

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
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
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EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Ind.
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
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LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
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WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 30, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 7—The Sustainable Watersheds Act
(Various Acts Amended)**

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 7, The Sustainable Watersheds Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur les bassins hydrographiques durables, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce The Sustainable Watersheds Act. This bill proposes to make amendments to four acts: The Conservation Districts Act; The Water Protection Act; The Water Rights Act; and The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Act.

This new legislation will address surface water management in a more focused and comprehensive way. It strengthens watershed-based planning by moving from conservation districts to watershed districts, and by making drainage and water management simpler and more accountable. It also enables the implementation of an ecological services program that will support the protection of wetlands and incentivize landowners to retain water on their properties.

And I'm happy to welcome all the stakeholders who are here today in the gallery to support this bill.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 203—The Insurance Amendment Act

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I move, seconded by the member for The Maples (Mr. Saran), that The Insurance Amendment Act be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, with the new rules and—dealing with medical assistance in dying, the federal government and the provincial government have a lot of things to reflect on.

This bill would allow—or would prevent insurance companies from taking advantage of these changes by indicating that anyone who is taking advantage of medical assistance in dying is, in fact, for insurance purposes, not committing suicide. In other words, that's insurance companies—this bill would prevent insurance companies from declaring that medical assistance in dying be a suicide and therefore deny individuals the insurance that they had purchased.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Steinbach's Food and Clothing Drive

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): It is my pleasure to honour the incredible work of two of Steinbach's finest community initiatives: the Southland Church annual Thanksgiving Food and Clothing Drive and the Steinbach Community Outreach.

Steinbach and the surrounding area have always been known for their generosity and for their volunteerism, Madam Speaker, and there is not better example than Steinbach's annual Thanksgiving Food and Clothing Drive. For the last 12 years, local volunteers collect donations of food, clothing, household goods and toys, with over 35,000 pounds donated this year alone. That is enough to fill more than 100 tables with clothing 18 inches deep. Nine hundred and thirty-seven volunteers participated this year with 1,400 hampers being distributed to 2,647 people in need receiving food and clothing. This is always an exciting event for our community as we have the chance to reflect on the many ways we have been blessed and to show our gratitude by giving to others.

Another fine example of an exceptional generosity in our community is the Steinbach Community Outreach. Formed in 2008, Steinbach Community Outreach assists people who are struggling to meet their essential needs. They focus their energies on the poor, the homeless and those at risk of being—becoming homeless by filling the gaps left by other programs. This means providing food, clothing, bedding, toiletries, to those most in need. It also means welcoming, listening and connecting people with other services like the local food bank, soup kitchen and the volunteer shuttle service.

On behalf of the Manitoba Legislature I want to congratulate the Southland Church annual Thanksgiving Food and Clothing Drive and Steinbach Community Outreach. Thank you for your hard work, your dedication to the community and your compassion. You continue to inspire us, and you continue to demonstrate the best of Steinbach and Manitoba.

Colleagues, please join me in recognizing the volunteers and organizers of these two wonderful community groups that are bettering the lives of Manitobans. They're with us here in the gallery today.

And, Madam Speaker, I would ask leave of my colleagues in the House to include in Hansard the names of the volunteers and organizers of both of these community groups.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include the names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Southland Church Thanksgiving Food and Clothing Drive: Co-ordinators, Grace Hiebert, Scott Rickey. Core team: Ange Funk, Crystal Klassen, Jewel Martens, Kim Neufeld, Rick Siemens, Joel Wiebe

Steinbach Community Outreach: Tammy Bekkering, Hilda Doerksen, Myra Gerbrandt, Irene Kroeker

World AIDS Day

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Tomorrow is World AIDS Day. I'm surprised there's no ministerial statement about it. It is important to raise awareness and support to those in Manitoba and around the world facing the challenges of living with HIV or AIDS.

In the fight against AIDS, significant advancements that have been made make it important to highlight the work that continues to be done in order to defeat this disease and give patients and their families hope for the future.

Manitoba has one of the highest HIV and AIDS diagnosis rates in Canada. Each diagnosis forever affects the life of the patient, their families and their community. For every victim of the disease, their lives, as well as the lives of loved ones, are forever affected. Often, patients not only have to struggle with health complications; they may also suffer from the stigmas attached which can lead to isolation and depression.

Another challenge is that nearly one out of every five Canadians with HIV does not know it, which puts others at a higher risk as well. Increasing testing, awareness and education is essential. In the face of these difficulties, Manitoba's front-line workers continue to step up.

We can be proud of Manitoba's team of professionals, health-care workers, volunteers, advocates and community organizations for working hard to achieve that. An example of this is the work of the Nine Circles Community Health Centre, which provides medical, emotional and spiritual care to patients in many ways.

Due to several medical advancements, AIDS patients are now able to get the treatment they need to live long, fulfilling lives and have the opportunity to receive counselling, support and be part of a community.

We call on all members of this House to use our own influence to end isolation, end stigmatization and end infection by standing with every person whose life has been touched by HIV or AIDS and strive to create a better future for the millions worldwide affected by the disease.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Chief Karen Batson

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Chief Karen Batson was elected as the first female chief of Pine Creek First Nation on January 4th, 2017. Chief Batson grew up in Pine Creek, later leaving the community to pursue a post-secondary education in psychiatric nursing. She went on to further attain two undergraduate degrees and a master's in education, which led to a teaching career at Assiniboine college and Brandon University.

Chief Batson's election platform emphasized fiscal responsibility, enhancement of economic opportunities and increased training and education for her community. Both chief and council have increased employment and training opportunities

while incorporating processes toward financial stability.

In addition, they work diligently to address social and infrastructure issues affecting the quality of life for Pine Creek residents, including a strategy to address addictions.

Chief Batson has also been active member of AMC First Nations Women's Council. The group presented on the issue of ongoing concerns of missing and murdered indigenous women across Canada to the Commission on Status of Women at the United Nations.

Strong working relationships have been a focus for Chief Batson and council. Working alongside community elders and Sustainable Development, they developed strong partnerships to ensure the protection of natural resources and environmental sustainability. Pine Creek First Nation was instrumental in securing provincial park status for traditional hunting, harvesting areas in Lake Winnipegosis area.

* (13:40)

In a short time, her leadership has made great strides to improve the quality of life in the community. Chief Batson is grateful to have a strong, supportive council and staff. Her leadership style emphasizes change while honouring traditions and values of the Anishinabe people. Chief Batson stated she could not embark on this journey without the ongoing support of her husband, family, friends and elders who encourage, advise and guide her as she continues her exciting endeavours.

Madam Speaker, I ask my fellow colleagues to recognize Chief Batson who is here today with her family, and thank you.

Public Transit Services

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about transit and what the provincial government is, or rather, is not doing to assist.

Transit is a lifeline for many Manitobans throughout our province, and I have been receiving emails from my constituents with respect to the issue and how people are being hurt because of this government's decisions.

Manitobans know how important transit is to our economy, to our climate and to our people, and this

government has an obligation to fight for everyone, not just their donors.

This past Sunday, Emily Wiebe said something in a CBC article I'd like to read here. She said that the backs of the poor cannot take much more of having to pay for the plans of the rich. Madam Speaker, there is so much truth here.

There are several reasons people will choose to take the bus and we must encourage people to do so. I agree with what my constituents are suggesting and that this government should restore the 50-50 provincial transit funding legislation that was removed earlier this year, as we need to keep public transit affordable.

Madam Speaker, transit is used for a wide array of reasons. For one, it allows for independence, especially for those who rely on public transit as their primary mode of transportation. Number 2, a lot of people choose to use public transit because parking may not be ideal, like students and people who work downtown or perhaps because another person in the household may need the vehicle. Thirdly, people choose to use public transit as a service to our environment by reducing our carbon footprint. And lastly, a lot of people choose to take a bus simply because it is a way to save money.

Madam Speaker, I hope this government reconsiders their decision and fights for all Manitobans and our environment by revisiting the provincial investment in public transit.

Thank you.

Wolverine Football Team

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): I rise today to celebrate the championship West Kildonan Collegiate Wolverine football team. The Wolverines play their home games at West Kildonan Collegiate in front of proud supporters, wearing their signature blue and silver. The homecoming game was full of cheering fans who watched the Wolverines win against Maples Collegiate by a dominating score of 30-0.

The Wolverines are led by second year head coach Russell Wallace and can be described as the most improved team in the league. From last year's 0-7 campaign, the Wolverines went 6-3 on their path to championship game.

The WHSFL Bowl was their last and most important game of the year and played in a crisp, chilled air of fall time Canadian football. The West Kildonan Wolverines met the St. Norbert Celtics in

the WHSFL Bowl at Investors Group Field on November 8th, 2017. Taking an early lead and leading at the half, the Wolverines were confident that they could hold out for the win in the ice-swept stadium with footballs cold as ice and hard as concrete. Exchanging third quarter touchdowns, the Celtics surged in the dying minutes of the fourth quarter to score a touchdown, only to miss the point after attempt.

The victory seemed certain, and the Wolverines were only ahead by a score of 13-12, but the young leaders rounded everyone up and told them the game was far from over. The Celtics recovered their onside kick as the collective air left all the lungs of every player on the West Kildonan sideline.

Through disciplined determination, the Wolverine defense ground the Celtics down to a standstill until they reached the edge of scoring range. St. Norbert lined up for their last snap. It's a pass, called out the Wolverines on the sideline. But the ball was deflected dead, the game was won. Wolverines rushed the field, the crowd cheered and Coach Wallace was dunked with water.

Nick Birch was named MVP of the WHSFL Bowl, but it was a full team effort that carried these young athletes to victory.

The team has much to look forward to in the future with most of its players in the 10th and 11th grade, while six graduating players, some of them here today, have been in contact to the Winnipeg Rifles football club to play with them next year.

This year showed the true test of teamwork, patience and determination as the keys to West Kildonan Collegiate championship season.

I ask the Legislature to join me in congratulating these young athletes.

Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to include the names of the students, staff, coaches of the championship West Kildonan Wolverines.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include the names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

West Kildonan Wolverines 2017. Players: Tyler Anderson, Miguel Babau, Jakob Bakerzak, Francesco Bergamorto, Jaydeon Bernard, Nick Birch, Mckiah Connolly, Mckiah Connoly, Evan Crawley, Dominic Cromarty, Tanner Dola, Dylan Fathers, Lucas Filbert, Angel Gibbons, Matt Gliha, Michael Guerreiro, Hunter Haddad, Jacob

Harris-Settee, Hunter Hazel, Luke Lehman, Russell Listmayer, Evan MacDonald, Devon Machum, Muhammad Maqsood, Brody Morovek, Matt Obirek, Justin Petrishen, Raf Pillotes, Ashton Rolland, Zach Shrupka, Nathan Slaby, Seth Spence, Damian Targosz, Joel Truthwaite, Jestoni Villanueva, Zach Woychuk, De'von Young, Noah Young. Staff: head coach, Russell Wallace; assistant coaches, Antonio Bergamorto, Brenda Bicklmeir, Corbin Boughen, Eric Johnson, Kevin Kwazny, Carl Wiebe; athletic trainer, Lisa Smyrichinsky

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests seated in the public gallery.

From Kildonan East Collegiate we have 33 grade 9 students under the direction of Ebony Hunter and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ambulance Services Budget Municipal Cost-Sharing Agreement

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, it's clear this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government don't play well with others. They've picked political fights with the federal government that have cost Manitoba families and now they're picking a political fight with municipalities that's costing Manitoba families on transit and even on health-care services.

Minister of Health, through the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, ordered the end to a cost-sharing agreement on ambulance services. This will mean that the City of Winnipeg goes without two and a half million dollars this year and it means some \$5 million less a year for ambulance services in the city.

Now, like all cuts this Premier is making, this one was made unilaterally without consultation or warning. It was delivered in a letter after the City budget had already been printed and was prepared to be delivered.

So the Premier needs to explain to the people of Winnipeg: Why has he cut the ambulance cost-sharing agreement with the City?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, I don't know how the Leader of the Opposition actually got that question out of his mouth without laughing—that doesn't know how to play well with others. That was a caucus, a caucus that was in more pieces than Lego. They were scattered all over the place. They fought. For three years they fought with each other. They fought internally. They fought externally. They fought at news conferences. They fought at party conventions.

We're working with other levels of government. We're working to better things with Manitoba. As far as I know, they're still fighting with each other, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, it looks like working with other levels of government for the Premier (Mr. Pallister), here, is more painful than stepping on a piece of Lego.

So, this is a cut to front-line health-care services. It doesn't get more front line than the people who drive you to the hospital when you are sick or when you are injured, yet this is the type of service that the Premier is choosing to target for cuts now.

And, again, this cut was not communicated face to face; it was not communicated in a meeting. It was delivered in a letter to the City on budget day after the budget for this year had already been prepared, even though it will reduce the amount of funding that the City is able to pay for this much needed ambulance service on.

So now that the Premier has broken his promise to protect front-line services once again, will this government finally come to their senses?

Will the Premier reverse his decision to end the cost-sharing agreement for ambulances with the City of Winnipeg?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition ignores the fact that there's been a significant increase in funding to the City of Winnipeg when it comes to ambulances, more than 28 per cent when it comes year over year for the ambulance service. And, of course, we've said to the City—and we said months ago—that they would be holding that funding, that that increase would be locked in for this budget year, that they would continue to get that increase.

* (13:50)

Now, there are always discussions in year about other amounts of funding when it comes to top-up, Madam Speaker, but the City shouldn't be expecting that it's going to be 28 per cent this year, next year, the year after. That simply isn't sustainable.

Manitobans have asked us to get our financial house in order. I'm sure they'd expect the same of the City.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: The City has to balance its budget—difficult to do so when this government pulls the rug out from under you on budget day by reducing the amount of funding, not face to face, not in a phone conversation, but with a letter.

So it's no surprise that we see the situation going from bad to worse under this Premier. We know that ambulance services are about as front-line a service as it gets. They will transport you to the hospital when you're sick, when you're injured. They serve some of the most vulnerable people in our city, and yet this is a program that the government is abdicating its responsibility for and is now putting in jeopardy.

So where will the difference be made? Will it be a reduction in ambulance services? Will it be a reduction in other services that the city provides? Or could the Premier simply do the right thing and restore the cost-sharing agreement on ambulances with the City of Winnipeg?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition now has talked about working well with others and he's talked about balanced budgets: two things that he knows nothing about, two things that that previous government never was able to demonstrate.

We provided significant increases of funding to the City of Winnipeg for ambulance service, more than 28 per cent year over year. We've said that for this year that would be locked in. They continue to get that increase. Of course, there can be other discussions when it comes to additional funding, Madam Speaker. We're always willing to have those discussions, but no level of government should be expecting an increase of 28 per cent year after year after year.

There is only one taxpayer in Manitoba, Madam Speaker. We'll protect them while that government—the former government never did.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to continuing on with oral questions, we have some further guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

We have members from a number of organizations: the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, Keystone Agricultural Producers, IISD, Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, AMM, Manitoba Conservation Districts Association and Manitoba Beef, who are the guests of the honourable Minister for Sustainable Development.

I'd like to welcome all members here on behalf of the Legislature.

* * *

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

Federal Parental Leave Changes Timeline for Provincial Legislation

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So, we know that the issue is clear and the government has had some time to get briefed up on the changes to parental leave that are being brought in by the federal government and that will take effect this weekend.

Again, parental leave—maternity leave, paternity leave—is being extended in terms of the—sorry, in terms of the employment insurance benefits from 12 months to 18 months. However, in order to guarantee that parents—new parents—are able to have a job waiting for them when they complete that period, there needs to be a legislative change to a provincial statute. A Manitoba law has to be changed.

We've brought in a piece of private members' legislation which would accomplish this change. We'd like to know whether the government is prepared to support it so that Manitoba families with new babies on the way can ensure that they have access to this new 18-month maternity or paternity leave benefits.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I was looking forward to the debate on that bill this morning, but apparently something happened and it didn't come, so—

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition is inferring that this is impending legislation that needs to pass or else, and he's dead wrong on that.

There is only one province so far that has begun legislation on it. A number of other provinces have begun consultations on this, and, as of this morning, I have asked the Labour Management Review Committee to review this, which is the proper process, where it should have gone in the first place.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, it was clear yesterday that this government had no idea that this change was about to take place—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—so when they talk about needing consultation, when were they going to do it? Friday? This is a change that is taking place this weekend. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: If the government were to be in a position to allow Manitobans to be able to take advantage of that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—that would mean that the Province of Manitoba is in line with the changes to the national Employment Insurance program.

Again, this is about ensuring that new parents can take the full 18 months and ensure that there is a job waiting for them at the end of that period.

Now, I understand that they want to debate other things because they've been having issues with some of their former members, but I would call on them to instead use government time to bring this bill forward and allow Manitoba families to take advantage of the new 18-month maternity and paternity leave program.

Madam Speaker: I would ask for everybody's co-operation that when somebody's asking a question and answers are being given, that the House listen carefully to what is being said. I think shouting across at each other isn't going to make anything better and, in fact, it does a disservice to the democracy that we're here to serve, so I would ask for everybody's co-operation in this.

The honourable Leader of the—oh, the honourable Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade.

Mr. Pedersen: As the member should've known when he went to introduce this private member's bill on this, he should've known that this is a piece of legislation that should've gone to the Labour Management Review Committee prior to it being introduced.

The member was—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: —trying to circumvent the system. He's claiming that there's an emergency here. This is still up to—between employers and employees. If they wish to have further leave, this is still very possible to do without legislation, and we will have consultations with—through the Labour Management Review Committee to see where to go with this.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: The government's currently sitting on a report from the LMRC, so I'm not too sure how respectful they are of that process at all. And, again, the government should've known that this change was coming for months and months and months now. This has been a long-ago-announced federal initiative that new moms and new dads in Canada would be able to access 18 months of, you know, parental leave. And yet, this government, all of sudden, after we bring it up, they need time to consult, they've got to go to LMRC. They've got all manner of excuses.

Why don't they just do the right thing and pass the bill so that parents, starting on Sunday, can access—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —18 months of paternity or maternity benefits in this province?

I hear the backbenchers, all of a sudden, raising their voices. I can only assume that they're supportive of this measure, which would allow for parental leave to take place.

So will this government do the right thing, call the bill during government time this afternoon, pass it to committee today and ensure that it receives royal assent before the weekend?

Madam Speaker: The honourable minister—[interjection]—order.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, the perceived emergency that the Leader of the Official Opposition is trying to put forward is really shameful. He's trying to scare parents in that there is not extended leave, when there is, really, extended leave options out there. And this particular legislation deals with federal employees and there is the option for any other private or provincial employees to ask for the same type of leave.

There is no additional money being put forward by the federal leave, and this—so we are quite able to do the same thing here without any legislation.

But it will go to the Labour Management Review Committee where we will get a report back and so that everyone can see what they—where they stand on this. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Federal Parental Leave Changes Request for Support for Bill 211

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): We were disappointed this morning to see the government's feud with a former member in their caucus stand in the way of Manitoba mothers getting the maternity leave they deserve—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, order.

* (14:00)

Ms. Fontaine: There are countless benefits of mothers being with their newborns in their first months. Mothers need enough time to be with their children through this critical development stage.

I honour the women who pushed for—to have the right to have a family and a career, and this government can also, by being on the right side of history, and do their job and protect women's rights to their jobs.

Will the minister put government bills on hold and pass Bill 211 before the weekend deadline?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Madam Speaker, it's shameful that the opposition tries to use scare tactics with new parents.

The issue has gone to the Labour Management Review Committee and it will be for them to decide a recommendation back to government.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Fontaine: The bottom line is that this government can't even be bothered to govern. Instead of making a simple legislative change to give mothers the parental leave they need to be with their children, they're ignoring them. Instead of doing his job, the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade is telling mothers to go and argue with their employers.

Mothers are entitled to this extended leave under the federal legislation—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —but this government is now forcing them, perhaps, to hire a lawyer, to negotiate with their employees—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —and perhaps involve their union, just because the minister doesn't want to pass this bill or do his job.

Will the minister prioritize our bill today?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, it doesn't matter how low the member stoops, it's gone to the Labour Management Review Committee.

Madam Speaker: I shouldn't have to be standing this often. I would ask for co-operation. I just asked for members' co-operation a couple of minutes ago. I would urge that when the Speaker does ask for co-operation of members, that there is enough respect for the Chair in this Legislature that members would heed the caution and that all members could be heard here. We're all elected. Everybody is here representing somebody, and I'm sure those constituents would like to know that democracy is well served in this place.

The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, as you know, women fought hard for the right to have children and keep their jobs and their careers. Unfortunately, this government is stuck in the past. They are refusing to take simple actions necessary to ensure that mothers have job security when they have a baby.

It's time for this government to stop putting barriers in front of working women, which they've done many, many times.

Will they agree to put government business on hold today and pass our bill this afternoon?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, this is an issue for both mothers and fathers and new parents. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: We look forward to the report from the Labour Management Review Committee, and we will look forward to it being released.

Funding for Child-Care Spaces Federal Bilateral Agreement

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Six months after the federal government announced a multilateral funding framework for the province, the Minister of Families has yet to sign the agreement and build one single child-care space.

His Throne Speech is just a plan with another plan with no funding, no spaces, no commitments and some 17,000 families waiting for a spot.

If this minister had sat at the table with the federal government, parents would have \$15 million worth of spots this year alone. Now we're almost a year behind and at least seven and a half million in the hole.

Why hasn't this minister signed the agreement?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Working parents is a priority for this government. We want to make it easier for people to get child care.

As I indicated over the last two days, our plan is with the federal minister. We need to wait for them to sign off on the plan. Once it's signed off, we'll make announcements.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Smith: The government's Throne Speech promised to launch a child-care strategy but announced zero actual spaces. In fact, the only real action we've seen from the minister is a bill that punishes low-income families, low-income parents who use child-care subsidies. Instead of working with parents who are the poorest of the poor and who need affordable child-care spaces the most, this minister could take them to court instead of increasing access to child care or building more spaces.

This minister is putting powers in place that could see the minister garnish parents' wages or send a collection agency after them.

Will this minister stop punishing low-income parents and build spaces?

Mr. Fielding: This government was proud to introduce the child-care standards legislation just yesterday. What it's going to do is make it a little bit easier for child-care centres to operate here in the province of Manitoba.

We know the inconsistencies of the NDP government in terms of their flip-flops. One thing they are consistent is—is in terms of their love for red tape and bureaucratic layers. You could choke a small town here in southwestern Manitoba with all the child-care layers here.

What this new legislation will do, it will provide a little bit of hope for child-care centres and allow them to operate in a more effective way and we're very proud of this legislation, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary.

Mrs. Smith: I wouldn't say taking the power away from parents and garnishing their wages—a step in the right direction or having the authority to take directors out of those positions.

This government's—as minister, has spent six months bickering with the federal government instead of building spots. We have almost 17,000 families waiting for these spaces while he—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —bickers with the federal government.

He's targeting the poorest of the poor and the—putting the powers in place that could see parents taken to court. Shame.

On this side of this House we know that low-income families need help.

Will this minister stop punishing parents and sign the deal today?

Mr. Fielding: The comments are unbelievable considering you need a partnership agreement with the federal government, with a provincial government. That agreement is with the federal government for approval right now. Once the federal government gives its approval—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —we'll take it back through our processes and we'll sign an agreement where there will be monies spent.

The member also talks about child-care initiatives. I was with the member from Wolseley earlier on in the week, at the University of Winnipeg, where we introduced more spaces based on the budget, the amount of money, that we contributed to child-care spaces. It's a fantastic program and I encourage the member to look at some of the initiatives that we're taking on as a government. In terms of what they accomplished when they were in government where—a failed system in terms of a unbalanced approach with child care.

We're going to get it right, Madam Speaker.

Public-Private Partnerships Consultations and Accountability

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, this fall the Pallister government had as one of their priorities a bill to repeal legislation that requires full and public accounting of public-private partnerships in Manitoba, including by the Auditor General.

There's a reason why the Pallister government doesn't want to be publicly accountable for these arrangements for things like schools, because in other provinces, like Nova Scotia, the true costs of the P3s ended up being tens of millions of dollars more expensive. In fact, in Nova Scotia the deals were so bad that the government ended up buying the schools back from the private sector.

So I'd like to ask the minister: Will he restore public accountability for these projects and allow the Auditor General to review these projects before he rushes in?

* (14:10)

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): We're working very constructively across the province here to catch up the deficit of school construction and school repairs that was left to us as a government. We are working with the P3 process to make sure that we can build good schools at low cost on time, something the previous government never seemed to be able to get done.

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

Mr. Wiebe: On August 2nd the Pallister government announced that it was pushing through these private—public-private partnerships for school construction.

An important component, though, of these—of public accountability is stakeholder consultation and public meetings, which—under pressure—the Pallister government agreed that they would actually undertake.

If—the government's business case is due in just a few short weeks and consultations have yet to take place.

I ask the minister: Why is he not being publicly accountable for P3s and will he hold consultations on these projects?

Mr. Wishart: It's certainly our intention to follow the legislation regarding P3s and do consultations as required. We certainly want to work with Manitobans to make sure they get the best value for their taxpayer dollar.

The member keeps going back to examples from 25 years ago, which is Nova Scotia, and passing over many great examples where other provinces built many schools on time and on budget, including our neighbours in Saskatchewan, who are now using 18 new schools.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wiebe: The fact is, Madam Speaker, that this Pallister government has removed the public accountability for these public-private partnerships. Their consultations on bringing P3 school—P3s to school construction haven't happened even though the business case is just a few weeks away. It's now obvious that they're looking to limit the public scrutiny of these arrangements.

But public consultation was promised by this government before the business plan was to be delivered, which is, again, just in a few short weeks.

So when, I'm asking the minister, when will these consultations take place or is this just another empty promise by this government? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: I am again having to stand to address members about the level of noise in here, the level of heckling and sometimes shouting, and I don't really believe that that serves the purpose of what we should be—here. These are all really important issues, and I am going to have to start to identify members by their constituencies if we keep going down that path, because I—and I don't think your constituents are going to be very happy when they hear that you have been called out in the House for poor decorum and heckling.

So I would urge some caution here. It's—I'm having to stand a number of times today. I'm having some difficulty in hearing people and I'm urging some co-operation here so that we can actually accomplish something good for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think Manitobans have heard the former government's plan that left us with a massive deficit of \$250 million in terms of maintenance, and they left us with a situation—we were using record number of portables, over 500 portables in use, from their planning and their work in terms of keeping up with what Manitoba students needed here in Manitoba in terms of spaces.

We're very pleased to offer Manitobans a better alternative and we will certainly do that.

Addiction Treatment Centres Funding Support and Accessibility

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, Kim Longstreet is a mother in Brandon, one of many parents in Manitoba who has been struggling to find support for the family who are in face of a crisis with addictions.

The major road block facing addicts is the lack of support and accessibility to treatment centres in this province. Madam Speaker, this is so severe that people are having to leave the province to find the support that they need.

What is the minister going to do to ensure that those living in our province struggling with addictions can receive treatment and support when they need it without having to leave our province?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Certainly, we know that one of the important steps that we took was to put Suboxone more available so that that front-line treatment would be available. It hadn't been available for many years under the former government, so we moved quickly to ensure the Suboxone was more readily available for those who're struggling with addictions, Madam Speaker.

Also, there's been a significant amount of money—in the hundreds of thousands of dollars—which have been used to sometimes send people out of province. We will be repurposing those funds to provide treatment in the province of Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this government claims to be spending record amounts of funds on health care, yet the latest annual report tells a different story. Numbers don't lie. According to the Manitoba Health Annual Report, this government only used 35 per cent of the budget for primary care and Aboriginal and northern health. This government cut almost \$16 million from community and mental health supports, \$1.5 million from addictions policy and support and almost \$1 million from health emergency management, all in 2016 and '17, yet the cost of administration of all these services have increased.

Why are all of these departments receiving cuts when we know that there is money that was allocated by this government in the account?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, in the last Estimates report that was tabled before this House, it was noted that there was a reduction in support for mental health and addictions treatment as a result of the federal government cancelling one of their programs in Manitoba. I didn't hear the member say anything at that time.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, Manitoba families are facing a crisis due to lack of available addiction treatment centres. It is so extreme that families here in Manitoba have to take matters into their own hands because this government is not listening.

Why would this government choose to cut \$1.4 million from addictions policy and support when our Manitobans are already being forced to leave the province due to lack of resources? How does this government plan to support addictions and mental health here in Manitoba with the extreme cuts that they have made?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I already indicated that there was a reduction in a federal program. I can't speak for Justin Trudeau why he would have cut that program. The member opposite might have a better opportunity to find out from Mr. Trudeau why that program was cut.

I do know in Manitoba we've added Suboxone to—more available so that those who need it can get front-line treatment. We're also going to

be repurposing funding that's been used for out-of-province treatment to provide more treatment in-province, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Labour Market Occupational Forecast Update

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): For this government rebuilding the economy is a top priority and Manitoba is averaging the lowest unemployment rate in Canada so far this fiscal year.

Can the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade update this House on the results of the Labour Market Occupational Forecasts?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I thank my honourable colleague for that great question.

The findings this year support the growing sense of optimism that business owners have about our economy and the growth in the years to come. This report predicts that more than 23,000 workers will join the labour force each year between 2017 and 2023 and, in addition, nearly 54,000 new jobs are expected to be created between 2017 and 2023.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to make—to do the work necessary to make Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada.

* (14:20)

Manitoba Hydro Rate Increase Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): On Monday, Manitoba Hydro will ask the Public Utilities Board for a 7.9 per cent increase this year and every year until 2024. That's potentially hundreds of dollars more a year in utility costs for the average family.

Now, this government's hand-picked Hydro board couldn't prove to the Public Utilities Board that the 7.9 per cent rate increase was justified in August, but they're going to go and try again.

Why does this government disagree with the Public Utilities Board?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Crown Services): I do appreciate the question. I'm surprised that the member opposite would have nerve to ask that question, though, because we know why Manitoba Hydro has to ask for rate increases. It's because of the reckless political decisions that were made by that government that left Manitoba Hydro in such financial distress.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Lindsey: Clearly, the Public Utilities Board didn't agree with that.

Drastic and unnecessary rate increases at Manitoba Hydro will disproportionately hurt northern Manitobans. Northern Manitobans pay among the highest bills in the province because of weather, lack of access to affordable alternatives. Large hydro rate increases will have devastating effects on northern communities that are already reeling.

Will this government stop the hydro rate hikes and keep energy affordable in the North?

Mr. Cullen: I do appreciate the question.

What the previous government should've done was stop in their tracks and actually review the capital investment they were going to make.

So we're building a \$9-billion—and counting—dam in northern Manitoba without a market for it. Why would any government do that?

They also went on and built a \$5-billion bipole line, and, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day Manitoba Hydro will face a \$25-billion capital debt. Somebody has to pay for it.

These folks got us into this mess; now we have to clean up the mess they left us with.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Lindsey: Business and industry will be watching these rate hearings quite closely. They've said that drastic rate increases will hurt their bottom lines and discourage new investments by companies in Manitoba, these businesses that employ tens of thousands of Manitobas.

If major companies pull up stakes due to rate hikes, the result will be more job losses for communities and lost revenue for Hydro. The impact on ratepayers and business is serious.

Will this government stop its plan for massive hydro rate increases?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we know the previous government is not—was never concerned about the debt they were growing: growing the debt on the government, growing the debt of Manitoba Hydro.

Madam Speaker, debt has to be serviced. Can you imagine the debt-servicing cost on \$25 billion of debt that was incurred by the previous government? That's a huge amount of money that Manitoba taxpayers, Manitoba ratepayers, will have to cover because of the reckless decisions made by the previous government.

Bureau de l'éducation française Assistant Deputy Minister Position

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Merci beaucoup, Madame la présidente. Aucune consultation, aucune avis, aucune excuse. Ça paraît que les consultations avec les représentants de la communauté franco-manitobaine, même celles sont obligées par loi, ne sont pas une priorité pour le Premier ministre du Manitoba (M. Pallister).

Ça paraît que les ministres de ce gouvernement ne respectent pas l'esprit ni la lettre de la Loi 5. Mais on voit que c'est bel et bien pas le cas ici.

Après les compressions pour le Centre Flavie-Laurent cet été, après les compressions pour les centres pour les aînés, on apprend des nouvelles compressions pour l'éducation française ici au Manitoba. La communauté se rassemble. Une lettre signée par 13 anciens présidents et directeurs-généraux de la Société franco-manitobaine a fait demander de rétablir le poste supprimé.

Est-ce que le premier ministre va renverser sa décision de supprimer le poste du directeur—du sous-ministre adjoint immédiatement?

Translation

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. No consultation, no notice, no apology. It appears that consultation with the representatives of the Franco-Manitoban community is not a priority for Manitoba's Premier (Mr. Pallister), even where it is required by law.

It appears that the ministers of this government do not respect either the spirit or the letter of Bill 5. We see that it is in fact not the case here.

Following the budget cuts for Centre Flavie-Laurent this summer, and the cuts for seniors' centres, we learn of new cuts for French education here in Manitoba. The community is gathering. A letter signed by 13 former heads of the Société franco-manitobaine has asked that the position cut be restored.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) reverse his decision to cut the director–assistant deputy minister position immediately?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Certainly we respect Franco-Manitoban Society and Franco-Manitobans in Manitoba. That's why we have increased funding because of increased demand for French immersion and full French courses across the province of Manitoba.

We're pleased to work with not only the society, but all parts of the French culture in Manitoba, especially the school division, to make sure that we have additional services available to them. And we are pleased to work with them to expand services beyond the K-to-12 system and are consulting with them on that process.

Livestock and Farm Buildings Repeal of Fire Prevention Code

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): The Manitoba Farm Building Code ensured that new farm buildings had increased fire protection for livestock and for property. It was to be phased in so that within a generation farm property would be protected, farm animals would be protected, farmers themselves would be protected, and yet earlier this spring the code was repealed.

Now, we've learned that 3,500 animals perished at a fire in New Bothwell, another 7,500 animals died in a blaze in Steinbach.

So I have to ask the minister: Why in heaven's name would he repeal the Farm Building Code?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Loss of any animal is of concern to all of us. In fact, over the last number of years we've seen no improvements to those facilities because the regulations were brought forward by the previous government. In fact, there was no barns built for close to 15 years under this previous government.

As a result of that, we'll see some new barns being built and the regulations have been modernized to make sure that those safety codes are in place, to make sure that every producer has the building permits in place to make sure that its sustainable, and we'll move forward with new barns being built within the province.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Yes, Madam Speaker, I—on a point of order.

This morning the—some members of the opposition blocked private members' bills dealing with conflict of interest and organ donation, and allowed us not to debate seven bills, six of which happen to come from the member from Assiniboia.

I'd just like to give this opportunity for the House leader of the opposition to apologize.

Madam Speaker: I would point out to the member that a point of order has to indicate a breach of a rule or a practice of the House, and what the member was bringing forward was certainly not one of those that I could recognize.

So I would indicate that the member does not have a point of order.

PETITIONS

Access to Health Care

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasingly-increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

This petition is signed by Natasha Ross, Alyssa Momen, Sheri MacIntyre, and many other Manitobans.

* (14:30)

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read, they are deemed to be received by the House.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more, are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

First, to urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care,

And second, to urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public

health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

This petition is signed by Megan McKenzie, Herman Dyck, Patricia Tripp and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more, are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more, are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

This petition was signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Rural EMS Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition in the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government announced a plan to close 18 EMS stations in Manitoba.

The recommendation for the closures was based on a report titled Manitoba EMS System Report issued in March 2013 that used data from 2011 that is no longer relevant.

The standard of care for EMS services in Manitoba is a 30-minute response time for 90 per cent of the population, 90 per cent of the time.

The information entitled information pack for rural municipalities stated in 2012 that the 30-minute standard was reached 95.81 per cent of the time and 95.52 per cent in 2015-2016.

The statistics show that by moving to the proposed systems Manitoba will be receiving worse care.

The proposed plan includes the closure of the Grandview EMS station and the building of two new stand-alone EMS stations in Cowan and Gilbert Plains, with no provision of a cost estimate.

There is a vacant Manitoba Hydro building in Grandview that was previously used to store large equipment which could allow for the deployment of ambulances.

In addition to the 39-bed personal-care home in Grandview, the hospital is fully staffed with 18 beds, three full-time doctors, two nurse practitioners and a full complement of support staff, including 24-hour diagnostic services.

* (14:40)

The Grandview EMS station employs four full-time primary-care or intermediate-care paramedics who routinely provide community education, primary- and/or intermediate-care support to emergency medical responders and other paramedicine services to assist the staff of Grandview hospital.

The Grandview EMS services 1,500 people within the municipal boundary, Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation, the southern half of the Duck Mountain Provincial Park and other outlying areas, including the communities of Gilbert Plains and Ashville.

The Grandview ambulance responded to 680 calls in 2014, 571 calls in 2015 and 673 calls in 2016.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living to provide an additional 12 primary-care or intermediate-care paramedics to facilitate 24-7 coverage at the Grandview ambulance station.

To urge the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living to provide a second ambulance vehicle at the Grandview station to allow for deployment to designated geo-positions.

To urge that the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living make use of the vacant Manitoba Hydro building as a garage for the two ambulance vehicles.

To urge that the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living install a computer-based system in the ambulance vehicles to facilitate geo-positioning and dynamic and flexible deployment to any area covered in the proposed plan in this region.

Signed by Walter *[phonetic]* Kuzyk, G.D. Elliott, Sandra Elliott and many others.

Access to Health Care

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health service—health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units and urgent-care centres and more, are occurring across this province.

These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these direct—these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Signed by Brenda Sabodiern *[phonetic]*, Mary-Ann Victoria *[phonetic]*, Shelley Lamothe and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more, are coming across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for a public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

And this petition has been signed by Marcel Wanlin, Wendy Rolfe, Debbie Jones and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba health facilities.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units and an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Signed by Darian Smith, Bill Pritchett and Justin Ross and many, many more Manitobans.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

* (14:50)

The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Signed by Colette Carriere, Michele Siemens, Michely Berger and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more, are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care and,

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

GRIEVANCES

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I rise today to raise a major grievance. As is becoming, or is, apparent, the government has continued to operate in an unconstitutional manner. Every member of a legislative assembly or parliament in the Commonwealth has the ability to reflect their constituents and that political parties are actually not

recognized in the pure sense of the word in the Chamber.

In fact, I'd just like to quote the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson) and say—and it says this: Our position is that the judgment ought to be entered, and the provisions with respect to floor crossing ought to be struck down as unconstitutional.

Madam Speaker, I agree. That was—this is a statement made, and I will table it, by the member from Tuxedo and the Deputy Premier (Mrs. Stefanson). And it was, I understand, made several times in that time frame.

The reason why this is important is the government, rather than using legislative time and just recognizing that there isn't any standing for this provision in the Manitoba legislative act, they could just simply agree with the—with my court application and be done with it. And that would be the right thing to do. It's the constitutional thing to do and it would save a lot of time and money, but the government has not done that, even though the Attorney General has said it's unconstitutional and everyone agrees it's unconstitutional.

Madam Speaker, we have to act within the constitution. There are no—it is—even this Chamber cannot take away the constitutional rights of the people who are in the Chamber or the people who elect the people in the Chamber, and that is exactly what exists in Manitoba. You can't—if something is unconstitutional, it's unconstitutional. Nothing can change that. And of all the places in Manitoba, this place should fall within the constitution and take the constitution seriously, and everybody knows—everybody knows—that section 52.3.1 of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly Act is unconstitutional.

Madam Speaker, as an independent member, the rights and abilities, in many ways, are diminished dramatically, and we just need to look at question period. It's more likely that a member of the gallery is to ask a question in question period than myself. We had—and independents aren't even treated equally amongst independents. We have independents who ask three questions a day who happen to be associated with the Liberal Party, and we have me, who doesn't ask any questions or the member from The Maples, who gets a question in a blue moon. And there's funding issues and raising money and staffing, but that—all that aside, our system depends on the ability of MLAs to represent their constituents

and constituents to have a reasonable expectation that MLAs will represent them. By the government not simply agreeing with the court application, it further degrades the constitutional principles and is not consistent with our parliamentary tradition.

So, in this—Madam Speaker, since I only have a few minutes left I am going to quickly table some documents. The first document I'm tabling is Queen's Bench, The Legislative Assembly Act. This is the—in regard to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms between Steven John Fletcher and the government of Manitoba: this is an affidavit. The next document is regarding Manitoba legislative act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Steven John Fletcher versus the government of Manitoba, notice of application; the Queen's Bench, Steven John Fletcher and the government of Manitoba, application brief.

*(15:00)

I'm going to submit some learned articles as well. This one is called modest steps forward—reform—a review of post-Emerson initiatives to curtail floor crossing. I have a series of newspaper articles that I would like to table, as well. This one is from the Winnipeg Free Press: Down but not out, MLA fighting for rule change. I have a very good editorial by the—from The Globe and Mail. It says it shouldn't be against the law to change parties, and they are right. The Globe and Mail got it right. Okay. Let's go to the next. This is from Maclean's magazine and it discusses why it is necessary for politicians to have the freedom of association and expression.

The next article talks more about floor crossings. From The Canadian Press: Fletcher asks court to strike down ban on floor crossing. Well, it's more than floor—like, that's just a colloquial term, Madam Speaker. I'm asking for the legislative act of Manitoba to be constitutional. And it goes—and the implications are far deeper than the simple colloquial term.

I am tabling the fact that the government had an opportunity to make this all go away, and in spite of the minister's public comments, the government decided to fight the court application two days before this—or the previous session started, which led to the December 18th, 2017 date for a court hearing. And this is not like it's coming out of the blue. I'm introducing an article that speaks to the fact that this has been on the table since early July. This is an article from The Canadian Press, July 4th, 2017.

I'm also providing an opinion from Gange Collins Holloway, Barristers and Solicitors on the

merits of what I am trying to do here and why the government is wrong in its position and how—and why the legislation must pass.

I'm also going to table to the Chamber changes in parliamentary affiliation. This is a document made—developed by the Library of Parliament in October 2016.

Madam Speaker, I know the member from Tuxedo. She's a good person—

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

I would just point out to the member and remind him that it is a breach of our rules to mention a person's name in the Legislature, even if they're reading off a document. And the member read off a number of his documents where his name was actually on the documents, and he read the name of himself. And that is disallowed by the rules. So just a reminder for members.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): First of all, Madam Speaker, on House business.

Madam Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Cullen: Yes. I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, December 4th, 2017 at 6 p.m. to consider the following report: the Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (ALL Aboard) for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, December 4th, 2017 at 6 p.m. to consider the following report: Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (ALL Aboard) for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader. *[interjection]* Pardon me?

An Honourable Member: Sorry, Madam Speaker, you were cutting out there.

Madam Speaker: Pardon me?

An Honourable Member: You were cutting out through the mic system.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that it will be available in Hansard as to the announcement of a meeting on December 4th at 6:00 on the ALL Aboard strategy, and it would be an annual report.

So, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum). The title of the resolution is Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview. The title of the resolution is Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill 4 and Bill 9?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second readings of Bill 4 and Bill 9 this afternoon.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 4—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Member Changing Parties)

Madam Speaker: So second reading of Bill 4, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Member Changing Parties).

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 4, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Member Changing Parties); Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative (adhésion à un autre parti), be

now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the freedom of a member of the Legislative Assembly to caucus with any party that wishes to have him or her as a member is a time-honoured tradition in our Westminster parliamentary democracy.

The previous NDP government undermined this tradition with legislation that was drafted in response to political news of the day.

Rather than focus on issues that matter to Manitoba taxpayers, Madam Speaker, the previous NDP government decided to implement a floor-crossing ban in 2006 in an attempt to capitalize on some controversial—some controversies that were taking place in the federal parliament.

Madam Speaker, our Progressive Conservative team knows that voters will judge each member of this House by what we do for our constituents and for our communities rather than for our respective political parties. Under Bill 4, the verdict we will all receive from the taxpayers of this province will be rendered in the next election. And that is how our system was meant to be and to work.

Madam Speaker, the floor-crossing ban is an unparliamentary and unworkable policy that was only passed because of the partisan political calculations of the previous NDP government. Ending this policy is something that we must do out of principle so that we can restore parliamentary traditions to this House while saving taxpayers thousands in potential legal expenses defending the floor-crossing ban which should never have been introduced in the first place.

We look forward, Madam Speaker, to the swift passage of this bill. Further delay of this bill could cost taxpayers thousands of dollars in unnecessary legal fees. We hope that members opposite respect taxpayers, and we look forward to them supporting the speedy passage of this bill.

Madam Speaker, this will allow us to get on with our robust legislative agenda that will help fix our finances, repair our services and rebuild our economy. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed

to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties, subsequent questions asked by each independent member, remaining questions asked by any opposition members, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I would like to ask the minister how her government plans on ensuring that voters' wishes are respected in this new bill in respect of who they actually voted for in the provincial 2016 election

* (15:10)

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for the question.

And we believe that each member of this House will be judged by his or her constituents at the next election based on the results they deliver for their constituencies, Madam Speaker. That is how our system is intended to work. The changes this—that this legislation will make will respect and honour those traditions.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Can the minister inform the House how will the integrity of government be respected if members can come and go from political parties as they please?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly are elected by their constituents in their various constituencies. We respect and honour that tradition, and we know that in the subsequent elections the voters will have that opportunity to decide whether or not the particular MLA has been doing their job, and we respect and honour those traditions as part of our Westminster parliamentary tradition.

Ms. Fontaine: How does the member's government plan on maintaining the integrity of the democratic process if this bill is actually passed and is in contravention of those individuals who cast their ballots for particular parties in the last 2016 election?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member again for that question.

We believe that the floor-crossing ban is unparliamentary. It goes against again the

Westminster parliamentary traditions that we uphold in our country, and we believe that, again, the constituents will have the opportunity to either vote a member back in or not vote them back in based on those traditions, and we respect the constituents and indeed all Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Allum: You know, I'm having a little bit of difficulty following the minister's answers, primarily because this bill has appeared out of almost nowhere. I don't remember her knocking on doors asking anyone if this is something she was—they would support in her election campaign. I don't remember her talking about it at any other point in our—my time in the House, and so it seems like there's a bit of a flip-flop going on here.

So how—will the government decide in a year's time that they once again do not support floor crossing and then we'll have to go through this building again?

Mrs. Stefanson: I don't know where to begin with that, Madam Speaker. You know, the members opposite went door to door in the election, knocked on those doors. They talked to Manitobans, they promised not to raise taxes and they made the choice without consulting with Manitobans to increase the PST. So those are the members in this Chamber that are not respecting consultation processes with constituents.

That is not the approach that we take on this side of the House, Madam Speaker. We had a very robust prebudget consultation where we reached out to more than 60,000 Manitobans. That's our approach as opposed to members opposite who don't like to consult with Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: We know, everybody in this House knows, that we do already have a low percentage of voters, not only here in Manitoba but certainly across Canada, and part of that is that there is a disconnect often in respect of people—voters seeing themselves reflected in here and having faith in this democratic process.

So how—is it the government's plan with this bill to actually deter people—Manitobans from voting in the next 2020 election?

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, I will mention that each member will be judged based on the results that they produce for their constituents in the next election. That's how our system works, that's the way it should be and that's the way it's meant to be.

The reason we're bringing this forward today is because this is an important issue in Manitobans. This is an unparliamentary procedure that was introduced by the previous NDP government back in 2006. We believe that this particular floor-crossing ban should be repealed. It's the right thing to do. It will also, if passed today and through our system, be able to save thousands of taxpayer dollars.

So I hope the members opposite will get on board and ensure that we do the right thing for the taxpayers of our province.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): The minister says this is an important issue. I would imagine it probably is. I know every time we talk about health care in this House, we talk about the cuts that are being undertaken in all areas of health care. I see backbenchers on the opposite side squirming in their seats. So I would imagine backbenchers from her party are looking to jump ship. I'm wondering if she could provide a list of members that she anticipates will join our side once this bill is rammed through by this government?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I know that members opposite, they've had some challenges within their own caucus. We know that they're somewhat divided within their caucus and maybe they have a fear of this legislation actually passing for fear that they may lose some of their caucus members.

But we'd—do believe, Madam Speaker, that this is the right thing to do. This is respecting our parliamentary traditions and we believe the floor-crossing ban, as it did stand before, was unparliamentary, and we ask members opposite to get on board.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): This bill consists of four words, and I wonder, after an appropriate period of time, if the minister would ask for unanimous consent to move the clock forward—or not the clock forward, but to get the bill out of the way. Failing that, I wonder if the minister would simply consider agreeing with my court application, so we can move on and get rid of this bill one way or the other—or this legislation.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm not going to discuss the specifics of a case that's before our courts, Madam Speaker, but what I will say is that if the member

opposite wants to ask for that kind of leave, he has the ability to do so in this House. That's his prerogative as an MLA in this Chamber.

We respect the parliamentary traditions within this Chamber and we know that we should be passing this bill. So we hope that all members of this House will do the right thing for the sake of the taxpayers of our province and pass this bill.

Mr. Allum: I find it hard to understand how the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson) thinks this is going to save money unless she doesn't want to have a by-election. I suppose that's what she's saying. That's how it'll save money. Well, I can advise her that a dictatorship, then, would be really cheap, if that's the way that she wants to go.

But she—could she tell this—maybe that's the whole what they're after here. I can't speak to that. But can she tell us, how does the removal of the ban on floor-crossing improve the representation of constituencies if voters can now see an MLA they voted in under certain promises completely change sides to a new party?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the floor-crossing ban is unparliamentary which is why we are repealing it today.

Madam Speaker, continuing to defend this floor-crossing ban in court would cost Manitoba taxpayers thousands of dollars. That's why by appealing this legislation, we think it's the right thing to do. It's unparliamentary legislation. We want to bring back the traditions of the Westminster parliamentary system in this Chamber and that's why we're encouraging members opposite to support us today.

Ms. Fontaine: Is the minister concerned with public approval of this bill considering the public outcry after federal instances of floor crossing that we've seen in times past?

* (15:20)

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the member for the question.

And I think what members of the public and Manitobans respect is our parliamentary system and our parliamentary traditions. And I think that this floor-crossing ban is unparliamentary. It's why we're bringing it forward to repeal this particular section of this area, and we hope that members opposite will support us. We hope that they will—they do the right

thing for taxpayers and ensure that we do the right thing for Manitobans.

Mr. Fletcher: There's a—at present, there's a battery—probably a entire army of government lawyers preparing a case against what we all want, which is to return to the principles that the Attorney General has stated. A way to avoid taxpayer expense is simply to agree with the application to the courts, and we all move on.

Will the government simply agree to the court application?

Mrs. Stefanson: The member opposite knows it would be inappropriate for me to comment on a case that's before our courts right now, but what I will say is that there is an opportunity for us right now as members of this Manitoba Legislature to pass this bill forward today to ensure its speedy passage to help alleviate the situation.

This is an unparliamentary situation, it's—on the floor-crossing ban, and we want to ensure that we restore our parliamentary traditions in this Chamber.

Mr. Allum: I'm not sure about the Attorney General's answer there, but there you go. I mean, if she had problems with the member from Assiniboia in her caucus, the right thing, of course, would—for all of them to try to work it out. And instead they just gave him the boot.

But this is an important question because it goes kind of to the heart of it, but does the minister believe it is right for sitting governments to use Cabinet positions to entice members to cross the floor? Does she think that that's a good idea?

Mrs. Stefanson: You know, the member opposite—I know that they're having challenges within their caucus. I know that there's many different fragmented caucuses within their own caucus, Madam Speaker. We know that they probably don't want to support this piece of legislation for fear that they may lose some of their own members to another party.

We're not concerned about that. What we're concerned about is doing the right thing for Manitoba taxpayers. That's why we're encouraging all members of this House to support this piece of legislation today.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Does not the minister think that it will advance democracy and reduce dictatorship by the leaders and also reduce the discrimination of one group against the other? I think

it will give more flexibility. What the minister think about that?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for that question.

Of course, we have respect for all Manitobans. We have respect for all the MLAs in this House. That's why we want, and that's why we're bringing forward, this legislation today.

This floor-crossing ban is unparliamentary. It is not within the tradition of a Westminster parliamentary democracy, Madam Speaker. Manitobans elected us by respecting our parliamentary traditions, and that's what we want to restore. That's exactly what we're doing through this legislation. So we hope that all members of this Chamber will support this and pass this through today.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, our position—this is from another member, the member from Tuxedo: our position is that the judgment ought to be entered and provisions with respect of floor crossing should be struck down as unconstitutional. Our government has already stated our view that the legislation is unconstitutional.

And twice in a written statement, the government has said it's unconstitutional.

Will the government simply take the fastest, most cost-effective and efficient path and agree with my court application—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank the member for the question.

Again, I'm not going to discuss specifics of a case, but what I will say, Madam Speaker, is that we do know that this floor-crossing ban is unparliamentary. It's also going to cost taxpayers thousands of dollars in potential legal fees. So what we want to do is ensure that we do what's in the right and the best interest for Manitoba taxpayers.

We have respect for our parliamentary traditions, Madam Speaker. Let's do the right thing today and pass this bill through to committee.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The time for question—this question period has ended. The floor is open for debate.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I think it's fitting in discussing a bill in respect of floor crossing

and—to put on the record how proud I am to have been elected the NDP MLA for St. Johns.

I think it's really important to understand that when we went—when all of us went door to door during the 2016 election, we went door to door under a particular political banner. And that was what—when we went to go make our pitches and introduce ourselves and get to know different Manitoba families no matter where we were across Manitoba, including their children and their pets—and I'm sure most of us in the House were invited in, you know, offered tea and meal and treats. I'm sure all of us had those experiences. It was an act of creating family, as I often talk about, when people invite you into their home and you come there with your particular party's 'camplaign' platform, your particular party's ideology, your particular party's spirit the way it's manifested. And that is what those particular Manitobans that went, that took the time out of their day—their busy days—that took the time to go and vote for you. That was who they voted for.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So I think it's important to recognize and to have it as a part of the official record that I recognize that: that as the MLA for St. Johns I recognize how important it is to honour and acknowledge each of those St. Johns voters who voted for me. And they voted for me because I am a member of the NDP. I am a member of a party that understands the need to fight for families, to fight for social justice, to fight for the environment and to do our public service in respect of those.

And I—so I think that, you know, it is—it's not right when we use the language that this is unparliamentary to have this piece of legislation on the records. In fact, it actually builds and respects Manitoba voters. That's who they voted for.

And, you know, I think it's really important to also put on the record that, as my member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) just noted only a couple of minutes ago, this didn't come up anywhere. I don't remember this, unless I missed it. Maybe I missed it at some of the community debates or in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) platform—although there wasn't really much that was disseminated during the election on what his platform was and what was put on the record—certainly, he's deviated from that.

So, I mean, I don't remember this coming up at all. And so, then, what is the genesis for bill—this new bill, Bill 4, that the government is so anxious to

receive royal assent? And why is that? Well, that is because the members opposite can't get along with certain members in their caucus or a particular member in their caucus. Let me be fair, let me correct that: a particular member of their caucus. I—and, I mean, I'm not sure—I mean, I can't imagine what the reasons for that would be.

* (15:30)

It will be interesting to find out what some of the reasons why that member was booted out of caucus. Again, I mean, by all accounts I can't even imagine why there would be some issues in the caucus with particular members of their caucus, but that is why, you know, the previous bill, Bill 40, and now Bill 4, the government's so anxious to get passed because they want to kind of be done with whatever and they want to just kind of, you know, wipe their hands and move on.

And so I think it's kind of disingenuous when the minister sits up here and says that this is unparliamentary and we're, you know, all of these, you know, justifying reasons for this bill when, really, let's be honest here, and let's be candid, it really is just to do away with a member that they're having particular issues with.

But the bottom line is is that the voters of Tuxedo voted for a PC Conservative, and it just happened to be that particular member. I don't know why the members opposite are clapping. They kicked him out, and now they're trying to—they're trying to put a bill, get royal assent on a bill so that member, potentially, will join another party. Like, I don't understand—I don't understand.

And I know that the minister earlier, and let me just put this on the record here, that the minister earlier stated that there were members on this side of the House that want to go and join other parties in this House. Certainly that's not the case. Like, none of us on this side of the House are going to be joining that sinking ship over there because, I mean, let's be perfectly blunt here, we—and we've said it, there's several of us on this side of the House that have said it, this is a one-term—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —government. It's an absolute one-term government and none of us will be jumping ship to join that party, I can certainly tell you. And that's good, because we'll all still be MLAs in 2020 serving Manitobans and serving the Manitoba voters who voted for us.

So, again, I think that it's important to realize that, again, I know—I'm not sure if the members opposite get this. I mean, I would hope that they would, but there—you know, the ballot—our democratic process that, in fact, countries around the world would love to be able to have our democratic process. There are people that actually lose their lives to be able to participate in what we have here and that is a sacred trust. It's a belief and a trust in our democratic process that who we cast our ballot for is the person that we understand is more in line with our ideology and our ways of thinking, and so to imagine that all of a sudden we're going to do away with that trust because we're going to do away with the legislation that says you cannot cross the floor just because you cannot get along with a member of your caucus, and a member of your caucus causes you problems with some of the bills that you're trying to ram down the throats of Manitoba voters.

Like, I think the members opposite have to understand it is a sacred trust, and they are breaking that trust and they are disrespecting the voters of Tuxedo. And I know that they laugh—I know that they laugh; it's okay. They laugh at all of these real serious things. They seem to think that this is a joke. They seem to think that their egregious health cuts are a joke. They seem to think that, you know, the job losses in the health-care system is a joke, so, I mean, you know, I don't know why I would be surprised that they would see that this is—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —a joke.

So, you know, again, I think, you know, this legislation is nothing more than the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) attempt to end a really embarrassing moment in this House in respect of his relationship with a particular member and a potential embarrassing court challenge. And, certainly, I think that there's a lot—it's disappointing that this government is more eager to introduce their legislation to end this feud than acting accordingly and introducing legislation that ensures Manitoba is in line with the federal government's changes to paternal leave.

Like, the government is more concerned with doing away with the member for Tuxedo than actually dealing with simple legislative changes, dealing with paternity leave. So, I mean, it really

does highlight where the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) concerns are and where the Premier's priorities are.

So I think that, you know, we saw today that, I don't know, maybe, one of the examples of the way the member for Tuxedo operated in their caucus. I don't know—oh.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Fontaine: Assiniboia.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Fontaine: Deputy Speaker, please, please let me—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Fontaine: Oh, my God, please let me officially—oh, geez.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order of the honourable member for Assiniboia.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I just want to raise a point of order. I would like to thank the NDP House leader for the compliment, both ways. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Anyone else on the point of order?

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Acting Government House Leader): That is not a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is—I just want to let the House know that it is not a point of order, but I'll have the honourable member for St. Johns continue with her speech.

* * *

Ms. Fontaine: Let me just put on the record how—and let me officially apologize to the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). I don't know—I think I was thinking about her in respect of being the minister and got confused. Certainly, I wouldn't want to put that on the official record that there were issues with the member for Tuxedo. Let me correct that, please, that the issues seem to be with the member from Assiniboia in respect of this bill—

An Honourable Member: On a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

Mr. Fletcher: If the member is apologizing to one, she should apologize to all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The deputy government House leader, on the same point of order?

Mr. Micklefield: It's not a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just want to call that it's not a point of order, but we'll continue with the speech on—from the member for St. Johns and we'll get her to continue.

* * *

Ms. Fontaine: Sorry for that. Let's get focused here. So I apologize for that again. So—and specifically to the member for Tuxedo I apologize.

So I do want to just reflect on a little bit of this morning and the fact that the member for Assiniboia wouldn't grant leave on a bill to discuss paternity leave in this province which, you know, I think is perhaps a little bit illustrative of maybe some of the issues that the government caucus had in dealing with the member for Assiniboia.

But, certainly, I don't think that it warrants, then, a bill that would get, you know, put in place legislation that folks can—

An Honourable Member: On a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

Mr. Fletcher: I wish the House leader would focus on the issue at hand, and I would also point out that her and her group denied leave on important issues such as organ donation and conflict of interest reform. So please—I hope the member can please get through this without making so many mistakes.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, for the member from Assiniboia, it is not necessarily a point of order, what he's referred to. So we'll continue with the debate, and I'll have the member for St. Johns to continue.

* * *

*(15:40)

Ms. Fontaine: Well, as everybody in this House knows, there's nothing more that I love than being mansplained how to do my job, particularly by a member that got kicked out of his own caucus, and now that his own caucus, his own brothers and

sisters, are so intent on making sure that he never comes back to that side of the House. So I don't need to be told how to do my job as an MLA in this House. *[interjection]*

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member for Assiniboia, on a same—on a point of order.

Mr. Fletcher: On a matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On a matter of privilege.

The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a matter of privilege.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): In this place, we—there is a level of decorum. We have had situations where people have apologized and withdrawn for the record for much less than what that member just said. I take offence to that reference, and it is completely inappropriate. And I don't care what gender you are—male, female, trans, whatever—you can't get away with that kind of language in this place. I demand an apology.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on the same matter of privilege.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Let me just put this on the record. I will not apologize to the member for Assiniboia for dictating to me, as a woman, how I execute my duties and what I say in this House as an MLA. I will never apologize for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to advise the House that we need a moment to consult.

I want to thank the—both the member for Assiniboia and the member for St. Johns on that point of privilege, but I would—I want to read something here that the—on the matter of the privilege raised by the honourable member for Assiniboia, I would like to inform the House that Joseph Maingot advised, on page 254, on the second edition of the Parliamentary Privilege in Canada, that language that 'impunges' the 'integrity' of the members would be unparliamentary and a breach of order contrary to the standard orders not—but not be breach of privilege.

Therefore, the honourable member does not have a prima facie matter of privilege.

SECOND READINGS

(Continued)

Bill 4—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Member Changing Parties)

(Continued)

Debate

(Continued)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So we'll continue with the honourable member—the honourable member for Assiniboia.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Then I have a point of order, then.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On a point of order, the honourable member for Assiniboia.

Mr. Fletcher: On a point of order, we've had a member use a very serious term with very serious implications. When this has happened before, the member from River Heights apologized for any misinterpretation. But this is very clear. It's—and it's against the rules in—I don't have the rules in front of me, but it's definitely against the decorum of this place.

Now, the Speaker's trying to improve the decorum in this place, and then we have that kind of action. I mean, it just makes a mockery of the whole system, and you can't just go around defaming people.

Please, Mr. Speaker, like, for the—goodness' sakes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. I want to thank the member for—the member from Assiniboia for the point of order. We will take this under advisement. We'll consult and—with Hansard, and we'll get back to the member once we—we'll bring a ruling back to the member once we investigate it.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So to get on to the business of the day here. So I think again it's also important to put on the record that the Conservative Party supported the original legislation to ban floor crossing when it was passed back in 2006. So, again, it does go back to my material point in respect of what my colleague here brought forward that we—nowhere did any of us hear that the government would be pursuing this piece of legislation, and again it is predicated upon, you know, one member of their

caucus not being able to get along and them wanting to just do away with this and allow the member to move on to a different party, certainly not our party, of course.

But I do want to just say as well is that their former leader, Hugh McFadyen, said during the bill's debate, and I quote, we support any good idea that comes before the House, regardless of whether we are in government or in opposition. So that is from their former leader, Hugh McFadyen, who, I think, was, you know, kind of seeing into the future that perhaps this government would renege on something that they supported back in 2006, and a mere, you know, 11 years later now that they're in government, they want to get rid of it.

And, you know, again let's situate the context of the floor-crossing ban. It was put in place in respect of voter outrage, public outrage, after the former Prime Minister Stephen Harper convinced Liberal MP David Emerson to cross the floor and become a member of the Cabinet immediately after being elected. I mean, if there's certainly a case that highlights disrespect to the voters, I think that it would be Mr. Emerson floor-crossing the floor right after an election.

And again I spoke earlier about the trust that voters put in us when we go door to door and we spend time with them and we give them their platform and we introduce them to ourselves and what we believe in, it's certainly disrespectful and certainly contravenes our democratic process.

And, I mean, who could forget when—I don't think any of us could forget when Belinda Stronach decided to cross the floor, and even myself, if you know me, you know that I'm—I watch the news every—I'm addicted to the news—and even me, like, when you saw Peter MacKay, and he was so sad, and he was sitting there in the field with his little dog and his little pitchfork or hoe, whatever he had there, it actually broke my heart, I think.

I think women across the country felt like they wanted to nurse his broken heart because Belinda Stronach decided to cross the floor. I mean, even he was certainly surprised that she crossed and didn't even tell him. But I think that is indicative of, you know, she didn't last very long, unfortunately, and, you know, I—we could suggest that that's perhaps because it is disrespectful to the voters.

And so I, you know, I think for us on this side it is really trying to honour the votes that people cast for us, and that we should honour those votes. You

know, and it's important to note, that actually the last Manitoba member to cross the floor was actually in 1986, and so since 1986 certainly we have been ensuring that Manitobans' votes are honoured and respected here.

And then, you know, I think that we have to kind of look at this bill in concert of some other bills that the government has recently passed, and certainly Bill 27, The Elections Amendment Act, is one of them, which I would suggest to you—and actually a lot of social development agencies that work with the most marginalized and vulnerable would suggest—is, you know, an attack on democratic processes for those most vulnerable in ensuring—in legislating more strict or restrictive IDs in casting your votes. So, certainly, it's voter registration.

* (15:50)

So I'm not sure what the members opposite or the government has against Manitoba voters, but they certainly are putting a lot of legislation that impacts directly on Manitoba voters. And, you know, they're not doing enumeration anymore, door-to-door enumeration, and so, you know, I think that we're—slowly, this government is moving to a system where voters are going to have less access and certainly won't even have a say in who they voted for. Like, if this government decides that it can't get along with another member and kicks that member out of their caucus, but has opened the door for them to cross the floor, you know, Manitoba voters are out again in respect of somebody that best suits their needs. And, certainly, we know that the next election in 2020, most Manitobans will be voting for the NDP, certainly after what the government has been doing.

So, again, I did start by saying that I am very proud to be elected as an NDP MLA for St. Johns. I certainly won't be crossing the floor anytime soon to any of the parties in this House and certainly not the government. I'm proud to belong to a party that stands up for Manitoba families and is, in this House, every day, fighting against and highlighting, really, these egregious cuts and, really, the legislation, really egregious legislation in the last 18 months, 19 months, what is it, 18 months that they've been—*[interjection]* Yes, it seems so, so long. But the egregious legislation that this government has brought forward, and Bill 4 is no different. It is disrespecting the voters of Manitoba.

And, actually, you know, I know that the Minister for Justice, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), keeps asking us to support them in

respect to Bill 4, but I would actually ask her to support Manitoba voters and to support the process that they engaged in and to honour Manitoba voters. And I would actually ask her to rescind this bill immediately and just withdraw the bill and, you know, when folks are kicked out of their caucus, they have to deal with the consequences. And if that is that they sit as an independent member and then run as—I'm not sure what they run as in the next election, but so be it. That is the way our democratic process works. It's the way it should work to ensure that voters, again, who took the time out of their day, and with conviction in their heart and spirit, to vote for who they believed in. That is the best way for us to honour those individuals.

And so I suspect the Minister of Justice and the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) will be reading Hansard very, very clearly tonight or tomorrow—*[interjection]* Tomorrow, yes. And so I would ask her to just withdraw Bill 4 and allow us to get on with the real work that we need to do here in this House as MLAs and in the best interest of Manitobans. And, certainly, this is a waste of time, and this is a waste of very limited time. In fact, we don't have a lot of time in this House, in fact. So the fact that the time that we do have in this House were spent on—again, and this is the second attempt. I want to also put that on—the it didn't seem to be a priority until it seemed that the House got disrupted for whatever reasons.

So I would ask her to withdraw Bill 4, let us get on with the work of this House and move on in working better for Manitobans. Miigwech.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): I'm happy to be here today and put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 4.

I'm proud to stand as a part of government that respects the traditions of offices we hold. The passage of this bill continues our government's work to undo the mistakes and mismanagement of the previous NDP government.

This bill repeals a 2006 amendment to The Legislative Assembly Act that never should have been passed in the first place. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this amendment was made in response to controversy in Ottawa. Instead of focusing on the priorities for Manitobans, the NDP choose to pass a law that breaks our time-honoured 'westminister' traditions. This was a short-sighted response to the news of the day.

When passed in 2006, this amendment was the NDP's political response to the federal Conservative government's decision to bring David Emerson into Cabinet, mere days after he had been re-elected a Liberal in the 2006 general election.

We believe that the freedom of a member of the Legislative Assembly to caucus with any part that they wish to is a time-embler—time-honoured tradition in our 'westminister' parliamentary democracy.

The voters of Manitoba will decide in the next election. That is how our system is meant to be. Dr. Paul Thomas, professor of political science at the University of Manitoba, when interviewed about the ban on floor-crossing earlier this year, called it a political gimmick and stated that it was likely a violation of the Constitution.

We do not believe that our 'westminister' system should be altered by the controversies of the day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I recently found an example of why a member may want to cross the floor. This is based on the disdain of the member of Elmwood that—and what he shows for his new NDP leader. That member may be the first one looking—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lagassé: —to take advantage of this floor-crossing bill.

Just yesterday in the House, Madam Speaker, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) had a pretty clear visual message for his new leader, which I happen to notice in a video posted to Facebook. I'm happy to table the appropriate number of copies of a screen shot of the video in question and the member's less-than-friendly gesture towards his leader.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, the NDP caucus is as divided as it was when the rebel five plunged them into crisis over three years ago.

Our PC government trusts Manitobans to choose their representatives wisely. If only members choose to cross the floor, it will be the people of this great province that will decide their political future in the next election.

We have heard from Manitobans, through our extensive consultations, that they want a government who can get our province's fiscal house in order and fix the decline and decay overseen by the members opposite. We are happy to propose this legislation,

not only to right an unparliamentary law but save taxpayers thousands of dollars in legal fees.

Our government is focused on the real issues facing our justice system, Mr. Deputy speaking–Speaker. Under the NDP, Manitoba has some of the worst crime rates in Canada. Since 2007, Manitoba has had more homicides per capita than any other province. Over the last decade, Manitoba's violent crime rate was second worst among the provinces.

Manitoba has had the highest robbery rate for the 21st century and the second highest rate for major assault, break and enter.

The NDP's response? Well, their inaction resulted in Manitoba having the highest incarceration rate in Canada in 2015-2016. Here we see the consequences of a government choosing a short-term, partisan gimmick over real action on issues faced by Manitobans.

Oh, but it doesn't stop there. The record gets worse when we consider violence against women.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Statistics Canada reported, in 2013, that Manitoba had the second worst rate of violence against women amongst Canadian provinces.

In 2013, Manitoba's rate of violence against women was double the national rate under the NDP.

*(16:00)

In 2015, Manitoba had the second highest rates of intimate partner violence in Canada. *[interjection]* I'll repeat that again, because the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) seems to think she needs to overspeak what I'm doing right now. I just wish she would wait for her turn. In 2015, Manitoba had the second highest rates of intimate-partner violence in Canada. Instead of addressing these devastating stats, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the previous NDP government chose to pass legislation responding to a controversy that had little or nothing to do with the betterment of Manitoba.

Our government has already introduced a number of initiatives to fix the justice issues that were left for us by the members opposite. Indeed, I would like to commend our Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) for her hard work here in Manitoba and on the national stage.

In addition to passing Bill 4 today, our government is actively working to make Manitoba the most improved province. We are focused

on balancing the budget and reducing the debt. Our government is working to reduce the crime incarceration and 'recidivism' rates we inherited from the previous NDP government with our three-part justice strategy.

Restorative justice. We're diverting less serious offenders into programs they need to keep them out of a life of crime. We've increased the number of referrals to restorative justice division programs by 50 per cent.

On responsible 'retintegration'. We reconstructed probation services to focus on ensuring that offenders leaving custody never commit another crime.

On preventative justice. We're investing in programs that prevent crime by getting youth and disadvantaged adults the support they need to lead healthy lives.

Our government is a national leader on criminal justice system reform, building consensus among provincial and territorial governments to eliminate inefficient preliminary inquiries. The Minister of Justice, along with Manitoba's chief judge and two chief justices, sent a proposal to the federal government that would eliminate preliminary inquiries, replacing them with an out-of-court discovery process for the most serious cases. The Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) helped build consensus at the federal, provincial and territorial levels that preliminary inquiry reform is necessary to ensure that serious violent offenders never walk free on a stay of proceedings due to unreasonable delay.

We have established an advisory committee of judges, lawyers, academics and community leaders to report back to the minister in spring of 2018 with recommendations on a new administrative model for family law. This new model will help Manitoba families by making family-law matters more accessible and less expensive.

Bill 4 continues our government's good work of undoing the legislative harm done by Manitoba–done to Manitoba by members opposite. As indicated by our Throne Speech last week, change requires courage and a willingness to look closely at the issues we face in our province to offer long-term sustainable solutions. We are repealing a law that should not have been passed in the first place, as it flies in the face of time-honoured Westminster traditions. We are removing a short-term political stunt from the books today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in

order to continue working towards a better Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'm pleased to speak about Bill 4, and what a pleasure to follow the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé), who stood up and put some interesting comments on the record which I think I'll deal with early on in my comments.

Bill 4, of course, would change The Legislative Assembly Act, and that act, as it currently stands, requires a member of the Assembly elected as a member of a political party to either continue to sit with that party or to sit as an independent if they cease to belong to that party. And what the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) wants to do is to remove the ban on floor crossing and do away with a provision that has served the people of Manitoba well for more than a decade.

I was fascinated to hear the member for Dawson Trail stand up and attempt to praise the work of the Minister of Justice. It is precisely because of her attention to these kinds of bills and ignoring the reality of crime and justice in Manitoba that Manitoba is now seeing the undoing of all the good that happened over the past 17 years to reduce crime and violent crime now being undone at a surprisingly fast rate by the Minister of Justice and her government sitting on their hands.

And I know—I agree with the member that Manitoba has historically had a high rate of violent crime. I was very pleased, in my five years as the minister of Justice, to see the rate of crime and violent crime go down in the province of Manitoba by 39 per cent, largest decrease of any province in Canada and, in fact, with crimes such as car theft, we saw Manitoba from—going from having the worst record to actually being middle of the pack and the city of Winnipeg actually dropping out of the top 10 lists which, unfortunately, started back in 1990s when a previous Conservative government did nothing about crime, did nothing about the roots of crime.

We have a government which has decided to take the axe to groups like the Elizabeth Fry Society, on the John Howard Society, which are actively working with offenders to change their behaviour. We saw just a couple of weeks ago, the John Howard Society's bail supervision program fold because of a lack of interest and a lack of support from this government. And, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that program was actually running in my community in the West End. And, when the John Howard

Society brought forward their proposal to run a bail supervision program, to take people who would otherwise be waiting in jail on remand and house them in the community, John Howard Society didn't just come to government. They actually went to the community and said: This is what we want to do; is the West End community prepared to accept this? And I'm very proud that the West End community, when they learned the plan, was quite prepared to do that.

And that's why, as minister of Justice, I was very proud to support that program and to make sure that we are taking people instead of sitting in remand at Headingley or the Remand Centre or Milner Ridge to actually have them in the community, properly supervised. Not a secure facility, but, if people left there, they would be breached, and there would be a response. And the results of that program were very, very good. And not only were people staying out of trouble, what they were finding was that individuals that went through that bail supervision program often were having their charges stayed by the Crown Attorney, because they'd gone ahead and they'd got help for the problems that got them in trouble in the first place. And that is something that I think was very positive, that was part of the unprecedented reduction in crime in Manitoba. And it's sad to see that this is just another example of this government putting cuts above services for people.

So I'll put my 39 per cent reduction in crime in Manitoba against what we've seen. Last year, of course, crime in Manitoba went up by about 9 per cent. And, if you look at the statistics this year, this year is going to be just as bad. And, as a matter of fact, I had read in some statistics just the other day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, within the Daniel McIntyre ward within the city of Winnipeg, the crimes which are reported by the Winnipeg Police Service, in a program called CrimeStat, crime in those 10 representative crimes is actually up 26 per cent, year over year, in Daniel McIntyre ward. And that's completely unacceptable.

And why is that? Because there's a government doesn't care, a government which is doing nothing about opioid addiction, a government doing nothing about methamphetamine addiction and a government that is simply not interested in dealing with those issues. Who knows? Maybe it's because they don't care about the people that live in the West End; that may well be. Or maybe it's because they just don't care—period. So I was surprised to hear the member for Dawson Trail decide to talk about justice,

because he is going to be very, very disappointed to hear what people in his own community have to say when the truth and the statistics are provided.

* (16:10)

Now, to move on to what's contained in Bill 4. Of course, this removes the ban on floor crossing. And, actually, to start off my comments on this, I want to kind of quote, perhaps paraphrase a little bit, quote the former Premier Gary Doer. And Gary Doer, of course, would always have wise words. If we thought, as a government, that we were getting carried away and feeling too pumped up or too good about ourselves, he would always lower his glasses and say, well, I would advise everyone not to be holier-than-thou. And that happens because in this Legislature and in our government things can change in a very, very rapid hurry.

And I would suggest that members opposite, rather than reading their staged notes about somehow a ban against floor-crossing being unparliamentary or unconstitutional, actually just give some thought as to the reasons why that bill came into effect, and why it was that the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party at the time, Hugh McFadyen, spoke in favour of that bill and actually put some comments on the record about his thoughts, that there are no monopolies in good ideas. And, in fact, this was a good idea that his party was prepared to support.

And why is that? Well, it's because a ballot is a sacred trust between the voter, the candidate and the party that receives their support. When's the last time that an independent actually won on—in a general election? Well, you have to go all the way back to—I believe it was 1969. And it was an individual who ran in the North, and that member had been a Progressive Conservative. And because what goes around comes around, that member actually resigned from the Progressive Conservative caucus, because he said at the time that this caucus, the Progressive Conservatives, had no interest in what was going on in the North.

You know, some things, 50 years later, haven't changed all that much. And he was able to win as an independent, beat the Conservatives and the New Democratic Party in 1969. That's the last time that someone running as an independent has actually been successful. Doesn't mean it couldn't happen again, but then that person would actually have to step up and seek election as an independent and go to the voters in their own riding and say, I'm not going

to be part of any team, whatever that team may be. I'm going to run on my own, and if you like me as a person, or what I can do, then go ahead and vote for me.

We believe that if a sitting member wants to leave his or her party and join another for the purposes of this House, well, he or she should have the courage of his or her convictions to face the voters again.

What's very important, of course—and we've heard some members of this House, suggesting a constitutional experts, which was a bit of a surprise, is that there's nothing in this bill that prevents a member who leaves a caucus or who's removed from a caucus from joining whatever political party they want. That is probably quite appropriately protected by our Constitution. The member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher), the member for Maples, they could join whichever party they want to, and there's nothing in this bill—nothing in the current bill or act which would prevent them from doing that.

But that's not what this is about. This is about the operation of this Legislature and how this House works. And this legislation is really the efforts of this Progressive Conservative Party and this Premier (Mr. Pallister) to try to end what is an embarrassing situation for them. It's a challenge by one of their former members that they kicked out their caucus and, in fact, it's a court challenge by a former member of their caucus.

And of course, the court file is all public record. I know that, of course, the member for Assiniboia is represented by Bill Gange, a lawyer that I have a lot of respect for. And I know that Mr. Gange will carry the case forward as best he can. I know the case is set for hearing on December the 18th. I know there's now been an affidavit filed, I presume, by the Department of Justice. Actually, it is an affidavit of a young woman who I happen to know who's a Justice employee—I'm not going to put her name on the record—I believe attaching a bunch of documents and information. There's been some other filings. And I expect that we'll see a very strong affidavit from the member for Assiniboia. And that is the last thing that this government wants to see.

But it's disappointing this government is more eager to introduce this legislation, to make this the first government bill that we're actually debating this entire session, to make that their priority in order to end a long, embarrassing feud with a former caucus member, rather than acting accordingly and

introducing other things such as legislation to ensure that Manitoba's in line with the federal government's changes to parental leave. But, instead, this is the priority.

So the bill's a distraction, and we know that the government has its own strange agenda and its own strange ways of getting things done or, for that matter, not getting things done, as we saw in the last session.

And, you know, it's fascinating to hear the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), who made her comments to say, well, this bill's brought in because we want to avoid legal fees. Well, the government of Manitoba, within the Department of Justice, actually has a Constitutional Law branch. I want to put on the record that there are some incredible lawyers that work within the Constitutional Law branch. Heather Leonoff is the head of that unit. Heather Leonoff, of course, has taught out at the University of Manitoba. She is a very capable lawyer and very capable of giving advice to the minister and to the government, which is not based on fear or favour but based on her view, and for this minister to suggest that somehow this bill is all about saving money, when in the very same year this minister hired an outside constitutional lawyer for—at the cost—

An Honourable Member: Hear, hear.

Mr. Swan: Well, hear, hear, says the member for Morris (Mr. Martin), the protector of the public purse, who believes that no lawyer should be left behind. They're celebrating the spending of \$40,000 in public money to hire Dr. Bryan Schwartz to give an opinion, and, again, I have respect for Dr. Schwartz, who also teaches out at the University of Manitoba. I have had the chance to go out and speak to his class. What did they get for \$40,000? Well, probably nothing—[interjection] Well, I hear there's a lot of heckling going on. I know that they all believe their constitutional lawyers. Maybe they should have hired them at zero dollars and saved the public purse some money.

But what happened is that I expect that Dr. Schwartz gave the same advice that the Constitutional Law Branch would have given, which is that the federal government has the right to bring in a new tax in the province of Manitoba and that that has to happen. Instead, the government of Manitoba and this Justice Minister spent \$40,000 on an opinion that they could have received from their own department, they could have actually received from anyone with a fair amount of common sense,

but instead they chose to do that. So it rings a little hollow that the minister now believes that it is so important that we now do this.

So, of course, the bill is the result of an openly disruptive internal feud in the government caucus, which happens from time to time, and we know the Premier (Mr. Pallister) kicked the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) out of his caucus for failing to toe the party line, for asking questions, for not being in line with what the government wanted to do, and now it's Manitobans who are paying the price for that. And you know, this feud with the member for Assiniboia led to a complete stall of House business the first day that the House resumed in October. We know the Premier's feud with a former member of his caucus has delayed the passage of bills and it's obstructed the government from being questioned on their cuts to health care and their cuts to education, and we know this bill comes in after the Premier brought in regressive legislation to try to stop low-income Manitobans without fixed addresses from voting, and those things are a shame.

But let me go back to what was happening at the time that this bill was passed in 2006. As I've said, with the verbal support of the former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and, of course, the support of the Progressive Conservative members, and let me read to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a story about the sadness of floor crossing, and it's a story which was written by a journalist named Shawna Richer of The Globe and Mail. The story was posted from a small community called Lorne Station, Nova Scotia on May 19, 2005.

"On Monday night, Belinda Stronach ate dinner with her boyfriend Peter MacKay. Then, without saying where she was going, she popped over to 24 Sussex Drive to talk with Prime Minister Paul Martin over another lavish, late meal.

"Mr. MacKay, the deputy Conservative leader, made a brief appearance at a Tory fundraiser before heading home. He didn't know where she was, but when she returned to him in the wee hours, she made a confession that ripped out his heart: Ms. Stronach would cross the floor to the Liberals the next morning.

"She came back after midnight on Monday night," Mr. MacKay said at his father's farm yesterday, speaking publicly for the first time since Ms. Stronach defected to the Liberals. 'She'd been at the Prime Minister's residence. I had no idea . . . She hadn't told me anything about it.

"I was completely surprised,' he said softly. 'I knew she'd been troubled and had a lot on her mind, but I didn't see this coming. I didn't see it coming.'

"Until 8 o'clock in the morning—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —Mr. MacKay pleaded with his ambitious colleague and lover to abandon her plan to leave the Conservatives—and by extension, him—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

* (16:20)

Mr. Swan: —just days before a crucial budget vote in the House of Commons. She left anyway.

"One sweeping survey of Elmer MacKay's bucolic homestead makes plain why the Prince of Pictou County retreated here to nurse his heavy heart.

"Several sprawling acres of gorgeous green grass, gentle rolling hills and a soaring pine forest under a blue sky lured Peter MacKay outdoors yesterday from the white clapboard house he still calls home.

"I thought it was important to reflect a little bit personally on things', he said. 'I came home to heal a bit and clear my head. I came to the place I feel I most belong, here on my family farm.'

"Mr. MacKay said he had not slept in two days. 'If I look and sound . . .' he said as his voice trails off, 'that's the reason.

"I have been wrestling with a lot of things and reflecting a lot of things that have happened over the past year or so. It tries your soul. But it's not unique to me.'

The handsome, ruddy-cheeked 34-year-old "wore an off-white work shirt layered with a dark T-shirt, his khaki pants tucked into orange rubber boots. He lugged a pitchfork and bucket as he distracted himself with planting potatoes."

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: "Mr. MacKay returned to his Central Nova riding on Tuesday afternoon as news of Ms. Stronach's decision sent shock waves across the country. Elmer MacKay, who served as a minister in Brian Mulroney's cabinet, picked up his son at the Halifax airport and the two went for dinner.

"He doesn't need comforting,' Mr. MacKay said. 'He's a strong, tough MP. He got bushwhacked a little bit, but he's fine. This is something that happens from time to time. I don't think it's the end of the world.

"I don't know what Peter and Belinda's plans were. They were obviously fond of each other, but I don't know if they had any lifelong plans together.'

"I haven't talked to her,' he said." The part—"that part of this is deeply hurtful and deeply personal. We'll see what happens.

"Asked whether he felt Ms. Stronach's move amounted to betrayal, Mr. MacKay said with a wry chuckle: 'Oh, it's more than that. But I want to leave the personal side separate.'

"It's been a rough few years romantically for the Hill Times' reigning sexiest MP.

"He ended a four-year relationship with Lisa Merrithew, daughter of former Progressive Conservative cabinet minister Gerald Merrithew, before he started dating Ms. Stronach.

"He said he's poised to move forward professionally, if not personally.

"The heart's got to heal a little more,' he said. 'I wish her and her kids, who I have a lot of affection for, happiness. I'm going to focus on my job. I don't walk away from things. I'll be back in Ottawa . . . to vote.

"I'll be with my caucus and working with the party to make sure we have a moderate, inclusive, national voice. I don't walk away from things.'

"Ms. Stronach left the party because she said Conservative Leader Stephen Harper's vision included none of those things. Yesterday, a number of Mr. MacKay's constituents agreed with Ms. Stronach politically, even as they felt for him personally.

"In nearby New Glasgow, the heart of Mr. MacKay's rural riding, residents were still gossiping about Tuesday's news and the political power couple's doubtful romantic future. But they applauded Ms. Stronach and wished big things for Mr. MacKay. 'She was smart, she got out,' said Russell Dooling of nearby Loch Broom, Nova Scotia. She has ambition, and Harper had his thumb on her. I wouldn't blame him,'" Mr. MacKay, "if he did the same thing. But he won't. His father would kill him.'

"Central Nova is as Tory blue a riding as they come, having gone Liberal only once since it was created in 1966.

"Asked whether he would follow Ms. Stronach to the Liberals, Mr. MacKay said, 'That will never happen.'

"Most of the lunch crowd at The Dock Pub where Mr. MacKay and Ms. Stronach have enjoyed dinner with pints of beer and Celtic music said they hope their MP would eventually assume leadership of the Conservatives.

"I'm disappointed in Stephen Harper,' said music teacher Janet Goguenproudford. 'Peter is the future of the party. I'd like to see him lead the party and take them back to the centre. I hope he waits it out.'

"Mr. MacKay's father repeated several times yesterday the end of his son's relationship with Ms. Stronach 'is not the end of the world.' He recoiled slightly when asked whether he felt she'd betrayed Peter.

"I don't like the word betray,' Elmer MacKay said thoughtfully. 'But, if you're going to use it, then I'd much rather be the one betrayed than the one who did the betraying.'"

How could any member of this House with a heart hear this story and not feel for Peter MacKay and his Progressive Conservative caucus? The caucus which thought they were actually going to defeat the Liberals in the House were not able to because they promised Linda Stronach a position in caucus. And what happened? There was Peter McKay, standing in a field with a dog, with his hip waders on, telling us how broken up he was. And, in fact, we learned after, the dog that he was with wasn't even his own dog; it was a neighbour's dog he borrowed for the TV cameras. But it was still hard—it was still hard—for Peter MacKay.

And I do, even upon reading that story, want to tell members that I actually like Peter MacKay. And, when I was the Minister of Justice, we actually worked together on a number of matters, and I found him to be a decent sort. And I believe that if you'd asked him on that day in 2005, is it reasonable; is it fair; is it right to the people who elected Belinda Stronach as a Conservative that the lure of a Cabinet position should allow her to leave the caucus and break Peter's heart to go and join the Liberal Party? You know what his answer would have been. His answer would've been no. And I'm sure he would have said—I'm sure he would say, I sure hope that as a

result of this, jurisdictions do exactly what Manitoba wound up doing and prevented floor crossing.

But, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Liberal, Tory, same old story. And just a couple of months later, what happened after the election? Well, of course, we know that things changed. And, in fact, within weeks of being elected as a Liberal in the 2006 general election, David Emerson decided that, even though he'd been voted in by people in his area as a Liberal, he was going to switch and become a Conservative. And, in fact, what got him to cross the floor? Well, it was the same thing. It was the promise by the new Prime Minister, Brian—sorry, Stephen Harper, to cross the floor and take a Cabinet spot. As a matter of fact, he was sworn in with the initial Cabinet in 2006.

Imagine that. You've been a loyal party member, you've been a Member of Parliament for years and years. Imagine, like, all those guys over there, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), the member for Morris (Mr. Martin), the—all the other members over there. Just imagine if someone got elected as a New Democrat and before they were even sworn in as a government, somebody—*[interjection]* Well, I hear there's a lot of grief going on over there because they realize how right I am. Imagine how they would feel if someone elected as a New Democrat was then enticed, weird as it would be, to join that government that was elected last year and came into Cabinet. Well, I can only imagine. Those gentlemen are angry enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as it is, as we hear their bitter catcalls every day. Just imagine what that would do to them if that was to take place.

So, of course, what happened when David Emerson switched parties? Well, he became a Cabinet minister. He was surprised, as was, I believe, Prime Minister Harper, that people in his own area were very angry about what happened. And, of course, weeks after that, of course, the Prime Minister visited Burnaby—in fact, paid a visit to a Burnaby daycare—and was surprised that there were anti-Emerson protesters out front of that daycare. The protesters said they were upset about Cabinet Minister David Emerson's defection from the Liberals to the Conservatives immediately following his election win in the Vancouver Kingsway riding.

And, of course, we had efforts within the Liberals in Vancouver Kingsway to try to get their campaign money back. The president of the Vancouver Kingsway riding association—this was

posted on CBC News, February 8, 2006—called on David Emerson to pay back nearly \$97,000 that was raised by Liberals to elect a now-Conservative MP. And I quote: Vancouver Kingsway Liberal riding association president Ivan Curman said he and the other campaign workers were shocked and hurt by the move, and now they want an apology, and a \$96,755 refund. And I quote Mr. Curman: "Among the voters of Vancouver-Kingsway, there are lots of unhappy people, and I think he would have to apologize to those people and volunteers and everybody else.

"We're looking for our money back. And basically that is raised to the Liberal Party for Vancouver-Kingsway, and it would be hard to raise that much money if he was running for the Conservatives."

And I go on to quote the story: "Curman is also demanding that the new Conservative MP resign and run in a byelection."

Well, what a good idea. In fact, it was such a good idea that months later our government in Manitoba went ahead and introduced legislation that would do that very thing. It would still allow people to leave a caucus. It would allow people—a caucus to kick people out of their caucus. It would allow individuals to join any political party they want. But it would not allow them to sit with a different caucus than the one that they were elected to be part of.

* (16:30)

And, of course, as we've already discovered at that time, former Conservative leader Hugh McFadyen thought that was a good idea and went so far as to say that we will support any good idea that comes before the House, regardless of whether we're in government or in opposition. And he said that in this very Chamber, in fact, on April 30, 2006. And, you know, at that time, we knew that the people of Canada were upset with what had happened to poor Peter MacKay, they were upset with what happened to the voters in Vancouver-Kingsway, to have somebody abandon one party and join another party within weeks of actually being elected under that party's banner. And that's why the law was brought into effect, and that's why this has served Manitobans well over the last number of years.

Now, why would this government suddenly want to change that? We already know that the minister's concern about saving legal fees is a red herring because this minister has already spent more money,

needlessly, on a legal opinion that she didn't have to get in the first place.

Well, what is it that really has this government so upset? Well, I think it's the fact that the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher), who calls himself the last Tory—he may be the last Tory after the next election, but certainly he's entitled to promote himself as he wants. Certainly, they're angry with him. He's asked a number of times, well, why don't they just throw in the towel? Well, the reason they can't throw in the towel is because they've got advice, I know, from their own department saying, well, actually, we think there is a very arguable case that this legislation continues to be constitutional. That's the problem that this minister has.

Now, who knows what a judge will do and, again, I know that Mr. Gange will put forward a very, very spirited case for the member for Assiniboia. Maybe on December 18th, in the spirit of co-operation and yuletide festivities, we can all go over to the courthouse together and we can hear, I suppose, what it was that caused this rift; we all have some ideas and, you know, I have some experience with this kind of situation, certainly. I'd like to know what's going to happen. And I know we'll get a really well-drafted and well-thought-out affidavit from the member for Assiniboia, and then I guess we'll find out why this became such a priority for the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson). We'll find that out in actually just a few short weeks; in fact, just 18 days from today we'll find out.

So I know, again, as the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) said we know, that the Justice Minister will follow very carefully the discussion that we've had today. I know that she'll have plenty of time to consider this because we'll be debating this bill still, I presume, in March or April, or whenever this House comes back. *[interjection]*

Well, and here I know there's the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) now trying to prevent members of the Legislature from exercising their right to debate bills. I know this government doesn't want to debate bills.

And I will end off with some comments that the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé) had put on the record as he was trying to say that somehow the current bill was opposed to the Westminster system. And I'll tell this member what is opposed to the way that we do things in this Legislature in the province of Manitoba, and that's shutting down committees. That's shutting down Manitobans—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: –who've come down to this Legislature for the right to present on a bill that has a major impact on their livelihood.

And I want to commend the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) who led the charge on Bill 30, as we heard from many, many cab licence owners, many drivers and others, who came down and hundreds of others who were left out in the cold by a government which chose not to allow sufficient time for them to present. And that's what the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé) should be concerned about.

You know, and, in fact, in Bill 36, we had dozens of people who wanted to talk about functional transit, who'd registered to speak for a committee on Bill 36, and this government chose never to go ahead–

An Honourable Member: The government followed the rules that the NDP laid out.

Mr. Swan: Well–and there's the member for Morris just telling us why it's such a good idea that they wouldn't let people come to Legislature and speak. And we'll remember, we'll remember this, the people of Manitoba will remember this and we will see a new government that will have a better way of doing things–

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time's up.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'm happy to rise and just put a few short words on the record here about Bill 4, The Legislative Assembly Act.

In 2006, the Doer government sought to capitalize on public opinion shortly after Member of Parliament David Emerson crossed the floor to become a Cabinet minister for the Conservatives, after being elected in the House of Commons as a Liberal. The former premier noted that the law was to ensure voters' wishes were respected, insisting that the bill safeguarded the voters' trust.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the New Brunswick Tory government passed similar legislation in 2014. However, it was reversed by a Liberal government just one year later.

Manitoba is currently the only province that prohibits floor crossing. The previous legislation gave advantages to leaders of political parties because ultimately it gives control over–back to

their backbenchers. Madam–or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, members and active politicians need to do what they need to do to represent their constituents, and trust me, I know resources are extremely helpful.

Our caucus looks forward to debating this bill at committee.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): I appreciate the member for Minto (Mr. Swan)–you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a hard act to follow, the member for Minto, but the member for Minto shared with this House a story, and it was a sad, sad story, and so I will share my own sad story, and it's a story about my predecessor, Mavis Taillieu.

And Mavis Taillieu was elected in this House in 2003 and in–unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, her husband was diagnosed with terminal cancer, and so she made the decision that I think any member of this House would make. She decided to resign as an elected official to spend those last moments with her dying husband, who was terminally ill with esophageal cancer. And I think, you know, the comment from members opposite even suggesting why would somebody resign to spend time with their dying spouse who's terminally ill, I mean it just speaks volumes again at the class act across the way.

But, regardless, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during that time frame when my predecessor left office, and, again, to spend those last moments with her husband, Wilf Taillieu, members opposite–and I look to the member for Minto, I look to the member for Fort Garry-Riverview, I look to the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), I know the previous member for Brandon East, the previous member for St. Norbert–they went out of their way to constantly mock my predecessor for leaving. They would constantly heckle, you know, and they would constantly ask: Where's Mavis. Where's Mavis?

You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, when I got elected I made a point to go over and share with the NDP members that, you know, just so you know, that Mavis's husband Wilf has been diagnosed with terminal cancer and obviously the outlook is very poor. His appetite is non-existent; the chemo's not going so well. He's basically a shell of his former self, and you know, they would nod their heads and say, you know, that's very sad, and the next day they would be back at it, you know, with their where's Mavis comments.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it got so bad actually the former premier of this province, the

MLA for St. Boniface, at a election debate at the Brandon Chamber of Commerce—and I'm not sure if it was a slight against my predecessor for leaving to take care of her dying husband or if it was just general misogyny—but he made a point to reference the decision by Bonnie Mitchelson and Leanne Rowat and, of course, Mavis Taillieu, to leave, all for their own reasons. But what was really interesting is he highlighted that, but he, you know, he didn't make mention of Stu Briese, and you know Stu, another long-term member who decided, again, for his own personal reasons to leave, and so he made that decision to leave, but the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) decided to highlight just the women.

So, again, I'm not sure if it was misogyny, I'm not sure what it was, but I do know that ultimately when the former reeve and ultimately the mayor of Morris, when he passed—and I do believe that he would believe in the necessity of this kind of legislative change that we're making today, because if there's one thing that Wilf believed in, it was democracy. He—in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Wilf and a number of other individuals from Headingley made the decision 25 years ago to separate from the city of Winnipeg, and they didn't do it unilaterally. They went to the people and they actually had a referendum, something that's the antithesis of members opposite when it comes to referendums, but that is what they did.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

They held a referendum, and they ultimately decided that they needed to separate from the people—or, from the city of Winnipeg. So I think, looking back, you know, and as I think back at Wilf's life and the NDP's shaming of his spouse for leaving to take care of her terminal husband, you know, I think that those members opposite should really reflect on their own actions and what they may have or haven't done.

* (16:40)

In term of stories, Mr.—or, Madam Speaker, the members opposite are citing example that happened during the Harper government. It—absolutely. That happened with the floor crossing. But it's always interesting that they don't reference a more recent incident involving their own NDP brothers and sisters in British Columbia, who just, this September, actually induced a Liberal member to cross a floor by making him Speaker.

Now—but, again, not once in any of their comments—and I listened to all their comments, as informative as they were or not so informative, Madam Speaker, but I don't remember, actually, any of them condemning their brothers and sisters in British Columbia for, again, that inducement to cross the floor and become Speaker of the House. And with that position, obviously, comes perks—obviously, in your case, well deserved.

But, Madam Speaker, the MLA for Minto used the phrase—he said, you know, that MLAs should have to face the voters. And it's always interesting that the same NDP party that says, you know, they should have to face the voter, the—Christine Melnick, let's take her for example. The NDP government actually kicked her out of caucus. They kicked her out of caucus. And why did they kick her out of caucus and forced her to sit as an independent? Well, it was because she used the political resources of her office, the political office, to actually fill the gallery in some sort of bogus attempt to inflate an issue of the day.

And, of course, the premier—and her entire caucus, actually, just threw her under the proverbial bus. And I remember Christine saying, you know, this was—that what she did was actually at the direction of the then-premier, the MLA for St. Boniface, that it was at his direction and the direction of his staff that she made the decision to call in and call the bureaucrat offices and stack the gallery full of people.

So the member for Riel sat as an independent at that time, but, instead of having to face the voters as an independent, as the member suggests, the NDP decided to bring her back in the fold when they realized, you know, that the writing was on the wall, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

An Honourable Member: How did that help them out?

Mr. Martin: No, it didn't. My colleague for Kildonan—my new colleague for Kildonan does make a very valid comment about how did it—how did that help them out. Not so well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, we talk about that voters vote, and the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) made the comment that voters vote with the conviction in their heart, Madam Speaker, and I absolutely agree with that comment. And, obviously, in the last election on April of 2016, they did vote. They voted overwhelmingly for a government that would fix

the finances, repair the services and rebuild the economy.

They were tired of a government, Madam Speaker, with members opposite, that put their own petty feuds ahead of the needs of Manitobans. In fact—I'm not sure why, if there was an event that the NDP had recently or whatever, but there was a revolving door recently of former NDP members in the loge visiting, and one of them, a former Cabinet minister, was telling me that things had gotten so bad across the way in terms of their internal fighting that he simply just stopped going to caucus meetings.

You know, that just gives you an idea. I remember the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) actually going on the radio and throwing all the political staff under the bus for their involvement in getting involved in the leadership race. And he actually went on the radio, and he said that those political staff are stopping the work of government, Madam Speaker. He actually said that, that they're stopping the work of government.

You know what—and then of course the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) promised all those staff, don't worry. You know, your jobs are all safe, and you guys are all good, and you can work on any campaign you want. And then, of course, after—you know, by the slimmest of margins, that the MLA for St. Boniface survived the rebellion that, unfortunately or fortunately, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) is the only one who seems to have survived the purge that he decided to, you know, expunge his staff of those rebellious staff.

And I think it was the tune of \$670,000. So the member for Minto gets up and he talks about a constitutional opinion that this government paid for, for \$40,000. I think it's money well spent. On the other hand, the members opposite, the NDP actually spent \$670,000 on severance to staff that they actually promised not to fire. Same staff that they've now actually re-hired, Madam Speaker.

So I'm not sure. It seems a bit of a revolving door, Madam Speaker, so—I mean, it's truly unfortunate. The legislation that the members opposite brought in, and a couple of them actually made mention of Hugh McFadyen, former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. And I think the MLA for St. Johns actually even referred to him as prophetic, that he saw into the future with his comments on this particular piece of legislation. Now, I'm not sure if he was prophetic on this particular piece of legislation, but I do know one

thing that he was prophetic on. In a debate with the member for St. Boniface, the then-premier, I remember Hugh McFadyen actually saying that the only way that the NDP could balance their books would be to raise the PST or to slash spending.

And, you know, at the time the member for St. Boniface, and every single NDP member and every single NDP candidate went to the doors and they knocked on those doors, and they said the idea of us raising the PST is total nonsense. It is ridiculous. Those were the exact words they used, you know? So, you know what? In that case, I will agree. Mr. McFadyen was absolute prophetic. He said the NDP would raise taxes, he said the NDP were going to raise the PST. They denied it, they went to Manitobans, they said one thing and they did another. You know, Madam Speaker? And they actually even went so far as to go to court to fight Manitobans on that very right and that ability.

Now I know the rebels, as soon as that incident happened, they quickly—[interjection]—I know the Theresa Oswalds of the world and the Stan Struthers, and the Jennifer Howards, and that, all quickly abandoned ship, and that. And I know, I remember, you know, the former MLA for Southdale, Erin Selby, she left as well. The member for Minto, I'm sure he enjoyed his time, you know, out there knocking with her and helping her out every night in an effort to get elected federally. And alas that, unfortunately, you know, for her didn't happen. But, you know, what it was—you know, it's an important part of democracy getting out there and knocking on those doors and being involved with your colleagues and lending that hand, and such. And so I have no doubt that it was time well spent for everyone—everyone involved, Mr. Deputy—or, Madam Speaker.

You know, Madam Speaker, the members opposite—clearly, they've brought in a piece of bill or a legislation back in 2006 that had never existed here in Manitoba for about 135 years. And they really—I mean, and one thing that I'll give, you know, the member for Minto was quoting Gary Doer. And, I mean, I'll give Gary Doer some credit in some things. The one thing that he was very good at—is very good at sort of taking the read of Manitobans and sort of—and Canadians in general—and sort of creating sort of an illusion of an issue. And one of those was the situation that happened federally. And you know, well, you know, with the full outrage that the NDP are very, very good at and had it actually down to a science. They pounded on their desks and say, well, we need to bring in similar legislation here in

Manitoba to prevent this kind of situation here in Manitoba.

And so, in 2006, they brought in this legislation, which they knew at the time—they had talked to any of their Leg. counsel staff, which I'm sure—because I've seen the briefing notes, Madam Speaker, that they would have seen that the legislation that they suggested back in 2006 was unconstitutional. But, again, you know, the rules, the law, any of those things—those things simply do not matter to the NDP and members opposite. Not—and some of those members are newer and they may not know the history of—they may not know, actually, back in 1999, the NDP actually created a Ponzi scheme using their agents—their financial agents within the party to actually put forward documents to Elections Manitoba in order to receive refunds they weren't entitled to.

In fact, you know, the—they pled guilty—members opposite, the NDP actually pled guilty to the charge of that election gerrymandering and rigging of the finances and illegally receiving refunds from Elections Manitoba, and they quietly repaid that. I think it was in hundreds of thousands of dollars that the NDP tried to fleece out of Elections Manitoba.

* (16:50)

So, for those newer members, they're welcome to go back and take a look at those elections documents. There—it's all in there, all the details, the amounts, and you'll clearly see history, the history of the NDP when it comes to their belief or lack of belief in the law or in the rule of law, and, obviously, that continued on, Madam Speaker.

We saw them as soon as they got elected with the Crocus file. Again, he had a file, and I've seen the briefing notes, Madam Speaker, and the then-Finance minister, the MLA for St. Boniface, his entire Cabinet and caucus were shared the information that there was a serious problem with the Crocus accounts. And again what did they do?

Well, according to the Auditor General, they ignored the red flags. In fact, they pushed the pedal to the metal and bankrupted Crocus, and the only thing left now is a sign on Main Street. I think actually that's actually been—is torn down. So he had, you know, tens of thousands of Manitobans lose their life savings, and actually the NDP went to court on that instance too to actually fight against those same Manitobans who demanded accountability when it

came to their lost life savings, you know, the life savings that they lost because of the actions of members opposite, their willingness to look and to ignore the red flags that were clearly presented to them, Madam Speaker.

You know, life and voting is about choice, and I think all of us present ourselves and present our party's platforms at those doors, Madam Speaker. I know in my instance when the members opposite finally called the election again after my predecessor had left and when they were done ritually shaming her for leaving to be with her terminal husband, you know, I went to those same doors and I heard almost to a person their disappointment with the NDP, and it really—it had to do with their illegal hiking of the PST and their willingness—or unwillingness—to follow the law again. Clearly, a law that had been in Manitoba, actually a law that they brought in, a referendum law.

They actually changed—they themselves changed the balanced budget legislation. They ensured that as part of that new balanced budget legislation, that change from the annual budgeting to a four-year rolling average, they ensured that there was actually a referendum mechanism within that. But, again, they decided to ignore that legislation. So it's no wonder that Manitobans were very, very disappointed in those—these kind of political gimmicks that we see across the way by the members opposite.

You know, I hear the member—the newest member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), and I've heard her rise in the House and, you know, ask questions about some of the agencies within her own riding, and I applaud her for doing that. I mean, that is what we do as elected officials. But I don't remember her once or any of her colleagues actually rising in defence when back in December of 2014 the NDP sent correspondence to—and I'm reading from a FIPPA-122 service providers, non-profit agencies, Madam Speaker, and in that they had to return 16 per cent of your total contracted budget to relinquish and, if you're not able to meet the target, you must provide the rationale.

And that was the great Christmas clawback. Just before Christmas in 2014 the NDP went to a 122 not-for-profit agencies. Agencies that provided services to women who had been in domestic violence, individuals that had been involved—they talk about addiction services. These children—services towards children, services for people with

disabilities. They went to 122 agencies, and they demanded back at Christmas time 16 per cent of their contracted budget, Madam Speaker.

So it's truly unfortunate that, you know, the same outrage, the same full outrage that we hear from members opposite that they were absolutely silent when 122 agencies brought that contact. So, you know what, Madam Speaker? You know, my time, unfortunately, is running low. I wish that, you know, members opposite would grant me leave. I'd love to, you know, put a number of additional comments on the record, but I'll simply leave it at this.

The voters of Manitoba, ultimately they're the power in this province. That is not to be forgotten. We'll allow them to make those choices. If a member—if any member of this Legislative Assembly chooses to leave their party, is removed from their party, which has happened on a number of occasions with members opposite, if they choose to do that, we will allow the voters of Manitoba to make that ultimate judgment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Well, it's funny, you know, I expected the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) to leave me some time to be able to speak to this government bill, but he seems intent upon filibustering his own bill and drawing it out, and I can only suppose that he doesn't support it either because, were he wanting to cross the floor, I can tell him all the seats are taken on this side. He wouldn't be welcome even if he wanted to cross this floor.

And the reason for that, Madam Speaker, and I'm sorry to say, is that the member for Morris gets up virtually every time and slings mud in the House, and, you know, when I go home every day, I want to be able to report to my family that we tried to do some productive work in the House to make things better for the people of Manitoba. I doubt that he could ever go home and ever report that because he never actually speaks to anything positive or productive. Instead, he, as I say, he is the quintessential mudslinger in this House, and I regret that he decides to always take that path. It's not a productive path. It's not a positive path. It really does nothing to enhance the well-being and the quality of lives for Manitobans all across this province.

And so we would invite him to aim higher and do better and to actually speak to the issues at hand. He was remarkable. He spoke for actually over

20 minutes, I believe, and didn't mention the bill at all except in passing, but he spent an enormous amount of time instead talking about other things that were not germane to the debate, not relevant to the debate and not useful to enhancing any member's understanding of why we should or shouldn't support this bill.

Now, I think it's fair to say that we don't support this particular piece of legislation, and we're actually quite disappointed that we're spending time debating it. When I was walking to work this morning, as I do most days—I try my best to do that—when I was walking to work, I had hope in my heart. I knew that we were going to come in here and talk about a really important bill sponsored by my friend from Flin Flon on parental leave, and I thought, well, there's an opportunity now. We're going to be able to rally around as a House, all members, to support parents across this province to have an extended amount of leave with their newborns.

And I have to say, and I'm sure I bragged about this to you before, Madam Speaker, but, you know, when you're in this position, you do it anyways, but I became a grandparent five-five and a half months ago. It's a—of course it's a blessing, and I feel honoured and privileged, but I know my daughter and my son-in-law would have looked at an 18-month leave and thought seriously about whether or not they would be able to take advantage of a very progressive idea in terms of being able to stay at home, to be able to raise your newborn and your infant, to build a strong family—strong family bonds among parents and the child and then, at the end of the day, as my sister from St. Johns said earlier, ensure that there's a job to return to after that 18 months.

So I walked to work this morning feeling very hopeful about that particular piece of legislation, tabled by my friend from Flin Flon, with the full and complete support of all members of our caucus, and instead my hopes were dashed by about two minutes after 10 when, in fact, we, as the record will show, we didn't get a chance—

An Honourable Member: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

Mr. Fletcher: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

I ask that we stay on topic. We've had now two presenters that have veered from the issue at hand. I wonder if you could provide us some guidance on that, please.

* * *

Madam Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 26 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 30, 2017

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