tax which takes proportionately bigger slice of poorer people's incomes fair? End quote.

That was Wab Kinew, Mr. Speaker, the NDP's candidate in Fort Rouge. I don't think—I don't believe all my colleagues caught that comment, so I'll quote Mr. Kinew again. How does raising the PST help grow the economy? How is a tax which takes proportionately bigger slice of poorer people's incomes fair? End quote.

You know what, Mr. Speaker, I would imagine that—you know what, I think unfortunately, that is probably the last quote that I will be able to publicly read from the NDP candidate in Fort Rouge whose comments and language on social media is abysmal, is disrespectful, homophobic, sexist, it's vile.

And it's quite interesting to hear members opposite demand that the Liberal candidate who said, you know what, offensive things absolutely, but when you look at the full breadth of their candidate's comments, it actually pales in comparison. And yet

they demanded the Liberal candidate's resignation, they said that no apology is sufficient, that it reflects on the party as a whole, it affects in the leadership. They even cited specific words that they found offensive, and yet without checking that their own candidate for Fort Rouge actually used those very words in a song that he profited from, a song that specifically degrades women, and one that he sought to make a profit from, Mr. Speaker.

So, obviously, Mr. Speaker, but—it's one of those occasions, and Mr. Kinew, I will agree with him at least in this one very narrow instance, and that being the imposition—the illegal imposition of the PST on Manitobans led by this government.

We need to go back, Mr. Speaker, to 2011 when this government said, and they were challenged by members opposite, that they had an agenda, an agenda to raise the PST and not to balance the books, and of course, their Premier said the idea was ridiculous and total nonsense, and he was very willing to stand in front of a camera and quote that to the high heavens, all in an effort to pull the wool over Manitobans' eyes.

And, of course, we all know what happened, Mr. Speaker, in the subsequent budget. They took that PST and they again expanded it. They loosened that belt and they added another notch to it and brought in a host of other activities, and some of them had a inordinate impact on organizations that simply couldn't afford to bear that burden.

I look to my previous life, Mr. Speaker, when I ran a small not-for-profit, and I remember when the PST was applied to our insurance costs, to our employee benefits. The cost to our organization was in the thousands of dollars, and yet—so here we have a agency that is predominantly government-funded, being told by the government, you need to give us more of your money that we're giving you back through a PST hike because we're broke, and yet we somehow expect you to get by on less.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? Maybe we might have been able to get by in that instance, and find some efficiencies and savings within, but for whatever reason the NDP saw fit to, every year, cut the budget, year after year after year. And it was always a difficult challenge and it's always interesting hearing members get up and talk about cuts and cuts to front-line services when those very things are happening today and have happened under their watch, when we were left with no choice in organization.

When the NDP are cutting tens of thousands of dollars out of your budget, they get to the point, Mr. Speaker, that labour costs are the only thing left, and, regrettably, we as an organization had to make the very difficult decisions to lay off staff because the government, despite all our pleas, besides showing them that we had consistently found internal savings, that we had consistently showed a clean audit for 25 years, and that they have continued to demand the same results despite a reduction in resources, they simply ignored our request despite—actually earlier, interestingly enough, making commitments to actually—to fund some of that—some of those cost overruns that resulted from a change in our leasing agreement.

So where are those organizations these days? Well, last I heard, in—was that Christmas, I think, about last year or the year before, when this government went to, I believe it was about 100 and—almost 150 not-for-profits in Winnipeg and area, and they went on essentially Christmas Eve, and they sent them correspondence and they said you are to identify 4 per cent of your entire budget and you are to return it to the NDP immediately. You have two weeks to do this, despite it being on the eve of the Christmas holidays, despite that we are on the last—essentially the last quarter of the fiscal year, we were to take a look at your entire budget and give us back our 4 per cent. And if you're not able to give us back our 4 per cent, you have to justify—and that was their words, Mr. Speaker, in correspondence—written correspondence, to almost 150 not-for-profits, that they had to justify to their benevolent socialist overlords, why they weren't able to provide them that 4 per cent clawback, and what that figure they could provide would be.

And I remember bringing that up in committee with the Minister of Family Services, Mr. Speaker, and I distinctly remember, actually, the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) yelling across the table that, you're making this up, you're lying, you're making this up, and I don't actually recall getting an apology from the member for Burrows despite me tabling the very correspondence sent from her government to these not-for-profits, saying exactly what I had suggested they had said and demanded from them.

* (16:40)

So, really, the tabling of a budget is an issue of transparency, it's an issue of accountability, which are clearly two words that this government has no interest in aligning themselves with. And I think

we only need to look no further than comments made by the—one of the—the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) when just this morning he referenced, and I quote: "We tried our best to make sure our party knew of some of the shady decisions that had been made." End quote. And all these members opposite are a party to those, quote, shady decisions that have been made.

And what's particularly worrisome, I, as a elected official who represents my constituency of Morris, is we know very well many of the, quote, shady decisions, that were made at the behest of this Premier (Mr. Selinger), his Cabinet, his Treasury Board and his MLAs, but I can only imagine what's going to happen on April 20th when Manitobans are able to lift that rock—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Member's time on this matter has expired.

The honourable member for St. Paul, on a grievance? On a grievance?

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a grievance.

Mr. Speaker: On a grievance.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, over the years that I've been a member of the Legislature, we've had numerous Finance ministers bring in budgets. In fact, I was here for the first budget of the then-Finance minister, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), who brought in his first budget. And at that time—in following every spring, we would see a budget come forward and we would have a discussion on it, and right from the first one, there were debates and speeches given about how the government was on a path that was unsustainable, that the spending always outstripped income.

Now, the government of the day at that time, under the Doer government, spoke about balance as they looted Crown corporations, went after Manitoba Hydro in probably the most severe way possible, took money from all kinds of places, cleaned out the Treasury, cleaned out all of the funds that had been left behind for contingencies that might come up by the previous government, and they spent money like no tomorrow. Went through the years of Finance of the minister for—member for St. Boniface; he knew what he was doing was unsustainable. In fact, there was the member for St. Boniface who encouraged union members, hard-working men and women on the shop floor, to buy shares in a company that he had first-hand knowledge was having liquidity

issues. For those of the Chamber who may not know what liquidity issues are, that basically means the company is going bankrupt; it has no cash.

So the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) was encouraging hard-working men and women, union members, to buy shares in the Crocus fund; the whole time he knew that it was going bankrupt. We pointed out to the government at the time, pointed out to the minister, the spending and the reckless way that they were running their budgets were unsustainable, that there was a real, severe problem.

Things changed. The then-Finance minister moved on to become Premier, and he appointed the then-member from Swan River—

An Honourable Member: Rosann Wowchuk.

Mr. Schuler: Rosann Wowchuk. Thank you. And, already then you could tell things were in bad shape. In fact, that was a minister who put forward a budget, who wouldn't stand up and vote for her own budget. In fact, she sat in her seat and wouldn't vote for the budget.

In fact, for those of us who were here, we remember her sitting, as many of us do at—from time to time, and she was on her BlackBerry. And she said afterwards that she was so involved in her BlackBerry that she didn't realize that it was her turn to vote, although her colleagues were saying, Rosy, get up. Get up, Rosy. You got to vote. Get up and vote. She didn't hear any of that. That's how immersed she was in her BlackBerry. And, actually, by not voting, Mr. Speaker, voted against her own budget.

We then thought things couldn't get any worse. After the—after Rosy, rightfully so, decided she was going to retire, and we wished her well on her retirement; she then went and got involved in a leadership campaign where she rigged the vote and got herself involved in all kinds of shenanigans. And the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the member for St. Boniface, appointed the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers).

And the member for Dauphin put forward a budget which—it was actually his second budget because the first one was the biggest broadening of taxes. It was his second budget. And I can remember, Mr. Speaker, sitting here in this Chamber, and the member for Dauphin stood there and he said, to pay for what was necessary, they were going to have to raise the PST.

And, for those who were in the Chamber, there was an absolute gasp, and I admit it, I was one of them. I was absolutely shocked. And you kind of looked at your colleagues and you said, did he actually say raise the PST? Did I actually hear him right? And we were all looking at each other, and there was a sort of a buzz in the room. It wasn't that loud, but you could really hear it. Everybody was looking at each other, and people in the gallery were, like, did, you know, did we hear him right? Did he actually say a PST increase?

And why there was such a shock about that is we had just gone through an election where the member for St. Boniface had attacked the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and attacked him about not being able to pay for his promises. And when Hugh McFadyen said to him, the only way you will ever pay for your promises is you'll have to raise the PST, and the member for St. Boniface said, read my lips, never, no new taxes, which he had already broken in the first budget. But the PST was the clincher. It was a clean hit.

The Premier then walked out of that debate, and the media asked him again and said, are you going to raise the PST? Would you have to raise the PST to pay for your promises? And he said, ridiculous. Nonsense. And it's all on the record. This isn't anything that is swimming out there and is part of a vapour. It's hard video, hard quotes; it's all there.

The Premier went out with 57 MLAs, knocked at every door, made a commitment to spend all kinds of money and promised no tax increases. And, on top of that, no PST increase. Worse yet was that they took away the democratic right to vote on it.

Mr. Speaker, we've now heard the final words from that Finance minister, who said, and I quote from the member for Dauphin, we tried our best to avoid an electoral district, after the fact by trying to remove the member for St. Boniface as leader. And this is what he says about the discussions that were going on about that budget: We tried our best to make sure our party knew some of the shady decisions that had been made. And that is, in large part, in reference to the budgets that he brought down, which he didn't even know what was all going to be part of. He was, of course, removed, because evidently he didn't communicate well enough.

It then went to the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard). And the member for Fort Rouge, who has a lot of integrity, I don't agree with her on a lot of things, but you cannot fault the member for

Fort Rouge on integrity. She walked into that process and realized that it didn't work. And, Mr. Speaker, in the fairness of time, because I am only allowed 10 minutes, there are enough news clips, enough quotes, you can read what the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) said about the Premier (Mr. Selinger), that he was more interested in himself getting elected than in doing what was right, and followed on the heels of what the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) said.

Mr. Speaker, we then move on, the then-Finance minister from Fort Rouge challenged her leader, challenged him in a dramatic way and in a substantive way and was removed from Cabinet, because if there's one thing the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) doesn't like, and that is hearing the truth. If there's one thing that he has shown a pattern for all the way through, anybody who challenges him and is right, he removes them.

* (16:50)

Then the budget process was handed over to the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), and I'm sure the member for Selkirk—there is only one person who was more surprised than I was in this Chamber, and it was probably the member for Selkirk, that he was given the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) position.

We now have a Minister of Finance who, after all the litany, doesn't even present a budget. We've gone from budgets that ministers wouldn't even vote for, budgets that ministers said were a disaster, budgets that ministers resigned on, budgets that ministers were kicked out on—we've gone to the point where we have budgets now that won't even be presented.

All the work has been done, it's sitting, collecting dust, and the member for Selkirk doesn't have the courage to even present the budget. We are going to give him tonight and tomorrow morning to see if he can find it collecting dust somewhere in his office, pull it out and show Manitobans what's really going on.

Are we talking about a 9 per cent PST? Are we talking about a 10 per cent PST? Show us the facts, tell us what's really going on, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans deserve to have a budget. They've had 16 years to prepare for this budget. The least they could do is present it.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Tuxedo, on a grievance?

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Yes, on a grievance, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On a grievance.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, it is with regret that I have to stand before this House today and put a few words on the record with respect to how I am so upset with the fact that this government has refused to bring forward a budget for debate in the Manitoba Legislature.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, never before in the history of Manitoba has a minister of Finance tabled a economic and fiscal outlook rather than—in place of a budget. So, this is historic in the province of Manitoba, and I think it's unfortunate.

And it's unfortunate, too, Mr. Speaker, that it wasn't even—that it had to be tabled, I guess, by the members—by one of the members opposite, but this is a very important day in Manitoba. This is—this sets a precedent in Manitoba, one that is very disturbing. And the fact that we have to grieve on this issue on the very day—one year to the day after members opposite who disagreed with their Premier at the time, who stepped forward and challenged their Premier at the time—a year ago, today, was the vote that took place in the NDP party, where this Premier won by only a mere 33 votes to hold onto his leadership in his party, and to hold onto his premiership of the province of Manitoba.

That's 33 people only within the party of the NDP party. It wasn't brought forward to Manitobans to decide about who should be the premier of Manitoba. And that's why we're looking forward to the NDP calling this election coming up, so that Manitobans can decide who the next premier of Manitoba should be, not 33 NDP people.

It's important that that take place, and we look forward to going door to door in the election campaign and presenting our plan to Manitobans, because we know that it's a plan that is built on the fact that the NDP has so badly mismanaged, over the last 17 years, that it's important that we are going to have the opportunity to go door to door and talk to Manitobans about our plan, much of which has already been introduced but over the course of the next five weeks or so, six weeks, Mr. Speaker, we'll have the opportunity to roll out the rest of our plan. And it's very important.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Finance has said that he would introduce this robust fiscal statement. Well, I would suggest that there is

nothing robust about what has been tabled in the House, this economic and fiscal outlook. In fact, when I peruse it, I find things that are very alarming within this document.

And, Mr. Speaker, I look—I only look to the area where we look at the core government deficit. And what was originally budgeted was \$421 million for the core government budget is now a deficit of \$646 million, and if you look at the—so that's a difference of about \$225 million more that's forecast to be spent over and above the budget that they introduced last year. But also, on the summary variance, \$350 million more than was budgeted for last year. And that's what is said in this document.

So imagine if a budget was actually introduced, in the Legislature, how bad it could—it probably really is, Mr. Speaker, and that is what is concerning to us on this side of the House. And that is what is concerning to Manitobans.

What they wanted, Mr. Speaker, was a budget to be presented to them so that they could see for themselves the true fiscal and financial whereabouts—or the situation of the province, but, unfortunately, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) saw fit not to present a real budget in the Legislature.

And the question is why. Why did they refuse to bring forward a document that had—and included everything in Manitoba the way a budget does, everything in the fiscal situation with the province? Why did they not do that? Is it because, Mr. Speaker, perhaps because they're desperate to hold on to power? They're so desperate that they are going to hide the very financials of this province from the Manitobans so that they can try and pull the wool over their eyes the way they did in the last election, which was horrible.

The way they went door to door in the last election—they knocked on those doors, Mr. Speaker. They spoke to Manitobans. They spoke to many of my constituents, many constituents in Southdale and Seine River, in many areas of this great province. And they promised that they would not raise taxes. In fact, the Premier himself, when we said, you will raise taxes—when we said—we called them out and we said that we—that they would raise taxes, the Premier said: That is ridiculous. That is nonsense. We'll never raise taxes.

And what did they do? The first opportunity that they did, when they came into office, after the last

election, they expanded the goods and services that were subject to the PST. And what did they do the following year after that? They increased the PST by one point or 14 per cent. That is not what this government was elected on; they were elected on not raising taxes. And they broke that promise to Manitobans.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know that the NDP went out in the last couple of months and have announced somewhat—upwards of 113 new announcements, totalling of—a total of \$6.6 billion worth of promises. And I wonder where that is going to show up in a document. And, if a true budget was presented in this House, it would have to show where they're going to pay for—or how they're going to pay for those \$6.6 billion worth of promises to Manitobans.

I think Manitobans know better, because Manitobans know that last time the NDP broke their promise. In fact, they've been breaking their promises for the last 17 years. I could go back on a whole litany of broken promises over the last 17 years, Mr. Speaker. Now, I haven't been here for 17 years, but I've been here for a little over 15 of those. And I have seen, from election to election, the NDP going out and making promises to Manitobans that they do not keep. And Manitobans are tired of it. They want a new—they want a change, and a change for the better will be coming with a government that will keep their promises that are so important to Manitobans.

And I will just say to members opposite that whatever they tabled here, and I haven't had a chance to look through it all, Mr. Speaker, and I will, but I would—I will say that it's really worthless, because what it is, is it's a projection of future broken promises made by this NDP government.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, is that Manitobans know that, based on past history, that they cannot and they will not support an NDP government that does nothing but break their promises to Manitobans. Manitobans deserve better than that, and they will get better than that.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, again, I want to just go back to the document, I guess, that was tabled, because it is important to look—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

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