

**First Session – Forty-First Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**  
**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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authority of  
The Honourable Myrna Driedger  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-First Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 6, 2016

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

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

Please be seated.

### Speaker's Statement

**Madam Speaker:** I have a statement for the House.

Yesterday, shortly before the House rose, I stated that the interim Leader of the Official Opposition (Ms. Marcelino) had 25 minutes remaining in the second reading on—in the second reading debate on Bill 9. This was incorrect. The interim leader, in fact, has unlimited time when speaking to second readings of government bills, so she does, in fact, have unlimited time remaining on Bill 9, and today's Order Paper has her listed accordingly.

My apologies for this error, and thank you for your attention.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

##### House Business

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, on House business, pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Thursday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew). The title of the resolution is Equality for First Nations People.

**Madam Speaker:** For the information of the House, pursuant to rule 33(8), it has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered next Thursday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Rouge. The title of the resolution is Equality for First Nations People.

**Mr. Maloway:** Madam Speaker, on further House business, is there—would we have leave to proceed to debate on second reading regarding Bill 204?

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to have debate continue on Bill 204, The Post-Secondary Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policies Act (Various Acts Amended)? *[Agreed]*

### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

#### Bill 204—The Post-Secondary Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policies Act (Various Acts Amended)

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable—oh—so we will now call Bill 204, The Post-Secondary Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policies Act (Various Acts Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage—the honourable minister—who has five minutes remaining.

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** And before I begin any public debate regarding sexual harassment, sexual violence or sexual assault, I'd like to just acknowledge that there may be survivors who will be either hearing these words or, perhaps in this instance, reading the words—these words of this debate in Hansard. And so I'd like to just acknowledge them, the survivors of sexual assault, for their courage, and I really praise them for their courage and their determination to always come forward with their stories.

I'm pleased to resume debate on this bill, talking about sexual violence and sexual harassment because it is something that is absolutely critical for us to continuously talk about until this conversation is finished, which would mean that there was no more sexual violence in our community, including our campuses.

But until that day arrives I will continue to talk about this difficult subject of sexual violence and sexual harassment, and I thank all members of this House for participating in this debate about addressing sexual violence on our campuses.

We know that sexual violence on our campuses is a reality. It's a stark reality that many of us are

facing, and sexual violence in our communities is something that must be addressed.

Consider this: In a year in which there were 680 reports to police regarding sexual assault—and make no mistake—680 reports to police is a staggering figure. But in that same year there 2,500 calls to the Clinic Sexual Assault Crisis Line. This is in keeping with national statistics that tell us that sexual assault is a greatly underreported crime, and it's in keeping with national figures that tell us that in some instances only 5 per cent of sexual assault survivors come forward with their story and actually go forward with a police report.

And while I can't—we certainly do not know the reasons for all the survivors for not coming forward with a police report, we do know that some of the reasons include a lack of clear definition of what constitutes sexual assault, what is a sexual assault, and I think that the dialogue needs to move forward into a greater area in which the definition of sexual assault is very clear and that any legislation that we would bring forward in this House I think it would be incumbent upon that legislation to have those clear definitions of what constitutes sexual assault and sexual harassment.

One of the shortcomings that I'd found in Bill 204 was that there was some—too much ambiguity about sexual assault definitions. It did not include a section on definitions of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

There were other shortcomings in Bill 204 and I was very pleased to work with our Minister of Education over the summer. We did some broad consultations with stakeholder groups. We talked to many students and university groups. Some of them are in the gallery today, and I thank them for coming today to listen to this debate.

We also met with a lot of academic institutions, including private vocational schools, and continued this conversation of how to deal with sexual assault and sexual harassment on campuses with all the academic institutions and educators.

We also talked to a lot of parents who had a lot of input on what they wanted their campuses to provide for their children as they endeavoured on their academic career.

We heard in most of our discussions we'd heard that there was—that Bill 204 simply did not go far enough, and that is why our government will proudly—we're proud to introduce an

alternative-based legislation to these—based on our consultations that we will be bringing forward next week.

I would like to thank all the stakeholders that we met with over the summer who provided input that has informed the legislation that our government is drafting right now, and I hope that everyone will support our Education Minister in his bill that he will be putting forward next week.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

\* (10:10)

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the former minister of Education, now the MLA—and the MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview. He was the one who brought a similar bill last time when we were in government, and this session, my colleague from Fort Rouge, thank you for bringing this very important bill to the House.

And also, welcome the members that we have on—that are on—at the gallery now, invited by the member from Fort Rouge. They're from the Canadian Federation of Students. Thank you for coming to listen to our debate.

Madam Speaker, on my way to the Legislative Building this morning, partly I heard of a news item that was very sad of an assault on a female student by a male student, and right away I thought of this bill, how important, how timely this bill is that was brought by the honourable member from Fort Rouge.

Madam Speaker, we have a clear vision of how to take the next steps on gender equality and advancing women's rights. This includes working to close the pay gaps, supporting victims of domestic violence and making public spaces safer for everyone by addressing sexual harassment and violence.

It is everyone's collective responsibility to ensure that a culture of respect and safety exists on campus that applies to everyone, and we welcome amendments to this bill, and we're always welcoming good ideas from whatever side of the House they come from. Ideas to improve this bill and to make campuses safer are important, and we are supportive of those efforts.

We urge the government to move on this bill because students deserve a safe education. If the government is serious about making campuses safer and hearing from students, then we urge the

government to send this bill to committee so we can hear from students and work together in the spirit of co-operation to make campuses safer for all students.

We are committed to working with government and our communities to move this legislation forward and protect Manitoba students. We know that creating a safe, supportive environment is vital for successful learning. We all know that strong universities and colleges are essential for modern growing economy. And we all want both sides of the House to ensure safer campuses for all Manitoba students by requiring both secondary institutions to have policies to prevent and respond to sexual violence and harassment.

It is important that Manitoba students know that they are safe on our university and college campuses, which is why this proposed bill would require that they have policies and procedures in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence and sexual harassment on campus. They are required to develop these policies in consultation with students. They're required to inform students of the services and procedures in place under the policies and they're required to report publically on the activities related to these policies.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It gives me great pleasure to stand up and put a few words on the record this morning, Madam Speaker, and I'd like to first say thank you to you. Welcome back. I hope your summer was enjoyable. I know it's been very busy for you in your new role.

Welcome back to the clerks and all the table staff, as well as our Sergeant-at-Arms and all the staff here within the Legislative Assembly, and as far as our Hansard staff and everybody as well.

Today we're debating Bill 204, and I'd like to, as well, welcome Mr. Michael Barkman from the Canadian federation for students and his colleagues, as well as Mr. Kevin Settee from the University of Winnipeg students' union as well for joining us here in the gallery on a very, very important debate today. And so I just figured I would stand up and just put a few words on the record, as we all know that Bill 204 is going to be coming to a vote this morning, actually.

So I just want to remind people that the member from Fort Garry-Riverview, the ex-two-time Education Minister, had brought this forward, and earlier on in the session, before, when they were still

in government. And now I know that the member from Fort Rouge brought this forward. We, as the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba, had some questions in regards to the bill. We found that a lot of the consultations were not happening, and we absolutely see that the safety at all of our post-secondary institutions for all of the students are of utmost importance.

And we do see that there is some flaws in the bill. And we actually pointed that out as the opposition before we now came into government. We pointed some of the flaws out, and the government of the day chose not to listen to some of the flaws or make any amendments to the bill. So then what ended up happening was, when the member from Fort Rouge was elected, he decided to bring Bill 204 to the floor again, and without any changes to it. So he basically just copied it from the original Education minister and brought it forward.

Now, this is a bill that, according to the past government, the ex-NDP government, was a high priority for them. But they never called it as a high priority. They had 17 years to get legislation like this done. And they tried to rush it through just before the election to try to cause a little bit of a wedge.

So what we're seeing, we've increased the consultations. I know that the Minister of Education, the member from Portage la Prairie, has been working very hard with all post-secondary institutions, not just universities and colleges, but also with our trade schools as well, and they—and with students' input. And they're going to be bringing forward a piece of legislation that expands and makes it a little bit broader so that it really focuses on that safety of students, because I know, as a parent myself of a child who's going to be going to some sort of post-secondary institution in a couple of years, we all want to make sure that when we're sending our kids to post-secondary institutions that there are safety provisions put in and processes so that they can feel safe attending these institutions. I know that a lot of the post-secondary institutions in the past were not consulted when the NDP government were in place. And that's why I know that the Education Minister for our government has put that time in and is be—and is going to be bringing in legislation soon so that that all gets accomplished.

As far as the member from Fort Rouge bringing this forward as a private member's bill, as I mentioned already, it's a copied bill from before without any amendments. But, when they were in

government, again, the priorities weren't there. So, when they were in government, private members' bills, they felt that bringing forward a private member's bill on sick leave and bicycle lanes was far more important than student safety.

So you've got our word that we are going to be bringing forward legislation very, very soon. I look forward to that bill being debated in the future. And with that, I thank everybody for their time. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know that the member from Fort Garry-Riverview is maybe going to get up and put a few words a record. I'm not sure what he's going to do. And I know he's asking for the students to have a voice. You will have a voice when the bill that the government's bringing forward, we'll definitely have an opportunity to debate that. And you will see that it is going to be a better bill. It's going to have more teeth and it is going to protect students far better than Bill 204 is.

So thank you, Madam Speaker, for your time this morning.

\*(10:20)

**Madam Speaker:** Are there any further speakers on debate?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** And I'm pleased to rise today to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 204, and I want to thank the member opposite for bringing this forward and, of course, it is very important. And I want to welcome the students in the gallery today with respect to this.

Of course, sexual violence is a very important issue for everyone, and it's unacceptable at all levels, whether on campus, whether in our communities, whether in our homes, quite frankly, which is something that, unfortunately, too many people in our society have had the unfortunate predicament of being—have been subject to, and it's a very difficult thing to talk about for many people, including for those of us who know and have friends who have been through things that have been very difficult.

I do know, Madam Speaker, that our Minister of Education takes this very seriously. I know the Minister of Education and this Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. Squires) have gone out and, over the course of the summer, have held various consultation meetings, have ensured that ample consultation takes place so that we get this right. It's one thing, and I'm glad that we are debating

this here today; this is a very important subject to debate.

But it goes beyond just that. We need to make sure that we get it right. This is such a very important issue that, unfortunately, so many Manitobans—way too many Manitobans—are faced with and way too many Canadians are faced with, and it's time to take action with respect to this.

So, Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased that the member has brought this forward, but I am not—I don't believe that Bill 204 has all the answers to what we need to make sure that we get this right. For our students' safety on campuses, we need to make sure that we get this right, and that's why today, I felt it very important to get up and speak on this.

I have spoken to the Minister of Education about this issue and there were certain things with respect to Bill 204 that it didn't cover in terms of definitions, better defining what it means, what does sexual violence mean, and I think it's very important to get the definitions right.

We have seen past legislation in this House where sometimes we didn't get the definition right and it had various consequences. We had to go forward and perhaps look at other areas down the road of having to make amendments, so that's why it's very important to conduct—to get out and consult, and I know that they consulted with the students as well as the faculties. This goes beyond just University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, University of Brandon. It's UCN, University College of the North, also all other campuses, and we need to make sure that the ample consultation takes place so that when those institutions put in place their sexual violent policies that it's done right.

And so that's why, Madam Speaker, I believe it's very important that we work together on this, and I appreciate the member opposite for bringing this issue forward. This has been an issue that has been all too, you know, constant, in our—not only on our campuses, but, indeed, in many communities in Manitoba, which is extremely unfortunate, and I think some of our northern communities, and so on.

So I just wanted to put a few words on the record with respect to this and just say that I know that the Minister of Education will be bringing this forward and will be bringing a bill forward that I think will be more encompassing, will cover off some areas that I think were omitted in Bill 204. So I want to thank

you very much for the opportunity to put a few words on the record.

**Madam Speaker:** Are there any further debaters on this? Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 204, The Post-Secondary Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policies Act (Various Acts Amended).

Is the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** I hear a no. So I—agreed and—no.

#### Voice Vote

**Madam Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Madam Speaker:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader):** A recorded vote, please.

**Madam Speaker:** A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

\* (10:30)

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 204, The Post-Secondary Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policies Act (Various Acts Amended).

#### Division

*A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:*

#### Yeas

*Allum, Altemeyer, Chief, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Swan, Wiebe.*

\* (10:40)

#### Nays

*Bindle, Clarke, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fletcher, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith, Smook, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Yeas 17, Nays 32.

**Madam Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

#### House Business

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business, is there leave to call it 11 o'clock and proceed to private members' resolution from the member for Flin Flon, Recognition that the Minimum Wage should be Increased?

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to call it 11 o'clock and proceed to the resolution on Recognition that the Minimum Wage should be Increased? *[Agreed]*

#### RESOLUTIONS

##### Res. 4—Recognition that the Minimum Wage should be Increased

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Flin Flon—sorry.

The hour being 11 o'clock, we are now moving to resolution by the honourable member for Flin Flon, Recognition that the Minimum Wage should be Increased.

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** I—I've—THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to implement an increase to the—

**An Honourable Member:** Forgot to say, I move.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I move, seconded by the member from Fort Rouge,

*WHEREAS Manitoba has a 17 year tradition of minimum wage increases that equitably reflect the interests of labour and business in Manitoba; and*

*WHEREAS the previous Provincial Government's record included reducing taxes for small businesses*

*who will pay \$446 million less in taxes this year compared to 1999; and*

*WHEREAS Manitoba entrepreneurs have saved \$3.8 billion in taxes since 1999; and*

*WHEREAS minimum wage increases in Manitoba have put more than \$7,500 per year into the pockets of full time minimum wage earners after taxes; and*

*WHEREAS total minimum wage increases since 1999 are more than twice the rate of inflation, increasing low income purchasing power in Manitoba and growing the economy; and*

*WHEREAS while increasing the minimum wage annually for 17 years, Manitoba has maintained one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country; and*

*WHEREAS people at the lower end of the income spectrum must unfairly spend more of their overall income on food, housing and other basic necessities; and*

*WHEREAS raising the minimum wage helps minimum wage earners support their families and save for tuition fees, textbooks and training; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government has an obligation to do everything it can to help raise Manitobans out of poverty; and*

*WHEREAS it is important to maintain a single-tier minimum wage to ensure that all minimum wage earners are treated equitably; and*

*WHEREAS freezing the minimum wage to a level that forces full-time workers to live in poverty is unacceptable in today's day and age; and*

*WHEREAS low income Manitobans suffered when the Premier last sat in cabinet and froze the minimum wage seven times.*

That the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to implement an increase to the minimum wage this year in accordance with Manitoba's tradition, recognizing that raising the minimum wage is an effective tool for bringing Manitobans out of poverty and growing the economy.

**Madam Speaker:** Oh, it has been moved by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), seconded by the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew),

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to implement an increase to the minimum wage this

year in accordance with Manitoba's tradition, recognizing that raising the minimum wage is an effective tool for bringing Manitobans out of poverty and growing the economy.

Is there agreement to have the resolution considered as printed? *[Agreed]*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to implement an increase to the minimum wage this year in accordance with Manitoba's tradition, recognizing that raising the minimum wage is an effective tool for bringing Manitobans out of poverty and growing the economy.*

**Mr. Lindsey:** This resolution is very important to working people, to families, to single mothers, to people in Manitoba that matter. This government has forgotten about people other than the rich, privileged few at the top of the spectrum. The NDP caucus recognizes that there's hard-working Manitobans that deserve to get ahead in the world. Raising minimum wage is one of the best ways for people to get ahead.

By the government opposite suggesting that maybe they'll index it someday but they're not going to do anything until at least 2017, puts working Manitobans that desperately need to keep up, to get ahead. It puts them behind already, and then they talk about, well, maybe we'll index it to something and maybe we'll do something and maybe we'll have a plan and maybe, maybe, maybe. Meanwhile, hard-working Manitoba families are suffering while they maybe come up with a plan.

Madam Speaker, that's not right. It's not fair. This NDP caucus, this former NDP government, recognized that there was people that deserved to get ahead, that worked hard, that tried to support their families. It's unfortunate that this government, this Conservative government, doesn't recognize that there's hard-working Manitobans that need to get ahead.

They like to pretend that, well, it's just kids; they're the only ones that are earning minimum wage. And nothing could be further from the truth. It's just another myth that they like to portray. It's hard-working single mothers. It's people that are new to this country. It's people that work at the corner store. It's people that work at multinational corporations that make billions of dollars a year. It's hard-working people. It's people that deserve recognition for the hard work that they put in to trying to get ahead.



Manitobans that earn minimum wage cannot afford to wait a year for this government to maybe do something. That's no excuse. This government should be ashamed of themselves for making hard-working Manitobans that earn minimum wage wait. They're taking food out of their mouths.

They introduce an idea that everybody should get financial literacy training so that they can live within their means. They should be ashamed of themselves, Madam Speaker, that they think people that earn minimum wage should be able to figure out how to live within that means, that they'd have to decide should they put bread on the table today or pay the rent. That's shameful behaviour by this government. And that is why the minimum wage needs to be raised now, not maybe next year, not maybe sometime in the future, not when workers have already been held back.

This government just continues to attack working people every chance they get, whether it's the refusal to raise the minimum wage, Madam Speaker, whether it's Bill 7 that makes it harder for workers to organize, maybe makes it harder for workers to get out of minimum wage because it makes them harder to organize into a union that will represent them and help them get out of poverty. It's shameful behaviour that this government wants to hold hard-working Manitobans in poverty. That's shameful. And this government should now recognize that hard-working Manitobans deserve an increase, deserve to earn a decent wage for their hard work. They deserve to be able to feed their families.

### Questions

**Madam Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. And questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party, any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties, each independent member may ask one question and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Are there any questions?

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I would like to ask my colleague: Who primarily earns minimum wage in Manitoba?

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Thank you for the question. Contrary to what some people would have you believe, it's not just students that earn minimum wage; it's single parents, it's predominantly women

that earn minimum wage, it's people that are trying to feed their families, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** Will the member not agree that raising the personal tax exemption, which reduces the tax burden for low-income Manitobans, isn't that a way that helps all low-income Manitobans have more money in their own pockets, rather than your method, which is to have them work and get taxed—

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

\* (10:50)

**Mr. Lindsey:** And, no, I do not agree with what you've proposed because changing the personal exemption puts maybe \$10 in their pockets. Raising the minimum wage puts a minimum of \$400 and probably more than that in hard-working Manitobans' pockets.

**Ms. Fontaine:** I would like to ask, why are regular increases to minimum wage important?

**Mr. Lindsey:** And thank you for the question. As everybody in this room knows, the cost of things continues to go up. Why should not the minimum wage continue to go up along with that? Whether it's a loaf of bread, rent—goes up; the minimum wage needs to go up so that working Manitobans can be lifted out of poverty, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** Madam Speaker, Manitobans elected a new Progressive Conservative government which is committed to fixing the finances, repairing the services and rebuilding our economy. This resolution refers to NDP minimum wage policy and increases as being traditional, like Christmastime.

Does the member agree with the following statement from the Canadian centre of policy alternatives, that sales taxes are more regressive than income taxes?

**Mr. Lindsey:** I'd just like to point out that under the previous NDP government, we had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada.

**Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park):** As a former minimum wage earner, this is an important resolution. I used to work for McDonald's and the question is: Who, primarily, earns the minimum wage in Manitoba? Is it youth, as the stereotype often suggests?

**Mr. Lindsey:** And thank you for the question. No, the stereotype is wrong. It's not primarily youth. It's working mothers; it's new Canadians; it's people that are trying to pay the rent; it's people that are trying to feed their families, Madam Speaker. It's not just kids going to school. Predominantly, it's women trying to feed their families.

**Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli):** Does the member agree with his colleague from Wolseley's statement that, and I quote: When you give away millions more dollars of public funding through raising the basic personal exemption, everyone in society benefits from that?

**Mr. Lindsey:** Certainly, it benefits some people more than others. Everyone gets a benefit. People on minimum wage get a benefit of maybe \$10 a year, whereas raising the minimum wage gives them an immediate benefit of at least \$400.

**Mr. Marcelino:** There's that term that we use usually to associate with indexed minimum wage. We call it poverty trap. What is a poverty trap?

**Mr. Lindsey:** Indexing of minimum wage at a level that people can't afford to live at traps them in poverty, keeps them trapped in poverty forever. Raising the minimum wage allows them the opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty.

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** So I represent Kewatinook and a lot of the Northern stores' employers, as Northern being our only employer, that's all they pay is the minimum wage, and without minimum wage increases yearly, these people are stuck in perpetual poverty because the indexing will not work for these people. Do you agree?

**Mr. Lindsey:** Thank you, member from Kewatinook, for that question. And, certainly, it's very relevant to people in northern communities. Indexing the minimum wage does not help those people. Raising the minimum wage to a wage that they can afford to shop at the Northern store is what will help people in the North.

**Mr. Michaleski:** This resolution speaks to minimum wage increases being in accordance with Manitoba tradition, which suggests that this member believes tradition is the basis of sound fiscal management. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business Director of Provincial Affairs Jonathan Allward states that no government should consider increasing minimum wage until it has exhausted its ability to assist low-income earners through tax relief and training initiatives. Does the member agree with this comment?

**Mr. Lindsey:** Thank you for the question. As I've stated numerous times, the best way to help people earning minimum wage rise out of poverty is to raise the minimum wage.

**Ms. Fontaine:** I'm just wondering if the member believes that raising the minimum wage by 25 cents or 50 cents to help people get out of poverty—does he believe that this is the spirit of what this government is trying to do for people of Manitoba?

**Mr. Lindsey:** The spirit of this government is to not help working people. It's to not help poor people. Everything they've talked about so far is to help a select few. We need to raise the minimum wage today, not wait until sometime in the future and maybe have a plan to help them and maybe not. We need to raise the minimum wage and we need to raise it now.

**Mr. Wharton:** Why, after—question for the member, of course—why, after over a decade of debt, decay and decline, did the NDP full-time and low-income workers in poverty by increasing taxes, which affected low-income Manitobans, and the PST—raising it by 1 per cent to 8 per cent, how it's affected low-income Manitobans?

**Mr. Lindsey:** I'd just like to point out that under the previous NDP government we had the lowest unemployment rate in the country, and that helped working people.

**Mr. Marcelino:** Which provinces in Canada, Madam Speaker, through you, which provinces in Canada are raising their minimum wage at this year and which provinces are not?

**Mr. Lindsey:** The only provinces not raising the minimum wage this year are Newfoundland and, shamefully, Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for questions has expired.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order.

The time for questions has expired.

### Debate

**Madam Speaker:** The debate is open.

**Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples):** I would like to put a few words—a few comments on this minimum wage resolution.

I think we—when I think about that, I think about the—our Provincial Nominee Program, how much money they're spending to bring people over here. And when the—those people come over here, I'd—are we able to keep them over here? That's important because we used to—*[interjection]* Yes. Because for so many years, we were able to keep them over here because our minimum wage was one of the highest in Canada. And now we are falling behind. Now we are falling behind. What's happening? Now we are falling behind because other provinces are increasing minimum wages, especially Alberta, they are going to go from up to affordable wages and we will lose so many immigrants from here. They will go to other provinces.

\* (11:00)

When we increase minimum wages, we also save some money on Rent Assist. And also with the minimum wage increasing, more people will qualify for the housing, for mortgages. So more people will buy houses, and when they buy their houses, more real estate will boom and also other businesses will benefit from that. If we don't do that—and there are also other arguments put out about PST increase.

And think about the minimum wage and how much money they can spend, and if they can spend, say, that family can spend \$2,000. One cent only will give 15—they will have to \$15 pay extra. But look at how much benefit they are getting—how much benefit.

Look at the school tax rebate. When PC was in power, they'd reduce from \$325 to \$250. And we increased up to \$700. Take that difference, take that \$15 per month, multiply by 12, \$180, reduce out of \$700 and the difference. Still families are—had—they gave about \$300—approximately \$300. And I think they—when they are talking about PST, they are more worried about their rich people because they have to buy big items, on those big items they have to pay more, because with the 6 million—with the six-car garage, those people have to buy more cars, have to pay more right in there, worry about their rich people, their buddies.

And minimum wage earners are the people who are—were being supported by the NDP from all different—Rent Assist and all the other benefits they were getting, which they are reducing day by day. And they will—they think they are creating a better Manitoba. I think they will create a bitter Manitoba and people will leave Manitoba, they will go to the

other provinces and the economy will go down to the drain, and that's their—that's what happened last time they were in power.

They had to have Filmon Fridays. And how much people suffered, how much money gone out of their pockets, because if you don't increase the economy, if you don't create jobs, and that's what is going to happen. Then there won't be that much revenue coming to the government, then they have to name another reduction in the wages that—I cannot name the Premier's name—and I think that will be—again, that will be that Friday.

So this government is not—I know this government is no government, because they are not going to do anything. They are just keeping their—just they are saying we are going to do something, but they're not going to do anything at all, and that's the way people will suffer and the economy will suffer. And if they don't increase minimum wage and people will leave Manitoba, they'll go to the other provinces, what will happen to the economy?

Then they will talk about small business. Small business paying—under the NDP they were paying zero per cent business tax, and so they were benefiting from that side too. If small business—if people have more money in their pocket, they will spend more money on the items, and small business will also benefit. So I think minimum wage is very important to increase—actually they should be increased up to the affordable wages, and Alberta is doing it, and we should not fall behind.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this issue.

It perhaps isn't surprising that the NDP have brought this forward because they're always looking at the lowest common denominator: what can we do at the low end; let's bring everyone down; equality for all; and that somehow is fair.

The reason Manitoba is in the deep economic mess it's in are due to things such as taxation. Taxation, well, the classic example is the provincial sales tax. But personal income tax and the many other taxes that we pay have driven many professionals and other young people away from Manitoba. The average Manitoban family pays \$4,000 more than the same family across the border in Saskatchewan.

When I was growing up we used to make fun of Saskatchewan all the time, Saskatchewan jokes. Now, Saskatchewan has been making Manitoba jokes ever since the NDP came into office, and they're kind of funny because they're kind of true, or they were. They won't be soon, but it does show a differential between the two provinces.

We can help the lowest income Canadians, Manitobans. The most effective way is to take them off the tax roll, so if they do not—so they don't pay tax. The people who can afford will pay their proportion. But, if you're right at the bottom end, I think most people would agree that is not good public policy or good for those families to pay tax. And that is exactly what the personal exemption allows, is for people at the low end of the income spectrum to be off the tax rolls, and this measure will take thousands of Manitobans—thousands of Manitobans—off the tax rolls.

Madam Speaker, when you increase the minimum wage, and Manitoba already has the third highest in Canada, but when you increase it you increase the costs of business, the costs of operating, cost to consumers.

I note, yesterday, Odeon theatres has increased their admission rate to see a movie and it was directly related to minimum wage increases in other provinces. Now, that is a—perhaps a frivolous example because it's—but it is not when you're dealing with the mom-and-pop grocery store or restaurant. These things matter.

And then what ends up happening is people, in order to make ends meet, start going down a bad road, and that is paying under the table, the black market, the underground economy. That's what happens. So employees at the service end actually end up—yes, they may get paid under the table, but then they don't get any of the protections that we offer those who are employed: CPP, EI, Department of Labour. These are all things that happen when you are careless with minimum wage.

\* (11:10)

Say it's similar, you know, that—when we raise—if we were to raise taxes on cigarettes to as much as I would like, they would be imported and—because people will find a way to pay the least amount if it's in their interest, if it gets—if there's—becomes a major economic advantage. And, if you increase the sales tax at a sales—well, sales tax, too, but if you increase the minimum wage at a rate that is disproportionate

to what the economy can withstand, then you end up with all this under the table—all the under-the-table transactions. And that is not good for the workers because they'll be exploited. And it's not good for society. And it's ironic because it undermines everything the labour movement claims they protect.

The other thing I'd like to mention is the minimum wage is a reflection on the economy. I would rather have it so nobody is paid minimum wage or very few. And the only way to do that is to have a growing economy with jobs—good jobs, jobs from the private sector, jobs that create hope, wealth, a future competition. The previous government did none of that. They brought down the lowest—to the lowest—*[interjection]* There's an echo here, Madam Speaker. I don't heckle the member, and I would hope he would give me the same courtesy. But I understand he's frustrated. He's frustrated. Maybe he's frustrated because the economy, after the dark, dark decade of NDP rule, didn't end up with good jobs, lower—not the high-end jobs. Maybe the member is sad that he didn't think of doing this or—when they were in government.

The personal tax exemption is probably the single most effective way to bring low-income Canadians out of poverty. The stronger our economy becomes, the better it is for everyone. And, Madam Speaker, the NDP destroyed our economy, our economic potential. We'll fix that.

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

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** I would like to take a couple of moments to put a few words on the record regarding the member of Flin Flon's resolution, the resolution of the Recognition that the Minimum Wage should be Increased.

Manitoba traditionally raises minimum wage with the intention of bringing Manitobans out of poverty, growing the economy, as well as keeping up with living expenses. Raising minimum wage is one factor. However, I believe we should be considering all options and facts and if, in fact, raising minimum wage is the most effective approach, that is what we, the Liberal Party, will support.

With that said, we should consider options such as hourly wage versus personal tax exemption. What if people on low income had personal tax exempt considerations? Or another option: what if we consider a decrease on payroll tax for business? It's important to also consider the employers and small businesses. They need to be able to afford to pay

employees more. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. We all know this and we know the importance of supporting them. Raising the minimum wage without helping the establishment is only burdening them.

We need to consider First Nation reserves. Unless the government intervenes in raising the minimum wage, employers will have an unfair advantage. Ultimately, we need to find a way and make the adjustments necessary so that all Manitobans who are affected by minimum wage are considered.

Liberals believe we should be raising minimum wage annually. The question really is, by how much?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli):** I am pleased to rise today to put a few words on the record about affordability in Manitoba.

Manitoba elected—Manitobans elected a new Progressive Conservative government that is committed to fixing our finances, repairing our services and rebuilding our economy. Amongst all provinces, Manitoba has the third highest minimum wage rate. A decade of dysfunction under the NDP saw affordability of—for Manitobans erode each and every year. The NDP made historic broken promises on tax hikes, and hydro bill rates are high and continuing to rise. All the while Manitobans were burdened with a deepening debt and declining services in health care, in education, that directly affects the results for our kids.

Supporting stronger, safer Manitoba families is a key part of ensuring affordability by reducing taxes. Manitoba got immediate action in Budget 2016 in the form of a raise by ending bracket creep, the NDP's yearly hidden tax. This will enable all Manitobans to invest more of their own money to rebuild our economy.

Indexing the basic personal exemption tax took nearly 3,000 low-income Manitobans off the provincial tax rolls altogether, people the NDP claim to care about but taxed at a higher rate here in Manitoba than virtually any other province.

Madam Speaker, we are doing what the NDP refused to do. Our government is currently consulting on indexing minimum wage to the rate of inflation. We are consulting and listening to wage earners and employers on how to best protect affordability while rebuilding Manitoba's economy.

We are committed to making Canada the most improved province, making Manitoba families safer and stronger.

\* (11:20)

Under the NDP, in Manitoba, the average family paid more than \$4,000, Madam Speaker, compared to their counterparts in Saskatchewan. Across Canada, the average basic personal exemption was almost \$2,000 higher. I had the privilege for over 27 years of operating my own business here in Winnipeg and in Brandon and employing a number of Manitobans. And I can tell you it's an experience that's overwhelming and humbling at the same time. When you're dealing directly with families on a day-to-day basis, you're not only dealing with the issues that come in business but you're dealing with the family issues that arise during the course of a day, during the course of a week or a month. Not only are those issues financial issues, but, of course, they're personal issues.

And I can tell you that when the biggest—one of the biggest issues for my employees in the last five to eight years was sitting down and saying, you know, Jeff, I see on my paycheque here that I've had a huge amount of tax taken off. And I said, yes, no, I see that too. You know, obviously, that hurts. And my—you know, one of the comments that came up was, well, how can we fix that? You know, there's more to it than just raising the minimum wage. There has to be a balance between minimum wage and a tax area that would be beneficial for Manitobans and their families.

And, quite frankly, the basic personal exemption, by raising it, will take that issue and ensure that Manitobans have the opportunity to invest in the things that are important to them like sports for their children, a good education and making sure that they're involved in many of the things—after-school events—and ensuring that, you know, they can continue to grow. You know, maybe do some expansion around their home to add a new room, maybe take care of a loved one. There are many things that Manitobans are asking: How can I see more in my paycheque at the end of the day? It's not necessarily more money that'll do that. It's—again, it's basically ensuring that Manitobans have a better tax regime going forward, and I know under this government, that is definitely going to be a goal of ours.

Manitoba was the only government west of the Maritimes who did not increase their tax brackets to inflation, resulting in hard-working low-income Manitobans paying more income tax. In Manitoba, we saw the NDP take more than \$1 billion from Manitobans by broadening the PST to tax more goods and services and increasing the rate of the PST to 8 per cent. Well, it was interesting how they did that, and I digress back to that. Again, they promised in 2011 not to raise taxes. Not only did they raise the PST to 8 per cent, they did it without giving Manitobans the opportunity to vote on a major tax increase, essentially breaking the law, Madam Speaker, which the NDP did, and did without any regard for Manitobans and their families. Taking more than \$4,000 off the tables of Manitoba families each and every year to help them grow internally, to help them build, to help to expand their homes and their businesses and their lives, quite frankly. Expanding the PST to things like haircuts and areas like house insurance, which affects not only middle-income earners; it affects our seniors as well. Every single day, they look at their—they look at that bill, and they say, holy mackerel. I was paying 8 per cent less before the NDP decided to add 8 per cent to the tax bill. Totally shameful.

Manitobans are telling us, Madam Speaker, they cannot afford another NDP decade of debt, decade of decay and decade of decline.

Madam Speaker, thank you so much for allowing me to put a few comments on the record.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake):** Today, I have the opportunity to rise in the House and speak to a private member resolution titled, recognition that minimum wage should be increased.

This private member's resolution sheds light on the members opposite in many ways. First, it is another demonstration of their short-sighted approach to governance. This private member's resolution reinforces what many of us already know. During the NDP decade of debt, decay and decline, the members opposite substituted making difficult, meaningful choices with face-value, meaningless, lightweight policies.

Madam Speaker, our new Progressive Conservative government was elected with a loud and clear mandate from the great people of Manitoba. Manitobans know they deserve better for what the NDP offered. And we have a better plan for a better Manitoba.

The members opposite would like to have Manitobans believe they are champions of the poor, the working poor and middle class. However, under the NDP decade of debt, decay and decline, their reckless policies took money out of the pockets of hard-working Manitoba families, making it increasingly harder for the average Manitoban to get by.

The previous government was increasing minimum wage but then taking those increases in other forms, putting it in one pocket and taking it out of the other. What our new government wants for those hard-working lower-income earners is to keep more money in their pockets so they have more for the necessities of life.

Madam Speaker, what the members opposite do not understand is minimum wage and raising minimum wage is not a final solution for the entire discussion. Instead, it is a small part of the discussion and, quite frankly, not a solution at all.

This discussion that needs to take place, Madam Speaker, is affordability: making Manitoba an affordable place to work, live, study, raise a family and prosper. Ensuring affordability by reducing taxes is a key part of supporting a stronger, safer environment for Manitoba families is the correct solution.

I am happy to put on record we need no lessons from members opposite on improving affordability in our great province. During the NDP decade of debt, decay and decline, the average Manitoba family has been forced to pay more than—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Order. There's a number of conversations going on here that is making it difficult for the member to be heard. And I wonder if people that are having conversations could please take them to the loge so that everybody can hear and respect the member that has the floor right now.

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. During the decade of debt, decay and decline, the average Manitoba family has been forced to pay more than \$5,000 in additional broken-promise taxes. Under the dysfunctional government, Manitoba was the only government west of the Maritimes who did not increase their tax brackets to inflation, resulting in hard-working, low-income Manitobans paying more and getting less.

Despite the members opposite say today, the previous government's legacy concerning affordability will be remembered for keeping Manitobans' basic personal exemption \$2,000 lower than the average across Canada. The previous government will be remembered for failing to end bracket creep. They will, however, be remembered for robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Madam Speaker, elections are about making promises, but good government is about keeping those promises. The member from St. Boniface, as previous NDP leader, promised, before the 2011 election, that any notion of raising the PST was nonsense and ridiculous. The NDP then broadened the PST to home insurance and benefits at work, as well as other goods and services in 2012. They increased the PST from 7 to 8 per cent in 2013.

The NDP's shameful financial performance is strewn with broken commitments to do better. In the 2012 budget, the NDP guaranteed they would eliminate the deficit by 2014. They broke that promise, but issued a new guarantee to return to a balanced budget by 2016. They broke that promise as well and overspent by \$846 million.

\* (11:30)

Just before the last election, the NDP hid an annual \$846-million deficit from Manitobans, the largest in our province's history. The members opposite just don't seem to understand Manitobans are tired of their politics.

This private member's resolution on minimum wage is not a stand-alone issue or a solution. Affordability is crucial to these discussions, and the NDP are not in any position to give lectures on that topic. They have 17 years to address affordability and, to be honest, they failed at every turn. Under the NDP governance, Manitoba's basic tax exemption remained stagnant at \$9,134, while Saskatchewan, which is indexed, has risen to \$15,843. This is NDP's legacy. Through these changes the NDP has taken more than \$1 billion from Manitobans—\$1 billion.

Real problems grow in the absence of real solutions, real leadership and real accountability. Manitobans endured no solutions, no leadership and no accountability under 17 years of NDP mismanagement. They also broke their promise to direct all the extra revenues to core infrastructure, but this cash flow instead paid for NDP dysfunction, mismanagement, self-serving advertising while Manitoba's front-line services were threatened.

To top it all off, Madam Speaker, the provincial debt doubled during the NDP decade of debt. To be clear, none of the NDP record nor anything to improve affordability for working families, in fact, they did quite the opposite. The NDP decade of dysfunction saw affordability erode—erode—affordability eroded each and every year with historic broken-promise tax hikes like the other ones that I've mentioned today.

As I mentioned before, we have a better plan, and our new government has wasted no time in making serious strides in addressing affordability for Manitobans, hard-working families. Within weeks of assuming office, our new PC government set a new course for Manitoba, one that will lead to lower taxes, better services and a strong economy for all Manitobans. Our new Progressive Conservative government's first budget took immediate action for all Manitobans in the form of a raise ending bracket creep, which was part of the NDP's yearly hidden tax hikes, as I mentioned earlier. This will enable all Manitobans to keep more of their own money, making everyday life more affordable. The fact, though, our new government's initiative, the average Manitoba family will save about \$713 per year by 2020.

Indexing the basic personal tax exemption took nearly 3,000 low-income Manitobans off the provincial tax rolls altogether, people the NDP claim to care about, but intentionally taxed at a higher rate here in Manitoba every chance they got. Manitobans, especially those on low and middle incomes, should be able to keep more of their hard-earned money through tax breaks the previous government refused to give them. Budget 2016 provided no new tax hikes and gave Manitobans a permanent tax break that will keep up with the cost of living by ending bracket creep and indexing low tax brackets at the rate of inflation.

We are enhancing the Rent Assist program for low incomes in Manitoba, increasing support for residential care workers, providing additional incentives for child care, introducing operating grants for existing facilities, as well as principal and interest costs for new centres.

Madam Speaker, the fact that the matter—fact of the matter is Manitoba families deserve to keep more of their hard-earned money. Manitobans deserve a government that works for them, and this is what our PC team is doing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding the proposed resolution on the minimum wage.

First of all, I want to thank all the small-business owners of this province that do great work in the province of Manitoba and create jobs for people. I'm—hear quite a bit from the side opposite how they seem to like to attack business, successful people that create jobs and opportunities for people to begin their careers, whether it be in minimum wage, and, hopefully, they're given more opportunities for people to come out—off of minimum wage.

So I do want to, first of all, thank all this—the investment people, the business people, the entrepreneurs who, in spite of this cloud of traditional lifting of minimum wage that hangs over them, they continue to invest in this great province and they provide opportunities for a lot of Manitobans to get ahead. Well, I just want to put that on the record, and thanks.

This resolution—again, it spoke of a Manitoba tradition, and I would question the—when you use the word tradition, when you're talking about public policy, fiscal management, that we just do things on the basis of tradition, that we've just continually done those things through time, and we continue to do that, that sends, in my opinion, the wrong message to all business, all investors, all workers.

If that's the way, Madam Speaker, the messaging from the government, the former government, is saying that we will continually lift the price—or the minimum wage forever just like Christmastime, and we will continue to—this till the end of time, and I'm not sure when that is until we've destroyed the confidence—investment—I don't know when that would end. So I would some—I would ask them to maybe consider that if you have a traditional lift in minimum wages, when does that end? And when can the people of Manitoba, when can they see the end to this increase and the burden its putting on a lot of small businesses that are employing a lot of people, and also looking at perhaps starting a job, starting a new business and looking to employ a number of people and try to get them off of—and improve their lives.

No government should consider increasing minimum wage until it has exhausted its ability to assist low-income earners through tax relief—is the

recommendation by the Director of Provincial Affairs Jonathan Alward. The solution is not to just keep giving out Christmas presents. I would assume, by his words, that we just don't, annually, just give out this Christmas present and let come what may. Whatever else happens, we'll just keep increasing this until the end of time. He is saying this is a bad thing.

We need to look at our costs. We need to look at how governments operate, no different than in our families or our businesses, we need to look at our costs. And costs are taxes on all Manitobans. So it's correct where you—if you continue to lift minimum wages up forever, it is a cost. There is a cost associated with doing that, and it's brought on to the—to bear by businesses, consumers and the like.

\* (11:40)

What should be done is our approach to evaluating departments, doing value-for-money reviews, look at our costs, lower our taxation so that we can provide the relief in the form of less taxation rather than what you're—what's being suggested as increasing the minimum wage, which only escalates the costs of everything. We need to be looking at lowering the costs and the net take-home. So we've done this through increasing the basic personal exemption. This is real dollars that are affecting low-income earners. These are real dollars without escalating the costs of everything.

So what I'm saying is there's a number of solutions to help people that are struggling, that are trying to get out to pay their bills. There's a number of solutions, and the minimum wage one is not the only solution that's out there, and we need to be looking at all the solutions. Minimum wage is important, and it's important to—*[interjection]* Sorry. It is important, Madam Speaker. The minimum wage is important, but it has to be balanced with broader economy and affordability.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have three minutes remaining.

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



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, October 6, 2016**

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