

Fifth Session - Fortieth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

DEBATES

and

PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 30, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 11—The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and responsible for the Status of Women, that Bill 11, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la violence familiale et le harcèlement criminel, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill will make it easier for victims of intimate partner violence to obtain emergency protection orders and will ensure stronger orders including the mandatory surrender of firearms. This is part of a broader strategy for greater safety for Manitoba women and children.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Alice Evans

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Municipal Government): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in the Manitoba Legislature to memorialize Alice Evans. The family of legendary Brandon East MLA Len Evans lost a marvellous wife, mother,

grandmother, great-grandmother, aunt and friend when Alice passed away this past June at the age of 81.

Alice was born and raised on a farm in the tiny hamlet of Sewell near Morris, Manitoba, where, as her family recounts, she made some of her happiest memories. When the Great Depression made farming no longer viable, she moved with her family to Transcona in 1944. There, at the age of 15, Alice met Len, and they married three years later.

Alice initially thought she would have a quiet life raising her children in the family home. Len, however, had another path in store. Together as a family, after a stint with the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in Ottawa and teaching at Brandon University, they took the leap into a life of public service, the very opposite of a quiet life. In 1969, Len Evans was elected as the MLA for Brandon East, a role in which he served for 30 years.

Soon after Len's election, Alice started to help start the Brandon East NDP women's association and came to see this group as her second family over her 40 years contributing to it.

Much of what I know about serving the people of Brandon East I owe to Len and Alice Evans.

Alice was also a long-time member of the Unitarian Church. Her spirituality connected her to the quiet, wild places of the prairies, and she always stood up for causes to protect these places.

In her rural upbringing, connection to nature, devotion to pivotal causes and love of her family, Alice's story is one shared by many Manitobans. We will remember her story and carry on her legacy.

Mr. Speaker, to husband Len Evans; to the children of Alice and Len, Brenda, Janet and Randall; their grandchildren, Jamie, Devon, Andrew and Jeffrey; and their great-grandchildren, Spencer, Corbin, Reegan, Keira and Griffin, I extend the deepest condolences of the Manitoba Legislature. Alice Evans was an amazing human being and all of us are better for having her amongst us.

Thank you.

Dr. Michel Bruneau

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, doctors play an essential role in providing quality health care to Manitobans. They are especially important in rural communities where access to health care is limited. There are some doctors who go the extra mile to provide health care to Manitobans, and an example of one is Dr. Mich Bruneau.

Dr. Bruneau has practised medicine in rural Manitoba for over 20 years. He works in rural emergency rooms, is the attending physician at the Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home, makes house calls to palliative-care patients and is part of a collaborative-care team that delivers cancer care to patients in Pinawa. Needless to say, Dr. Bruneau treats—fills many roles as a physician and he is an important team player for the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

Dr. Bruneau understands the importance of having good working relationships with doctors in various municipalities, which is essential in an area where there is a doctor shortage. He takes pride in saving rural Manitobans the trip to Winnipeg by providing them care close to home.

Dr. Bruneau was recently awarded the 2015 Manitoba College of Family Physicians award for being the Family Physician of the Year. He is well known by his colleagues for his compassion, knowledge and skill. He truly is a role model for aspiring physicians who are considering practising in rural Manitoba. He is truly a doctor that cares not only for his patients but also for the larger community of Lac du Bonnet.

I would like to congratulate Dr. Mich Bruneau on receiving the 2015 Manitoba College of Family Physicians award for being the Family Physician of the Year. I would also like to thank him for all of the work that he does in my constituency and for the greater good for Manitobans.

Thank you.

Abdo El Tassi

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged and honoured to recognize Abdo El Tassi, one of the most distinguished Canadians, Manitobans and a constituent of Radisson, who is a role model for new Canadians in our country, Canada.

Albert El Tassi was born in Lebanon and came to Winnipeg in 1969 with little more than the shirt on

his back. He started at a junior position at Peerless Garments and later rose to the position of president and CEO in 2003. Since then, he has increased his company sales from \$3 million to \$45 million.

A recipient of Manitoba's highest honour, the Order of Manitoba, we have recognized Mr. El Tassi as a person of the highest dedication to serve our province by contributing to the social, cultural and economic well-being of Manitobans. He was also invested into the Canadian honour with the Order of Canada.

A profound humanist, Mr. El Tassi has done so much, including starting the Islamic Social Services Association and the first Islamic school in Manitoba. He's also a member of the Arab-Jewish dialogue group, which fosters positive relations between Arab and Jewish communities. This speaks volumes of his character and service to humanity.

A generous provider of care, Mr. El Tassi has sponsored nearly 50 immigrants to Canada and has provided them with employment opportunities, interest-free loans to cover business start-ups and university tuition.

*(13:40)

He supports Winnipeg Harvest, Siloam Mission, United Way and countless others.

Thank you, Mr. El Tassi, and your worthy son Muhammad, Mrs. El Tassi and your entire family. You have made our country better by your dedication to integrate us all as part of a larger family of humanity and build a better world. Thank you, Mr. El Tassi [*inaudible*]

Nurse Practitioner Day

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Two special days have recently been celebrated in Manitoba. One was the third annual Nurse Practitioner Day and the other one was National Physician Assistant Day. Both professions have become key providers in Manitoba's health-care system. Both have been fully supported by our PC caucus, and both are filling significant gaps in our health-care system. Without them, the health-care challenges would be far worse.

Our PC caucus fully supported the establishment of an official nurse practitioner day in Manitoba in order to officially recognize the great contribution of nurse practitioners to health care in our province. They are a leading force for change, with the unique and innovative positions they occupy and skills that they possess as leaders in direct patient care. It is no

secret that Manitoba's health-care system is teetering on the edge of sustainability, and the services that nurse practitioners provide are essential to uphold the integrity of the system.

I felt honoured to be asked to sit on the Canadian Nurse Practitioner Initiative report review committee in 2006. Our job was to review the report and make recommendations on the report to the board of the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba. This report articulated a new and enlarged role for nurse practitioners in Canada. A key recommendation was made to protect the title of nurse practitioner. We also addressed quality-assurance legislation and interprofessional practice.

Mr. Speaker, both physician assistants and nurse practitioners are making a huge difference in our health-care system, and we just want them to know that their work is valued and appreciated and we thank them very much.

Vincent Massey Trojans

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the members and coaching staff of the Vincent Massey Trojans on their recent championship.

A few weeks ago, the Trojans took home the ANAVETS Bowl for the AAA high school football championship, defeating the St. Paul's Crusaders. This is the first varsity football title for Vincent Massey, and the Trojans played an excellent game against worthy rivals.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the players and Coach Kelsey McKay here today with us in the gallery. They come as guests of myself, the member of Fort Garry-Riverview and the member for Fort Richmond (Ms. Irvin-Ross). Welcome.

Throughout the season and the final game, the Trojans have demonstrated how commitment, dedication and teamwork results in success. Football is a demanding sport that requires total commitment from its players. This season's gruelling practices and energy-draining games have made the Trojans' victory that much sweeter.

Throughout the school's football program—though the school's football program is fairly new, it is clear that the head coach, Kelsey McKay, and his assistant coaches ensured every teammate was well prepared and confident leading up to the game. Kelsey's encouragement and support were instrumental in the team's success but also created a

positive environment in which the team learned to respect and celebrate each other's strength.

The festivities of the Grey Cup this past week show that every Manitoban is connected to football, and this is partly thanks to our Manitoba high schools that put a lot of time and effort into providing football programs to their students. These programs teach young people the importance of healthy, active lifestyles and provide the foundations for self-discipline, leadership and teamwork that they will be able to carry into their adulthood.

Congratulations to the team members, coaches and parent volunteers on a terrific season and a spectacular championship, and good luck next season.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes—the honourable member for St. Norbert.

Mr. Gaudreau: Ask leave to have the members' names into Hansard, please.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the names referenced by the honourable member for St. Norbert to be included in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Abdul Gassama, Keyshawn Peters, Jarah Al Dabous, Patryk Bujalski, Freddy Noriega-Gomez, Matt Lemay, Jon Walker, Nick Meyer, Andre Dueck, Shane Latour, Taj Moryl, Andrew Ferguson, Jeremy Rogge, Carter Hague, Alec Dickson, Geleta Gurnu, Steinn McIntosh, Austin Grenier, Mikey De Leon, Connor Russell, Ben Charbonneau, Jeremy Gillis, Keenan Onyebuchi, Matt Marion, Neel Visen, Nikon Moghadasian, Barak Al Dabous, Eric Bridges, Cody Parrott, Ben Hudson, Matt Melito, Brian Murphy, Riley Kolodie, Findlay Brown, Josh Diamond, Jonah Komorofsky, Jalen Burley, Jared Ott, Corin Plas, Tony Balinov, Matt Arnold, Steven Ingleson, Dylan Nicol, Tong King, Keenan Cooke, Tristan Dean, Eryk Bujalski, Brandon Nacionales, Kevin Noriega-Gomez, Liam Casey, Garrett Bridgeman, Nathan Ash, Tristin Lilley-Brine, Jason Craddock, Brayden Saville, Liam Tessier.

Mr. Speaker: Just—that concludes members' statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: And just prior to oral questions, I want to draw the honourable—attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today the Honourable Gary Mar, the former minister of health for the province of Alberta; Canadian co-founder of Bug Insights, Tim Glowa, from Houston; and also Kelley Charlebois, a

consultant with Bug Insights, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Mineral Resources (Mr. Chomiak).

Welcome to the Manitoba Legislature this afternoon.

And also seated in the public gallery we have with us today from Kildonan-East Collegiate, we have 42 grade 9 students under the direction of Jody Kulyk and Louise Maciejkow, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

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

And while I'm on my feet, I want to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my right where we have Mr. Len Evans, the former member for Brandon East.

On behalf of honourable members, welcome to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Balanced Budget Timeline Provincial Deficit

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans understand that deficits and debt are simply deferred taxes. And they know that this Premier has doubled our provincial debt in spite of record tax hikes in our province. And they also understand that this Premier has never balanced the books despite repeated promises to do so.

So, having repeatedly missed his targets or pushed them back for balancing the books, I'd like the Premier to explain to Manitobans: What is his next target date for balancing the books of our province?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it's great to have so many people here from the community and around the country in our Legislature. It's an honour to have them all here.

I did want to add my condolences to one more great Manitoban who passed away very recently, and I hope we'll have a more formal occasion to do it later, but that's Maurice Strong, who grew up in Oak Lake, Manitoba. And he notably created the first 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, which led to the development of the Kyoto Accord, the first global attempt to address climate change in the world. And he was known throughout the world as a

great Canadian who brought people together around a model of sustainable economic development. And that led to the International Institute for Sustainable Development being established right here in Winnipeg, which serves the planet today. So I just wanted, before I answered the question, to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that a native Manitoban has made to the world at a time when we're considering climate change.

With respect to the member's question about the deficit, it's one of the lower ones in the country, at the same time as we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country, the highest job creation rate in the country, Mr. Speaker.

And I was pleased to march with the members of the football team down Portage Avenue just the other night, and I saw the new Hydro building, I saw the RecPlex at the University of Winnipeg, I saw the MTS Centre, I saw the Convention Centre. People—

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

Mr. Pallister: Well, these young athletes understand that when you set a goal, you try to strive to achieve it, Mr. Speaker. You just don't fail; you just don't ignore it.

Now, ninth, closer to 10th than to eighth, Mr. Speaker, is the government's record on job creation. So it's nothing to brag about or put signs up about.

And Maurice Strong was a proponent of sustainable development. So my question was about the sustainable development of our province. And it was about a target date and the Premier's failure to achieve that target date. And now he refuses to answer the question.

So I guess he's got no target date at all. And this government's new fiscal strategy apparently is to avoid having any target. They've missed the target so many times they know they wouldn't be believed if they set one. And they were so far off the bull's eye they've decided to take the target down entirely, and that's no way to achieve your goals, Mr. Speaker.

Now, would the Premier admit that he's actually given up trying to balance the books at all?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there's a stark contrast to the members opposite on this side of the House. Their preferred approach is austerity, which leads to higher levels of unemployment, for young people particularly, higher levels—slower levels of economic

growth. And what do you get out of that? You get even larger deficits. You get even more debt. You get less health-care services and less education services.

We're the strongest economy in the country, Mr. Speaker, the lowest unemployment rate in the country and the best job creation rate in the country. That keeps our deficit down. That keeps Manitobans working. That keeps young people being educated. That looks after people in the health-care system.

And if you keep walking down Portage Avenue, you get to the ballpark. You go further to the Journey to Churchill exhibit, at the Assiniboia Downs, and you go anywhere in Manitoba, and we're rebuilding homes, we're 'bluing' flood protection for people.

* (13:50)

That's what people need: protection, jobs, education and health care. That's what we stand for, not the cuts and austerity of the member opposite.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Mr. Speaker, spirited energy but no substance whatsoever, not a bit—not a bit.

Every athlete up top there, and they all deserve to be commended, understands that when you set goals you work to achieve them. You don't just talk about them, Mr. Speaker, you actually work to achieve them.

This Premier has tripled our debt. His economic record is deplorable. We are 10th in health care and 10th in education. It's not a record to be proud of.

And now we know their new campaign slogan: balanced budgets are very scary. That's the slogan: balanced budgets are frightening.

They went out with a Throne Speech last week and promised \$6 billion more spending, \$6 billion more. They have given up—they have given up. They have no plan. They have no target. This is the last gasp of a tired government and a tired-out Premier.

The Free Press described the Throne Speech as a Hail Mary. The Winnipeg Sun described it as the behaviour of a gambling addict. We say it's reckless.

Would the Premier admit that he's trying to purchase his short-term political gain at the expense of Manitobans' long-term pain, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. When the member opposite was in government, they had 13-plus cents of every dollar to service the debt. Under our government, we've been

reducing the amount we pay to service the debt; it's now down to 5.6 cents on the dollar.

When you can keep your debt servicing cost at 6 cents on the dollar and less and have the lowest unemployment rate in the country, the best job creation rate on the country, a growing population, keeping your climate-change emissions down flat over a decade, when you grow the economy over 30 per cent and add 11 per cent more people to the province, you are doing the right thing for the people of Manitoba. That's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. That goes along with supporting refugees to come to Manitoba. That goes along with reconciliation and addressing the needs of our indigenous people.

Those are our policies: an inclusive province, a growing province, a fair province, a just province and a prudent province, all of which the member opposite wants to destroy.

Average Weekly Earnings Government Tax Policies

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Well, angry Premier—angry Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's quite right about one thing: The facts speak for themselves. And the facts say that we're dead last in education, dead last in health care in our province, and those are not things to be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, last week Statistics Canada released the latest average weekly wages report, and when compared to Saskatchewan, average workers in Manitoba earn \$110 less per week.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister just admit that his high-tax-and-spend policies are having a negative impact in jobs and our economy?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier just answered that question about three times over.

We have one of the strongest economies in the country. We have one of the best job growths in the country, 20,000 jobs, three out of four private sector, four out of five full-time, lowest unemployment rate in the entire nation.

But, Mr. Speaker, I was proud just last week to stand with the good folks at Canada Goose, world-class workers making—in a world-class facility making a world-class product right down in Winnipeg's North End. They're going to be making 40,000 garments a year; by 2018, 200,000 garments

a year. Right now they have 500 new jobs at Canada Goose; by 2018, over 1,000 new jobs.

And we continue to lead on wage growth as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, and again the minister refuses to answer the question, Mr. Speaker.

Under this Selinger government, the gap is, in fact, widening when it comes to average weekly earnings between Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. Back when this Premier (Mr. Selinger) first took office in 2009, the average person's weekly earnings in Manitoba was 5 per cent less than in Saskatchewan. The latest numbers show that Manitobans are earning 13 per cent. Things are getting worse; they're not getting better.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister just admit that his high-tax-and-spend policies are having a negative impact on wage earnings right here in Manitoba?

Mr. Chief: Mr. Speaker, here are the facts: the largest wage growth in the last year, with the average worker earning more than \$40 per week than they did last year. So as according to StatsCan, we continue to lead when it comes to wage growth. Those are the facts.

What does Robert Kavcic have to say, a senior economist from BMO Capital Markets? Noted employment growth—that we led in employment growth in the country in March at a very strong 3.1 per cent, the best pace the province has seen in 13 years.

What does the Bank of Montreal have to say about our economic growth in Manitoba? It'll be among the strongest in the country.

What does TD Economics have to say? Manitoba is projected to be one of the top performing economies over the next three years.

Mr. Speaker, all the member from Tuxedo has to do is to ask her leader. He just has to go over to Shaw Communications in his own riding and see 500 new jobs right here in the city of Winnipeg.

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I'm asking the minister a question that he refuses to answer.

Manitobans earn \$110 less per week, on average, than in Saskatchewan. When the Premier first took over in 2009, Manitobans earned \$36 less than Saskatchewan. Things, again, are getting worse, not better.

Will the Premier just admit that under his leadership Manitobans are paying more and getting less?

Mr. Chief: Largest wage growth in the country happened here in Manitoba last year and—with the average worker earning more than \$40 a week, Mr. Speaker. I've answered that. I've answered it three times.

What are other people saying about jobs in Manitoba's economy? Manitoba's an economic elite. That's what the people are saying, Mr. Speaker, in the Winnipeg Free Press: Province's economic growth ahead of the national average. Thousands of trades jobs on the horizon. It goes on: Winnipeg downtown, a period of unprecedented growth. Lowest unemployed—lowest unemployment rate in Canada? Right here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Leader of the Opposition to find me one good headline when he sat around the Cabinet table that talked about his record on jobs and the economy. I ask the member from Tuxedo to find me one good headline in the current plan that her leader has.

On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we stand with world-class workers, we stand with world-class businesses, and we stand with world-class families.

Competitive Bidding Practices Highway Signage Contract

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, the NDP government regularly awards contracts without tender or awards contracts that are tendered but can only possibly be fulfilled by one provider. We have often seen this with highway signage.

Mr. Speaker, in May of 2014, MIT issued a letter informing the various construction associations in Manitoba about changes to designated construction zones that were expected to be announced. In this letter, MIT directs the associations and their members that new signs can be purchased from Signal Industries. I will table that letter.

Mr. Speaker, did MIT get paid for this advertising, or were they providing it free of charge for Signal Industries? A clear example of Manitobans paying more and getting less.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, am I ever glad the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) is asking about our highway signs, because rather than check with the department, the officials in our department, who have a role ensuring our signs are there, that they're safe, that the reflective coating, which is an important part of that last, the member got up and tried to make some big conspiracy theory. I'm sure he's had a lot of coaching from his leader.

Well, Mr. Speaker, he asked a question about why this Manitoba type 11 specification was used. Actually, it mirrored a draft regulation from the industry standard, the ASTM. What he then did, he said that this was part of the tender. Actually, not this year, was not part of the tender this year. And he put on the record that there was only one supplier. He's wrong. There are two suppliers and one specification for the another—other.

I think I've lost track of how many times he was wrong, and he's wrong again.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister had the opportunity to answer that question last week and failed. So he's trying again this week.

But how about we work on this question: The NDP government rushed this announcement, but apparently Signal Industries was made aware of the need to new—for new signs before any other sign company knew. Mr. Speaker, untendered contracts given out at a moment's notice to their favourite sign company and advertised on MIT letterhead: Which of these things is not appropriate? Wait a minute. None of them are appropriate.

Will the minister tell this House why his department consistently hands out untendered contracts, then advertises for these private companies?

* (14:00)

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I lost track of how many errors there were in the question last time, but it's pretty easy to determine how many of those he's recognized. The answer is zero, because he just asked a further question and did not put on the record, and I'll repeat again for the member opposite, the specification he referenced was from an industry standard. It was actually not used this year, and there are multiple suppliers of that particular standard.

So rather than get up ill-informed, rather get up, Mr. Speaker, when last week he was clearly wrong and apologized, he's continuing in terms of that.

I say the only issue here is why, once again, are members opposite so ill-informed?

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, the NDP government certainly learned from the AG's report on untendered contracting, and they know now exactly how to continue to get away with awarding contracts to their friends, that and advertising on MIT letterhead for the sale of those signs.

Mr. Speaker, are these just examples of another law, another regulation, another policy that the NDP government has broken? How quickly will these be changed now that this example has been highlighted?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I think the real question is not how quickly, but will the ministers on this side learn? Absolutely, and one thing we're going to learn from is the errors of members opposite when it comes to our infrastructure.

It's interesting. They don't ask, Mr. Speaker, about the record number of contracts that went out through a tender process that the Heavy Construction Association says is a model for Canada. They haven't talked about why we might need a few more signs, yes, for construction safety—we brought in that legislation—and because we have record construction.

I'll put on the record again: We increased 44 per cent the first full year of the 1 cent on the dollar, another 10 per cent after that. Last year, the second best year in terms of paving in our province. In case the member hasn't noticed driving home to Brandon, this year, 30 per cent higher than any other year in Manitoba history.

We are the get-'er-done government; they're the shut-'er-down opposition.

Keeyask Project Inquiry Request Workplace Safety Case Concern

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I'd hope that all members in this House believe in a safe workplace.

On October the 16th, 2014, Joseph Head had been working on the Keeyask project and suddenly felt ill. He went to the housing unit to rest. His neighbour notified security of this. They called EMS. Unfortunately, Mr. Head passed away that same day.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Hydro: Has his department asked for an inquiry into the death of Mr. Head?

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that

Mr. Head was a personal friend of mine. I'll tell you what we have done, and we certainly want to extend our sincere condolences to Valerie, the Mrs. of Mr. Joe Head.

We have referred this matter to Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health, who have given us a verbal update on their findings. They have concluded their process and we expect written confirmation to be forthcoming shortly.

We have also referred it to the Manitoba Ombudsman, and I understand that a complaint has been forwarded to that office.

As well, Manitoba Health, the Office of the Medical Director is reviewing the matter as well.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Head and his family were assured that all safety checks were in place if emergency medical services was needed at Keeyask. As we know, this is a remote worksite. Provisions were guaranteed for expedited emergency transfers and, unfortunately, they were not in place.

Mr. Head was the household provider and clearly loved by his family. They deserve answers on what went so terribly wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I once again ask the Minister of Hydro: Can he call an inquiry to help this family have closure and answers to what went wrong and ensure that this is, in fact, a safe workplace?

Mr. Robinson: Well, in my earlier response, Mr. Speaker, I just outlined that we're anticipating some responses from a couple branches of government, and then I'll be in a position to respond to the member's question about an inquiry.

As the member may be aware, Mr. Head was a subcontractor of a company that was doing some subcontract work at the Keeyask site. To the best of our knowledge, all the appropriate measures were taken to ensure that Mr. Head got the appropriate medical attention that he required.

He was sent to the Gillam Hospital, which is a lot closer than the Thompson hospital. If anybody could care to—would care to look at the geography of the area, they'll know that Gillam is a lot closer to the Keeyask site.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll be gladly—I'll gladly respond further to the member's questions.

Mr. Eichler: Valerie Head, the wife of Joseph Head, and her daughter-in-law Kristy are with us today and would like this government to find out through an

inquiry what went so terribly wrong that Mr. Head lost his life that day. There are so many unanswered questions that need to be answered.

Mr. Speaker, why hasn't the Minister of Hydro ordered an inquiry, and will he commit today to do that for this family?

Mr. Robinson: We regret that Mr. Head passed as well, Mr. Speaker, and I can't get into the details about my knowledge about Mr. Head's personal health situation.

I will say, however, that Manitoba Hydro has been in touch with—has attempted to be in touch with Mrs. Head on a number of occasions. I'm advised that numerous attempts have been made to contact her to provide updates to her on where things are at with the matter.

We need to go through the process. And I understand this; I mean, I can empathize with the family. This is very frustrating when you lose a loved one in the workplace. And Mr. Head, as I said, was a personal friend of mine. I held him in high regard, and he did his best to provide for his family.

Grace Hospital ER Patient Release Case Concern

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, a senior called an ambulance at 6 in the morning because she couldn't breathe and was feeling extremely weak. She was taken to the Grace ER, which we know has the longest ER waits in Canada. She was examined by a doctor who said she had fluid on her lungs and gave her a prescription.

She says, and I quote: I was then sent home, more like kicked out of the hospital and sent home in a cab. I was very weak and still having trouble breathing. End quote.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health if she could tell this senior why she was rushed out of the Grace Hospital ER in her condition.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

And if what has happened is true, I would gladly ask that the member of the public to whom this happened can gladly contact my office. I would like to learn more about this, as I would know that the patient advocate at the Grace would as well. Because I know that the Grace has offered compassionate, high-quality care for over 100 years, and we're

committed to working with them and expanding the facilities that they do have in the emergency department.

So my heart goes out to the family. And if there's any information, as the member opposite knows, we cannot discuss the details of any one particular person's case in this Chamber, but if she has any additional information to offer or if the family is aware, that they can please contact my office. I look forward to meeting with them and discussing the situation if they choose.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, Ruth Segal is a senior and lives alone. She also has heart problems. She was very weak, had a lot of difficulty breathing and could barely walk. But she was discharged from the ER, put in a taxi and taken home.

She said, and I quote: The cab driver dumped me off, and I had a great deal of difficulty making it inside my apartment building. End quote.

In January 10th, 2014, the minister of Health here announced that she held cab drivers responsible for ensuring that patients discharged from the hospital made it home safely.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell Ruth Segal why she was just dumped off.

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, again, thank the member for the question.

And, again, if there is ever an issue with a discharge and there's a mistake made, there is something that seems inappropriate, I want to know about it. This is how we resolve these situations. This is how we address them. We take ownership for that.

This is a very different situation than when members opposite were closing the Grace on evenings and weekends in the '90s. So I know you can't look after someone, you can't discharge them if there is no emergency room for them to go to.

So, again, if the Segal family would like to contact me, I will gladly meet with them.

Again, in terms of the protocols, we are working with the WRHA on those issues as well, and I will gladly continue to work because we do know that the Grace does take great care of so many people on a regular basis.

*(14:10)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, in the reception area, Ruth had to sit down to catch her breath. Two people

saw her, and they wanted to call an ambulance for her.

She said, and I quote: Well, after several minutes, I told them the story how I was kicked out of the hospital and they would not keep me, even though I was so sick. End quote.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health to admit to Ruth and to all the other seniors that are being affected in similar ways that her NDP waste and mismanagement is failing Manitoba seniors.

Ms. Blady: As I've said, all Manitobans expect and deserve that they and their loved ones will receive the highest quality care at our health facilities, and, again, we need to be sure that patients are being discharged appropriately and safely. The onus is on medical professionals to make sure patients are ready to be discharged. If someone sees a discrepancy in the service they receive, again, I ask them to contact me.

I will also advise the Segal family and others to recall that it was members opposite that closed the emergency room at the Grace weekends and evenings, so there would have been no care if members opposite had been in charge.

We're working very hard with the Grace and the Grace Hospital Foundation for a new emergency room and a new MRI. So our work is being done and we will continue to work with families to ensure that they get the care they need, not cut and close like members opposite.

Child and Family Services Child Apprehension Case

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I am sure we have all seen the family protesting on the front step of the Legislature. They are Farhia Gelle and Gulad Farah, originally from Somalia. Following an ER visit in 2008 with their oldest daughter, Kawsar, the children were apprehended by Winnipeg CFS. Following a lengthy period of on-again, off-again visits, the family had their day in court in June 2014, during which an agreement was made to work towards reintegration of the family. No progress has been made.

I know the minister will refuse to talk about casework, so my only question remains: Is this minister satisfied with the treatment of this family?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): As the member said himself, I am not

permitted to discuss the specifics of any case within this Chamber.

What I want to say is that this is the government that has continued to make investments in the child-welfare system. We have devolved the system to agencies that provide front-line care. They have difficult work that they do every day when they enter into a family to make that assessment of how do I support this family, what resources do you need.

I am very proud of the resources that we have put in place that those front-line staff have access to. Over \$29 million is going into provide for protect—or for prevention services, and that prevention service money is supporting 17,000 children in our community with their families. That's truly making a difference.

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Speaker, this minister's investments have led to nearly 11,000 children in care in this province.

During the long wait between apprehension of the children and their day in court, Farhia became pregnant again. Rather than lose another child to CFS in Manitoba, a decision was made for Farhia to return to Somalia to give birth and leave their child with her sister in a Boko-Haram-controlled area of Somalia.

How did it become safer to leave a child in a rebel-controlled area of Somalia than to deal with CFS here in Manitoba?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Again, I cannot discuss the specifics of this case. It would not be very responsible for me or anyone else in this House to have this conversation.

What I'd like to talk about is our government that has continued to provide investments to the child-welfare system ensuring that we have protection services that are available to children when it is necessary. Safety is our No. 1 priority.

But before we get to that point, I think what's really important is that \$29 million that we invest alone in child welfare. That doesn't count for the money that we are investing in Healthy Child or within Education or the jobs that we are creating.

We want the best for all Manitoban children. We're going to continue to make those investments and we're going to continue to support those front-line workers that every day make very difficult decisions.

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have met with this family several times and helped and encouraged them in their process to work with CFS to resolve things, to reintegrate, as the court agreed. The last meeting with CFS Winnipeg went badly, however, as they were told by senior CFS staff that, and I quote, as long as they are on the front steps of the Legislature, no progress would be made.

When did peaceful process become not allowable for CFS? How can this family work towards reunification if they are bullied and even the right to protest is interfered with?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the member opposite feels he'll gain by attacking the front-line workers that every day dedicate their professional life to support families across this province, again, making very difficult decisions, walking into homes that are in crisis for any amount of reasons, sitting down with them, coming up with a plan about how they can keep their children together.

Our No. 1 priority is the safety of children. We want to ensure that children are safe and growing up in a caring environment. We want to make sure also that families have an opportunity for reunification. That's why we continue to make the investments we do to the child-welfare system, by supporting the front-line workers, by ensuring that our not-for-profit organizations have the resources they need to deliver the programming every day to Manitoba families.

Student Debt Burden Non-Repayable Grants

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, it is well known that a large number of our post-secondary education students have accumulated a very large amount of debt by the time that they graduate. These loans are an enormous burden on our students, averaging over \$15,000 per graduate.

Will the Premier consider changing student loans to non-repayable grants, as a Liberal government would do here in Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has among the lowest tuition fees in the country for post-secondary students, whether at the college or at the university level. We've put that in legislation that it can only grow according to the rate of inflation.

At the same time, we've increased funding to universities, unlike any other province in the country,

during difficult times, to ensure there are more spots available for young people to go to post-secondary.

We're unique in having the best graduate tuition tax rebate system in the country. Some of that money is available to students in their last two years of their baccalaureate or undergraduate education. And when they graduate, if they live and work in Manitoba, they can get 60 per cent of their tuition back just by the very fact of living and working in this province, which the vast majority want to do.

Over 93 per cent of the people graduating from our community colleges choose to live and work in Manitoba. They get 60 per cent of their tuition back, which is among the lowest in the country, Mr. Speaker. If you're a medical student and you want to work in northern or rural Manitoba, you can get 100 per cent of your tuition covered in Manitoba.

And the good thing about it is, we have jobs here for Manitobans. We have jobs for everybody, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of the provincial rebate for a portion of the student loans and also aware that the rebate is primarily available if a graduate is making enough income to claim it and primarily available only after a student has graduated. This doesn't do much to relieve the economic distraction of how to survive day to day while in school.

Will the Premier (Mr. Selinger) not even consider switching student loans to non-repayable grants, as a Liberal government in Manitoba will do?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we have a very robust bursary program in Manitoba. I was at an event just recently where literally dozens of young Manitobans got bursaries. We paid 50 per cent of them. Sponsors in the business community paid another 50 per cent of them. That allowed a lot of young people—some of them were parents already—to be able to ensure that they could go to school.

We have a tuition waiver program at the University of Winnipeg for anybody coming out of the child-welfare system that wants to go to post-secondary. They're getting an education. They're getting an opportunity to go back and provide strength and leadership to their families.

We're always open to new ideas. But the policy being put forward by the member would actually reduce the support to young people in Manitoba. Our interest rate—our interest program on loans in

Manitoba is interest-free for the first time ever in the history of this province. You don't build up interest on your debt. You get a chance to have a job here, pay that back, with the lowest tuition fees in the country.

And we will remain open to new ideas, but the No. 1 way to get rid of any obligation for education is to have a good job after, which is why we have the First Jobs now program. People that are graduating from post-secondary get a chance for a career right here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:20)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier says he's got a robust bursary program. Why was it cut almost in half since 2008?

Also, the Premier claws back the student loans if a student is able to seek—to eke out an income of \$100 a week while in school. Sure, the NDP are doing a lot, a lot of what students don't want them—to have done to them.

After more than 16 years, will the Premier finally see that the Liberal approach of dramatically improving his punitive student-aid program is the right thing to do?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker—and I appreciate the information. We have a student-aid program for post-secondary students worth \$33 million. The member opposite is promising to put a \$10-million program in place. That tells me they're going to be worse off. If you're getting \$33 million now and only \$10 million under their program, do the math; they're going to be worse off.

The graduate tuition rebate program is there. The First Jobs now program is there. No interest on your student loans, Mr. Speaker.

And in Manitoba we also promote another very important part of post-secondary education. It's called co-op education, and I was involved in this when I taught there. You can actually get a job in the area where you're training in while you're going to university or college. That gives you a job credit; that gives you income; that gives you an opportunity for a career right after. And those co-op education programs, over 70 per cent of people that participate in them get a job offer when they graduate because the employers know them. They see the quality of the young people we have in Manitoba. They see the quality of the education.

The way forward is good supports for young people to get a high-quality education and a good job. That's the way forward in Manitoba.

Victims of Domestic Violence Protection Order Improvements

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, this morning I was able to attend the announcement of amendments to The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act.

Too often women in this province are targets of violence by spouses and intimate partners. Too often women are victims of gun violence. Too often those women are indigenous.

Protection orders are a critical component of the supports available to Manitoba women, children and families that are at risk.

Can the Minister of Justice tell the House about the amendments announced this morning to The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank so many strong women in Manitoba, leaders in the movement to counter domestic violence and so many others that contributed their ideas. I think our hand in writing the bill was guided by their insights.

Mr. Speaker, about 59 per cent of protection orders in this province that are applied for are not granted, and so we are going to lower the threshold for obtaining a protection order. At the same time, it's important to strengthen those orders and, for the first time in Canada, on the presentation of any evidence of a firearm, there will be a mandatory prohibition and surrender of firearms.

Mr. Speaker, as well, this complements other work to help people apply for protection orders. This legislation is for Selena Keeper. It's for Camille Runke and too many others who deserved long lives and lives in peace.

Christmas Tree Cutting Permit Availability

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Conservation is about to expend the equivalent of one ton of CO₂ so he can personally attend the Paris climate-change summit. The NDP's failure on this file is well documented, including the headline, quote, NDP full of hot air on emissions strategy, end quote, in this weekend's Winnipeg Sun.

Sometimes, however, Mr. Speaker, solutions can be found closer to home. Why, in the city of Winnipeg, population 700,000, is there a single location in which you must personally attend to acquire a provincial Christmas-tree-cutting permit?

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): And I do want to thank the member opposite for a question on climate change. That's truly an epiphany for members opposite, and I'm taking that as an indication that they actually believe in climate change, so, you know, welcome to the third millennium.

On this side of the House, we have a firm commitment to address the global challenge of climate change. It's the greatest challenge of our times. I think all of us on this side of the House certainly feel that way, anyway.

And in very short order, we will be sending a delegation over to the COP21 conference on climate change in Paris. We will be announcing our strategy shortly in this regard. It's something that is the primary responsibility—

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

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the greatest challenge of our time is getting an answer from an NDP minister.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP seems stuck in the '90s both in terms of their rhetoric and in terms of technology.

Can the minister explain why a family can buy movie tickets online through their smart phone with no paper and no GHG emissions yet the equivalent service is not available to purchase a Christmas-tree-cutting permit from the Province?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, of course, trees are a huge part of our strategy, Mr. Speaker, given the fact that they absorb carbon dioxide and in that way sequester them—sequester it into the ground.

So, obviously, as a part of our overall strategy, increasing the number of trees planted and so forth across our parks, something else that members opposite paid very little attention to in their time in office. Whereas here, for example, we have a \$100-million commitment to enhancing our parks over an eight-year period, obviously a sign of how this government cares about parks, about our environment, much like—or unlike members opposite, who had a very dismal record in that regard in their time in office.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for petitions.

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

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by B. Hall, J. Mitchell, G. Gresham and many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

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

Applied Behavioural Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

* (14:30)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the ministers of Family Services, Education and Advanced Learning and Health consider making funding available to address the current waiting list for ABA services.

This petition is signed by F. Haney, L. Johnson, J. Prazak and many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

despite commitments to reduce the waiting list and provide timely access to services.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the ministers of Family Services, Education and Advanced Learning and Health consider making funding available to address the current waiting list for ABA services.

And this petition is by L. Apperley, J. Hunsberger and M. Anderson, along with many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition as follows:

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

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

(3) The children learning service has the highest ever waiting list which states—starts at 45 children. The waiting list is projected to be—keep growing and to be in excess of 80 children by September of 2016. Therefore, these children will go through the biggest transition of their lives without receiving ABA services that has helped other children achieve huge gains.

(4) The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in children by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy.

These children are being denied necessary ABA services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as many Manitoba children.

(5) The current provincial government policy now imposes on a ABA service provider will now decrease in scientifically proven, empirically based and locally proven five-year program to a consultive model that will now have over 200 children wait-list and allow only a small portion of these children to access these new services.

(6) Waiting lists, decrease in services and denials of treatment is unacceptable. No children should be denied access to the eliminate of these abilities for ABS services if their diagnosis still remains and their needs still exist.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by L. Apperley, N. Snidal, J. Rogoza and many other fine Manitoba residents.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) School learning services has its highest ever waiting list which started with 45 children. The waiting list is projected to keep growing and to be in excess of 80 children by September 2016. Therefore these children will go through the biggest transition

of their lives without receiving ABA services that has helped other children achieve huge gains.

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

(5) The current provincial government policy now imposed on the ABA service provider will now decrease the scientifically proven, empirically based and locally proven five-year program to a consultive model that will now have over a 200-child wait-list and allow only for only a small portion of children to access these new services.

(6) Waiting lists, decrease in services and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their diagnosis is still remains and they need still exist.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by F. Haney, L. Johnson, A. Johnson and many more fine Manitobans.

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

* (14:40)

And the background for the petition is as follows:

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

(2) The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes

the importance of early intervention and ABA therapy for children with autism.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the ministers of Family Services, Education and Advanced Learning and Health consider making funding available to address the current waiting list for ABA services.

And this petition's signed by L. Klein, H. Mills, J. Honke and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by J. Peters, L. Page, B. Litkowich and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Manitoba Interlake—Health Care

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is submitted on behalf of J. Wharton, M. Wharton, R. Bailey and other fine Manitobans.

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by V. Jeffrey, G. Baldwin, B. McKnight and many more fine Manitobans.

Community-Based Brain Injury Services and Supports

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to develop and evolve community-based brain injury services that include but are not limited to: case management services, known as service navigation; safe and accessible housing in the community; proctor or coach-type assistance for community reintegration programs; improved access to community-based rehabilitation services; and improved transportation, especially for people living in rural Manitoba.

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

* (14:50)

Signed by J. Booth, R. Walker, K. Toews and many other Manitobans.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a grievance.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, on a grievance.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to express my opposition to this NDP government's spend-more-and-get-less, pedal-to-the-metal spending spree of its most recent Throne Speech. And I want to use this time allotted to me in particular to express that something has changed in this province. Now, what

has not changed is this NDP government's ability to make promises. They continue to make promises and then not deliver them. But what has changed and what this Throne Speech signals, is that this government has moved away from any pretense in the idea of actually committing to a fiscal plan, a plan that would move from the legacy of deficits and debt of this government into the land of surpluses and matching revenues with expenditures.

Mr. Speaker, it was only in 2009 that this NDP government brought a Throne Speech of a different kind. At least at that time they indicated they were managing fiscal pressures by targeting spending to priority services and tightening their belts. And they said, most government departments were on pace to reduce spending. Well, that was then and this is now. And, of course, this Throne Speech is absent any language that would indicate that this government is tightening its belt.

Mr. Speaker, it was only in the 2010 Throne Speech that this same NDP government brought a Throne Speech that said that they would return the Province to balance over a five-year period, managing growth and maintaining affordability. Well, that was then and this is now. In 2010, they broke their promise, but I would submit for my colleagues in this Chamber this afternoon that the Throne Speech this year is absent of any plan to return to balance. The Throne Speech is silent. It does not refer to any plan, any agenda, any priority of this government to go in that direction.

Mr. *Speaker*, it was in my first year as a legislator in this Chamber in 2011 when this NDP government brought a Throne Speech that said their continuing goal was to sustain growth, find program 'efficiencies' and meet their fiscal targets. And how did that go for this NDP government? Well, they broke that pledge in 2011. But I would underscore that this Throne Speech is absent any similar declaration, any similar intent, any similar regard to push down expenditures, to get into balance and actually move in a direction of affordability and sustainability.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it was only last year in this Chamber, at the same time of year, when this NDP government brought a plan or at that time they said their plan was to responsibly return to balance. And how did that promise go? Well, that promise was badly broken, just like the ones that were made before this by this NDP Finance Minister and by this government.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would again underscore that this Throne Speech is absent any language that has to do with an intent, a desire, a commitment to drive down expenditures, to match revenues to expenditures.

And for that very reason, I take this opportunity afforded to me as an MLA in this Chamber to express, in the form of a grievance, my opposition to this plan that is not a plan. In fact, it is a plan to overspend deliberately. It is a plan to finally take the target down that this government that has been in a habit, year over year, of setting a target and then boldly missing the target they put out, now they have deliberately chosen to take down the target, to simply shoot the arrow and let it hit whatever, and have Manitobans pick up the cost and assume the responsibility or the implications for whatever that arrow happens to hit. A person who doesn't have a target is destined to miss that target every single time.

Mr. Speaker, what was their most recent commitment this last year? Well, their commitment was to balance the budget, but the 2015 Public Accounts show that this Finance Minister has missed it by a mile. His deficit was almost half a billion dollars, but, more importantly—and I say this for the benefit of the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), who is listening so attentively—that it was \$95 million higher than planned in his budget. He missed it by \$95 million, but it's actually more egregious than that, because at the same time unanticipated revenue streams were up, not down. So he's actually failing on both sides of the equation.

But, Mr. Speaker, in no way, shape and form would I reference throne speeches from 2011, '12, '13 and '14. In no way is this most current Finance Minister exempt from the charges, because it was he, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), who said that the goal of his government was to return to surplus when? In 2016-2017, but how were they going to do this? How was the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) going to accomplish this audacious goal where his predecessors has failed? He said we're going to do this by controlling expenditures.

Ah, there it is. How did it go for the member of Selkirk who tried to succeed where his predecessors failed? Well, it turned out his deficit was \$100 million over. His expenditures, actually, were \$204 million over what was budgeted even though revenue was up hundreds of millions of dollars over what was predicted. So, you know, I can

give my condolences because I understand that this Minister of Finance inherited a bad deal, but he is not exempt from these charges that I bring today.

Mr. Speaker, I would use the remainder of my time to simply point out that last week at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities debate, this First Minister was madly off in all directions. As a matter of fact, I think you could say that he was flip-flopping because he was saying on one hand that it was important to spend on infrastructure but that—he was saying that it was surely the reason that he had raised the PST. He was saying the reason we raised the PST was to spend on infrastructure. He actually said you can't do infrastructure when you're getting rid of revenues. But, on the other hand, he confirmed that most of the infrastructure spending is going to be financed through borrowed money, and he said we have to build these things when interest rates are low. The problem is that he can't have it both ways. He cannot have it on both hands. Which one is it? Is the government paying for infrastructure out of the PST hike, or are they paying for it by these historically low interest rates and financing it through borrowed money?

Well, the answer, Mr. Speaker, is obvious: that the NDP's only real commitment is a commitment to dramatically overspend, the result of which is higher borrowing costs that we've already seen with our province's first downgrade in over 20 years. The result is higher debt, the result we have already seen in simply the last six years the NDP has doubled the Province's debt to over \$36 billion and the result of which, of course, is a stubborn deficit that neither this Finance Minister, his predecessor or her predecessor is equal to the task of addressing.

Is it impossible? No, but it takes a plan, and this government, of course, doesn't have a plan. Mr. Speaker, what this government has is a plan—is a tax plan. It's a tax plan. And the tax plan is a \$6.6-billion plan of previously unannounced spending commitments over the next five years. It would amount to, instead of the \$39-million surplus in 2016-2017 as was initially forecast, it would amount to more than \$1.3 billion of additional deficits every single year for the next five years. That is historic. That is boldly going where no deficit-loving Finance Minister has gone before.

*(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, these are only some of the reasons I choose to express my disdain for and great fear—

great fear—of the tax plan that this NDP government is trying to perpetrate on unsuspecting Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Are there further grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to—for leave to allow bills 2 and 7 to be moved for second reading, which would allow for a question and answer and for members who have previously spoken to the bills to be able to speak again if they wish? And this is as per the agreement between the House leaders from the previous session on carry-over bills.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow Bill 2 and Bill 7 to be moved for second reading, which would allow also for a question and answer and for members who have previously spoken to the bill to be able to speak again if they wish? And, also, this is as per the agreement between House leaders from the previous session on the carry-forward of bills.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I thank the House for leave.

Mr. Speaker, would you—we would like now to call for second reading of Bill 300, Bill 2, Bill 7 and Bill 3.

Mr. Speaker: We'll be calling bills in the following order: starting with Bill 300, followed by Bill 2, Bill 7 and Bill 3.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 300—The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 300, The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), that Bill 300, The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la « Mount Carmel Clinic », be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: It's a pleasure to speak today about this bill and to speak a little bit about Mount Carmel Clinic.

Mount Carmel Clinic is a not-for-profit community health centre committed to helping families live healthier lives. Mount Carmel Clinic works together with people, families and communities to enhance lifelong health and well-being.

The people at Mount Carmel Clinic understand that social determinants affect health outcomes. That's why they offer a wide range of services that address needs from child care and mental health to housing and social status. The approach taken with each person is as unique as they are, taking into account each person's own history and priorities.

I'm pleased we're joined in the gallery this afternoon by some good people from Mount Carmel Clinic. I'm told we have Bobbette Shoffner, executive director; Al Shpeller, acting executive director and director of operations; Chad Smith, board chair; Jay Bodner, director of primary health; and Pauline Maytwayashing, executive assistant.

By way of history, Mr. Speaker, Mount Carmel Clinic was created in response to Winnipeg's immigration boom of the late 1800s and the early 1900s. While Winnipeg was quick to recognize the economic need for immigrants, it was painfully slow to recognize their social needs. As immigrants arrived in Winnipeg by the thousands, the majority concentrated in the North End and West End. Cheap housing was plentiful, but physical isolation coupled with prejudice led many newcomers to develop business, professional, social and religious institutions of their own.

Despite the growth of a vibrant and active community, one thing above all others remained a problem: accessible and affordable health care. Those who couldn't afford to pay for services could still visit a hospital with outpatient facilities for the poor, but these hospitals kept records including the ethnicity of each patient. They tabulated these numbers and regularly printed them in the paper.

It was this environment that prompted the Jewish community in Winnipeg to establish the Mount Carmel Clinic. The clinic began in a house on Pritchard Avenue in 1929 and moved into a new facility funded by the Jewish community located at 120 Selkirk Avenue, very close to where the clinic is

located today, and served primarily members of the Jewish community.

By 1948, the clinic had just two staff members: Anne Ross, who was hired as a nurse, and a bookkeeper-secretary. By this time, the economic conditions of Winnipeg's Jewish community had improved like that of many other Canadians, lessening the need for the services of the clinic among the Jewish community alone.

Under the leadership of Anne Ross, the emphasis of the clinic changed. It became a strongly community-oriented service catering to the needs of the community in which it was situated. The change in perspective is best explained by Anne Ross herself in her book *Clinic with a Heart*, and I quote, health workers in 1948 emphasized curing only the physical affliction without regard for the contributing factors of the illness. From my perspective, such a philosophy was terribly narrow-minded and almost nonsensical. I believe in a system of health care that was not acknowledged at the time. I believed in the idea of treating the individual or family as holistic entities. Every person responds physically and emotionally to their immediate environment and to their network of friends and family members. I felt it was highly advisable to investigate these factors as a function of an individual's general health.

Over the next 20 years, Mount Carmel Clinic truly came into its own. What was once only a passive service dispensing care to those who came through the doors became an active agent for change in the community. The clinic established a regular roster of volunteer doctors which gave public health nurses the option to refer patients to Mount Carmel Clinic, instead of a hospital setting where many clients felt so uncomfortable. Home visits were increased, helping to ensure proper follow-up on treatment and to provide information about preventing illness and maintaining good health. Home immunization programs now meant families didn't have to travel with one or more young children in tow, increasing the likelihood that children would receive preventive care at the right time. During the same period, Mount Carmel Clinic took a lead role in providing family-planning information, mostly to young and low-income women.

Well, it's hard to imagine now, Mr. Speaker, taking the step to provide this type of counselling took great courage, for at that time it was a direct violation of federal law.

Immigrants continue to arrive from around the world, now joined by a wave of Aboriginal and Metis people moving from their home communities, hoping that Winnipeg would provide greater opportunities. Unfortunately, for many, any advantages to city life were paired with many cultural changes that adjustment often became difficult. This meant many of the newly arrived were forced to live in poor housing conditions without proper nutrition or the necessary warm clothing.

These conditions were especially hard on children. The clinic saw more and more cases of upper respiratory and ear infections. Families were confronted with so many hardships that even they were able to get medical care for their children, it wasn't always possible for the families to provide the necessary follow-up care. In the face of this overwhelming need, Mount Carmel Clinic created a day hospital. Children came to the clinic each day for treatment but then returned home at night; this meant they received the care they needed while allowing the family unit to stay intact. An additional benefit of daily visits was the connections that many families made with the staff. They learned about life in Winnipeg and how to cope with the issues that city life brought with it.

When Medicare arrived in the 1960s, many thought the clinic had finally outlived its usefulness. This proved not to be the case. Patients came in growing numbers for a variety of reasons, but underlying its continuing relevance to the community was one thing: an appreciation for the dignity and respect given to each client. At this time, a variety of programs were available, including counselling, a milk fund for at-risk pregnant women, free dental care, pharmacy and a day nursery.

By the early 1970s, the clinic space was no longer adequate, serving 120 patients per day in a space of only 2,500 square feet. It was clear the original facility could no longer house all the programs and services Mount Carmel Clinic had to offer. Social workers and the nutritional counsellor occupied a rented house nearby and the day nursery was accommodated in a trailer. Through persistent effort the clinic finally raised enough funds to build a new facility at the clinic's current location at 886 Main Street. During the same period, Mount Carmel Clinic played an advocacy role in issues perceived as health related. This included both improved housing and the ongoing struggle to control the price of milk.

The community-centred approach pioneered by Anne Ross in the 1950s has continued to thrive. As the needs of the community have changed, the clinic has responded to meet those needs. The clinic has also expanded to five buildings, all located within the Point Douglas-North End community. Services provided today include over 25 major health services, including new programs such as the multicultural counselling program, the diabetes and hepatitis C clinics, teen clinic, The Mothering Project, Sage House and the Parenting Student Support Program.

The legacy of Anne Ross lives on, not just in the spirit of the clinic but also in a building that bears her name. The Anne Ross Day Nursery dedicated in her honour now has its own building adjacent to the clinic with space for 48 children. The building is currently expanding; it'll be adding 16 new infant spaces by March 2016.

It becomes clear with every year that passes Mount Carmel Clinic's focus on promotion of good health and prevention of illness leads to positive results not only for the personal well-being of patients but for the economic well-being of the health-care system and the clinic itself.

The clinic has received public acclaim not only in Manitoba but also across Canada and in the United States. Many see it as a model for care that is responsive to community needs, addresses root causes of poor health and promotes a harm-reduction approach to working with its clients and our community.

* (15:10)

Throughout its history, the Mount Carmel Clinic has had the benefit of an excellent volunteer board. The legislation currently mandates a minimum of 25 board members. That is a lot compared to other not-for-profit organizations of similar size. Mount Carmel Clinic asked that this number be reduced to a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 15.

Mount Carmel Clinic was the first community health clinic in Canada and continues to be a leader within our provincial health-care system, and they've requested amendments to modernize the wording of this relationship. Mount Carmel Clinic will celebrate 90 years of service for the community in 2016. And as they say: We meet you where you're at, no judgment here.

I encourage all members to support this bill and to learn more or perhaps even visit the Mount Carmel Clinic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Are there questions on Bill 300?

Seeing none, move on and continue the debate.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, and appreciate the member bringing forward the bill, Bill 300, The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act, and just want to let him and the House and people from Mount Carmel know that we are fully supportive of the bill.

Having been on a board of directors before, I can certainly appreciate that sometimes when you have a huge board of 25, it can be somewhat unwieldy and certainly not as nimble as a board with perhaps 12 to 15 people. So we're fully supportive of what the intent of the bill is in decreasing the size of the board.

When I was a student nurse, one of the first things we learned in nursing school was about Mount Carmel Clinic and, actually, about Anne Ross. And through my years at the Winnipeg General Hospital, certainly Anne Ross's name was one that was out there a number of times as a leader in health care, a pioneer and a visionary. And, certainly, with the challenges that she had before her in those days, she really did become quite an icon to many of us who, you know, learned about her and learned about her efforts to make a difference in the area that she chose to.

Certainly, with Mount Carmel Clinic, too, I had a chance, as a student nurse, to tour there, and I've had an opportunity since. I do look forward to having a tour, hopefully in the near future, to see the progress that has been made, because certainly this is a clinic that has, you know, embraced their many challenges and are doing a lot of really good things and dealing with a lot of need in the area in which they are housed.

So I would also say that I think they were ahead of their time in addressing social determinants of health. It's taken a long time for the health-care system to embrace looking at that. We've talked about it for a lot of years. We talked about it back when I was a student nurse. And we all know how important dealing with social determinants of health are, that, in fact, they probably have more of an impact on a person's actual health than hospitals, but

it always tends to be that hospitals are the ones that get most of the attention. And social determinants of health and, you know, health promotion, illness prevention tend to get less attention than what acute care does. So Mount Carmel Clinic were really leaders in taking on these issues, and they still are today, not only looking at health issues but the social challenges of many people that are in that area.

We do know, and I heard the minister say, that next year will be 90 years. That is certainly going to be a significant celebration for the clinic, and we know that it was created at that time to respond to injustices that resulted in two important needs. One was the need of Jewish immigrants to Winnipeg to receive good health care, and the need of Jewish doctors in Winnipeg to have access to good jobs. Mount Carmel Clinic has stayed true to its roots by remaining in the North End to provide health care and a variety of additional programs that benefit their clients.

And I think it has become such a significant clinic in north Winnipeg that it's even hard to imagine what it might be like without having that clinic there and the services that they provide and, you know, their embracing of primary health care. We are finally starting in the health-care system to really comment about the importance of primary health care and, really, that is where the major focus for health care needs to be. It's, you know, tipping the system on its head and really making primary health care as important as it needs to be because that's what keeps people healthy. It keeps people out of hospitals, and that is one of the ways that we can address sustainability of our health-care system.

So Mount Carmel Clinic was ahead of its time, and I think anything we can do to help support their initiatives, to showcase them as a model for what can be done, I think we should be doing that. They built on a vision of their predecessors to respond to social issues that have resulted in poor health for citizens in their community. Many of the people whom they serve are indigenous, and we know the significant challenges that our indigenous people have around health care, particularly around diabetes and the major challenges that that poses. Mount Carmel Clinic provides a wide variety of primary health services, including, I would add, a free chiropractic services to north enders, something often beyond a person's ability to pay for and something that can actually make a big difference in the lives of somebody seeking better health.

They operate the Anne Ross Day Nursery, and, certainly, that has been, I think, a huge benefit and, you know, one of the programs that I've heard about over many years. They have a lot of variety of unique programs responding to the needs of the community, and they've based their clinic and built their clinic around the needs of the community. And that's how we should be looking at health care.

They have multicultural programs that provide trauma counselling and a variety of programs to assist refugees and newcomers to gain life skills in their city. I imagine that this is something that is a big challenge nowadays as we have more immigrants and refugees coming in. Many of them do need access to good health-care services but also post-traumatic stress disorder, counselling and other forms of mental-health counselling. And this clinic is in such a good place and positioned in such a good way to address those issues, and I imagine those issues are going to be growing for them and challenging for them, and it is something I think we have to keep on the radar to ensure that they have the supports they need in order to be able to help people with that.

We know that they have a Housing First program, an Assertive Community Treatment, part of Chez Soi, a program formerly at the Mental Health Commission of Canada which works with the hardest-to-house citizens in Winnipeg who are homeless. We saw the other day in the—being reported about the number of homeless that have actually now been identified in Winnipeg, and it's a significant number. And as we are, you know, moving quickly into winter, these are big challenges, and it is good to know that there is a group like this that are working hard to address this challenging problem.

The Mothering Project is one I particularly like. It provides wraparound services to young women who are pregnant or who have addictions. We know that, again, here's another area of great challenge, and we know that there are big gaps in our system in Manitoba in terms of addiction treatment and we have long waiting lists. So, again, another area that we certainly have to stay in tune with and monitor what is happening there and ensure that the groups that are out there working on these issues have the resources they need to be able to address the problems.

I note that they build relationships with, you know, pregnant moms, and they support young

women through their pregnancy, birth and young motherhood, so having that length of time with somebody is certainly going to ensure more success for a young mom. And I would note, too, that this program has enabled many babies to go home with their moms in well-supported situations where, previously, many of these children might have been taken into Child and Family Services' care at birth.

*(15:20)

Also, Mr. Speaker, the clinic takes very seriously the need for change in a variety of ways for their patients and clients and participants. They do indicate that racism affects many in their lives, and it is something we certainly need to be very aware of. Poverty also compromises the opportunities available to many. And yet those at Mount Carmel see communities of resilience with people working hard to provide opportunity for themselves and their families.

So we certainly have a health clinic here that is already doing some marvellous things in Manitoba, and I'm sure if we looked at all of the things that are doing, we will find that it's been incredibly valuable to the people that live in that community. So we're certainly very supportive of this legislation, and we wish Mount Carmel Clinic all the best in the future ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, like others, I am very pleased to be able to put a few comments on the record as we debate the passage of this bill to modernize the Mount Carmel board structure, I guess because in many respects, you can say they have been iconic. They have always been leading edge, and they've always been very adaptive. And so, in some respects, they've been modernizing the provision of community health care, how it's provided to folks. So it's only fitting that we now work with them to modernize the legislation.

As has already been described, that, you know, they have been doing so many things and provide so many services, but I think what's most important is that they have been called an oasis of acceptance in a judgmental world, that it is not just about the services; it's been about the provision of those services. And that description—well, really, I can hardly imagine a more heartwarming description for a health clinic. It's something that I think the staff, the volunteers and the board of Mount Carmel

should be very, very proud of because we are very proud of them.

And, as has been discussed already and as many know, Mount Carmel Clinic was founded in the early 1900s by a group of Jewish professionals who wanted to provide accessible and affordable health care to immigrants. And, of course, we know about the legendary Anne Ross, who took the reins in 1948 and moved the clinic's orientation from strictly ethnically based to community oriented. And, again, as the first community health clinic in Canada, Mount Carmel played a vital role not just in providing health care but also in overall settlement services for immigrants, as the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) has noted in his remarks. And this is a tradition that continues today as Mount Carmel will be an important part in the settlement efforts for Syrian refugees coming to Manitoba.

Earlier this month, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) announced a comprehensive, multipronged strategy to provide humanitarian relief and supports to welcome 1,500 to 2,000 refugees displaced by the crisis in Syria, and at the time, he said that Manitobans value diversity and inclusiveness and they have made it clear that they want to do whatever is necessary to help these innocent victims of war find a better life. Welcoming refugees to Manitoba will require working in collaboration with all levels of government as well as with settlement agencies and community organizations to find suitable housing and start the long-term settlement process.

So I would like to thank, in advance, the great staff at Mount Carmel as well as other agencies and groups in advance for the countless hours, enormous effort it will take to open our province to this group and make them feel at home after their long and dangerous journey. If there is anyone that we can trust with the care of those individuals, I know it is the wonderful folks at Mount Carmel. Again, you've been leading the way for 90 years. We will rely so much on your guidance and your commitment to community as we enter this new phase welcoming new people to Canada and all of the safety and warmth that it will represent for them and knowing that you, for many of them, will be the face of that welcome. So I want to thank you for that.

Now, I know that in some respects, this is a bill that, because it's about modernizing a board of directors, some might see as, again, as merely housekeeping because, you know, the notion of changing in the board of directors might not seem

like, you know, something that really rings for folks or understand the nature of the legislation. But, as I said earlier, when Mount Carmel approached us about this change, it was clear that their vision to have an inclusive and vibrant board that reflects and understands the clients of the clinic and to move forward with new and innovative programs was really far from administrative. So I'm really pleased to be able to work with everyone in this Chamber to help make this change that—for Mount Carmel so that they can effectively continue their leadership in the community.

And, yes, in 2016, next year, Mount Carmel will celebrate its 90th year of serving Point Douglas and Winnipeg. And, like others looking forward to touring the clinic in the new year, learning more about the day-to-day service that it helps provide in the heart of Winnipeg and, again, helps keep Winnipeg's heart beating.

One thing I would like to say as well is that, again, how do you describe this community and what the role and the approach that they take? Well, they say it best themselves, and I would like to read for others here that might not have seen it, the vision statement from their website, because I think it really does encapsulate so much of what they do.

So it says: At Mount Carmel Clinic we believe everyone has the right to accessible health care. That's why we go the extra mile to help clients connect with services they need, in their homes, workplaces and neighbourhood. Things get in the way, like language barriers, bad past experiences, or just the idea of walking into a clinic setting. There can be many reasons why health care hasn't felt like an option. We know we can't do it alone, so we draw on the strengths of our community. In our proudly multicultural part of the city, many groups have a tradition of neighbours looking out for one another. Resident groups are in place, making employment and literacy programs available. Neighbourhood patrol groups are visible, and the business community is actively involved in local revitalization projects. Partnerships between agencies and community residents are growing. Together we are all working towards a healthy North End. End quote.

I think it very much—that encapsulates so much of what you do and again speaks to the vision that you have here. So I would like to again thank you for the holistic approach that you've taken. I think, in many times in health care, we talk about things being patient centered. You've taken that to a whole new

level. It's patient and it's community-centered and, again, it's something that we are so thankful for the 90 years that you've contributed already.

And to the guests that are here in the House, please share with the rest of your team, the rest of your board, the staff, the volunteers, just how much we appreciate the work that you do. I have to admit I have a slight soft spot because your director of primary health is one of my former nursing students, and so you have an extra special place in my heart, and I just want to thank you again for everything and look forward to this legislation helping you for the next 90 years.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by recognizing Chad Smith, board chair, and the members of the Mount Carmel Clinic who are here with us in the Chamber today.

I was at the recent annual general meeting of the Mount Carmel Clinic and enjoyed the conversation and getting updated and the speech from the former grand chief and it was a very positive meeting and looking ahead and continuing the good work that Mount Carmel Clinic is doing. I'm a strong supporter of Mount Carmel Clinic and the work that it's done.

I want today to speak specifically and primarily to the Manito Ikwe Kagiikwe, The Mothering Project. I had the opportunity earlier to this year to meet with Margaret Bryans and others in The Mothering Project. It is focused on helping pregnant mothers who have problems with addictions to drugs or alcohol, to provide these mothers the skills and the support before, during and after the birth of the child. And, of course, sometimes the support starts after, but primarily it is involved before, during as well as after the pregnancy.

The goal is to enable these mothers, almost all of whom who've struggled with drug or alcohol addictions, to be able to take care of their babies and to take them home when they leave the hospital. In the past, a very high proportion of these infants would have been apprehended and taken into care.

And so this is a very important endeavour, as we have far too many newborns being apprehended and taken from their mothers at birth in Manitoba. It averages about one newborn a day being taken away from the mother, and that's far too many, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:30)

Indeed, it is probably in the range of 10 times as many, as many other jurisdictions around the world, in a very-well researched article that was published, I believe, in 2012 in *The Lancet*, a prestigious medical journal. And that research was very carefully done and pointed out the problems that we have here in Manitoba with generally insufficient support of mothers before, during and after pregnancy, particularly the mothers who are having difficulty.

And so it is wonderful to see this Mothering Project working. It is not easy work. It is extremely challenging. And I want to congratulate all those who are involved in the Mothering Project. I'd like to congratulate Margaret Bryans and her team on their work and to thank them for what they do, for they've had a remarkable amount of success and have been enabling about half of these mothers to be able to take their babies home and to raise them and to do well.

I also want to recognize, of course, that there are many other programs at Mount Carmel Clinic, an example being the Housing First program which is taken up from the work of Dr. Jino Distasio and Dr. Jitender Sareen, who co-chaired the *Chez Soi* project here in Manitoba and demonstrated how effective the Housing First project is in enabling people to have homes who have been homeless and to be able to do better and to use fewer social services and health-care resources than they were doing before.

So I want to just acknowledge that I'm in full support of Bill 300 and the Mount Carmel Clinic and wish those at the clinic all the best of success in the years ahead, the most positive years, I hope, and to continue the wonderful work that you're doing.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand today in support of Bill 300, The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act, and welcome those in the gallery that are here today to see and listen to the debate and see what we really do in this House on many, many occasions, and that is agree when things—when issues are presented to us. And most times we agree on a lot of things. There are times when we have conflict and we will disagree based on our philosophical beliefs, but today we stand united to support Mount Carmel Clinic and the wonderful work that you have done over the last almost 90 years. And we can only anticipate and expect that kind of good work to continue for many, many years to come. So thanks to the present board

and to all those that preceded you in making Mount Carmel Clinic the strong and vibrant organization that it is today.

And, you know, family issues were very different 90 years ago than they are today. And I believe that life and community is much more challenging. Although, you know, with the first waves of immigration in the early '90s and the Jewish community, and I grew up in the North End of the city of Winnipeg and probably was exposed more somewhat to the Jewish community, but also to the Ukrainian community that immigrated here and settled in the North End of Winnipeg, and, you know, the services and supports that were needed and were provided by organizations like yours were invaluable to those first immigrants and I know are invaluable today to the significant issues that are—you deal with in the North End of the city of Winnipeg, as we see, and we might call it—I don't think we can call it immigration from our northern communities—into the city of Winnipeg, primarily into the North End, and to the new waves of immigration and the language barriers and the challenges that we see. We know that you do an excellent job.

And I just want to speak briefly about Anne Ross and how appropriate it is to have the day nursery named after her. She was a pioneer and a visionary and a strong woman at a time when women were just finding their place. And she took on the challenges with vigour and certainly made significant—she was an agent of change for the community and for Mount Carmel Clinic. And we just have to give our thanks to her for the work that she has done.

Some of the programming is just so very, very important to those that need support and services. And many of the families I know that Mount Carmel Clinic works with today are families that are living in poverty. We see the homeless that need the kinds of support that are available through Mount Carmel Clinic, and I just can't express my thanks and my gratitude enough for those people that do, every day, come to work looking to help those that are in need.

And I just have to think about the countless numbers of people that have walked through the doors of Mount Carmel Clinic over the years. Not only have we got the board that has changed and we have the staff and the volunteers that have changed over the years, but the number of people that—I'm sure if walls could talk, they would have stories to

tell that would warm our hearts, Mr. Speaker, for the invaluable work and service that has been provided over the years.

And I just have to say thank you so much to those that saw the need 90 years ago and started an organization that continues to grow and to thrive and to evolve to meet the ever-changing needs that we experience today through the different waves of immigration and through all of the challenges that we face. With so much more—families have changed so significantly, and we see homeless people today that are supported and served. We see young single moms who have significant challenges when it comes to pregnancy and addiction that probably weren't around 90 years ago. But we're seeing more and more, Mr. Speaker, of that kind of thing, that kind of challenge in our communities today.

And, if we could only clone Mount Carmel Clinic and ensure that the services and supports that they provide were available to more families, Mr. Speaker, we would be the beneficiaries in Manitoba of a great, great system. And we would see so many families experience the kind of support and help to move themselves up in our community.

So I just want to say thank you very much. We certainly support the changes in the legislation. It's not just the changes in the size of the board but it's the change, as has been said already, in the kinds of activity, in the renewal that does need to happen when an organization has been around for 90 years. There needs to be change, they need to adapt and they need to move to the new realities.

And so I really support the smaller size of the board. We all do in this House, and it's so good to see that there are people on all sides of this House, both sides and the Liberal Party also, that do support the good work that you do. Congratulations on 90 years of community support and support to families that need the kind of encouragement that they have received from Mount Carmel Clinic. And I'm hoping that we will see that continue for many, many years.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased and honoured and proud to stand here today and to support this legislation, and say thank you to those that have done such a great job over the years.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this matter? Seeing none, the House is ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 300, The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act.

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

**Bill 2—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Small Classes for K to 3)**

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to call for second reading Bill 2, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Small Classes for K to 3).

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Ms. Wight), that Bill 2, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Small Classes for K to 3), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (15:40)

Mr. Allum: I'm pleased to be able to rise in the House today to speak at second reading on Bill 2, the public schools amendment act relating to small class sizes for kindergarten to grade 3. Some years ago, this government—and I want to acknowledge my friend, the former minister of Education, my friend, member from St. Vital (Ms. Allan)—this government committed to reducing class sizes in kindergarten to grade 3 in all our public schools across Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this commitment was to roll out over five years. And I'm pleased to say that that commitment is on track, on budget, going ahead full steam, with significant investments to be made in the hiring of additional early-years teachers—and we can say categorically that that's happened—and then also to provide capital to create additional classroom spaces.

Now, this undertaking was given because we believe—and it's not just we, Mr. Speaker; the scientific evidence suggests this, the pedagogical evidence suggests this—but we believe that success in life depends on having access to a quality education early in life. Smaller class sizes allows students more one-on-one time with their teachers which in turn builds a strong foundation for future learning and in helping students achieve academic success.

And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, my own daughter, proud to say, teaches a grade 1-2 class at

General Byng in Pembina Trails School Division. Her class is under 20. And she tells me it's not only just that one-on-one time, which is an imperative between teacher and student, but it promotes a greater cohesiveness in the classroom. It promotes better mentorship between and among students. It creates all around a better learning environment. And when you have that quality learning environment, especially with the younger grades and at the younger ages, you are certainly going to promote better educational success and better educational outcomes for our children as they make their way through the public education system.

Now, in moving forward with implementing this initiative, the Department of Education was fortunate to be able to call upon the advice and assistance of the major stakeholder groups that we work with day in and day out. That includes, of course, the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils or MAPC which, I'm pleased to say, this Legislature also passed legislation around MAPC to make sure that there's a parent voice in our education system as well there should be. We also worked, at the time, Mr. Speaker, with the Manitoba School Boards Association, Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents and the Manitoba association of school business officers. And these folks met with members of my staff over a period of several months to develop recommendations to assist in a practical and workable implementation scheme for the class-size initiative.

As you can appreciate, when you're trying to create smaller classrooms, when you're working with your school division partners to hire more teachers, which is what we do, this is not an uncomplicated task. It takes co-operation among the partners. It takes collaboration among all the partners. And I'm pleased to say that as a result of that co-operation and collaboration between ourselves and all of our partners, we've gone a good deal down the path toward full implementation of this initiative with many more—with some more work still to be done in the final years of implementation.

Now, indeed, the content of Bill 2 reflects those very recommendations that were made when this initiative was committed to by the government, particularly with regard to the capping of K-to-3 class sizes at 20 students in 90 per cent of division classes and a maximum of 23 students in 10 per cent of division K-to-3 classes. And this is important, Mr. Speaker. There has to be some element of flexibility.

There has to be some element of practicality when we want to implement a sophisticated, not uncomplicated initiative but one we know we need to do in order to serve our children well, in order to create the foundation for positive early learning experience and in order to create a successful pathway for education right through from kindergarten all the way through to grade 12, but then we hope, of course, into college or university and then on to a good job.

Now the recommendation, Mr. Speaker, around the sizes, the class sizes of 90 per cent—20 students in 90 per cent of division classes and a maximum of 23 students in 10 per cent of division classes—this recommendation, which the department subsequently adopted, has been used successfully in other jurisdictions when implemented so that it's—so that when implemented we can be sure that practicality combines with aspiration in order to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, smaller class sizes in early grades simply makes sense for student learning.

As I said just a few minutes ago, research supports the common sense notion that class size is an important determinant of student outcome. It provides an environment in which teachers can teach differently. In smaller classes, teachers can interact with individual students more frequently and employ a greater variety of instructional strategies. Students can and frequently do take greater control over their own learning when smaller class sizes are in place, and I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that that only relates to the experience between teacher and student, as important as that is.

But what we know too is that parents categorically support this initiative. They come into the classroom and they see a small class-size setting. They see that interaction between teacher and student. They see in student-led conferences how that interaction, that greater one-on-one time between student and teacher, they see that how it's actually, in fact, improving learning in the classroom for their own child. But they also see that it's working for every other child, and in that sense it's a really important initiative for students, for teachers and, of course, for parents who want to see their children succeed when in school.

Mr. Speaker, I also should say that in smaller classes students are able to learn more academically and socially. So we're not only talking about their academic success, which is important, of course, we

want to make sure that they focus on those fundamentals of good foundational learning in math and in literacy. But we also need to make sure that they're also socially adept as well, to play better or well with their other students, to interact on a more collegial basis in the classroom with other students. That improves behaviours and that improves performance as a result. There certainly is greater student engagement, as I said a few minutes ago, less disruption in the classroom.

And this—we've talked about this before, Mr. Speaker, but it's worth restating that teachers themselves are noticing a direct connection between smaller classes and student behaviour. In the fall of 2013, the Manitoba Teachers' Society surveyed a number of its members on a variety of workplace issues, and in regard to the smaller K-to-3 class size initiative, 90 per cent—and I'm including my own daughter among this—90 per cent of the K-to-3 teachers surveyed indicated that this had made a positive impact on student engagement with 80 per cent of these teachers suggesting that student behaviour was also positively impacted.

Mr. Speaker, teachers see this every day, they know this and, as I said a few seconds ago, so do parents. Smaller classes contribute to student success. Individualized attention makes a difference at any grade, particularly so at early years when the foundation for learning is being created.

* (15:50)

Now, since 2012 a significant progress, as I said at the outset of my remarks today, has been made as we work towards full implementation by the end of September 2017. Mr. Speaker, \$13 million has been contributed towards the hiring of 382 new teachers as divisions reduce their class sizes and, again, I think it's important to 'reiterate'—reiterate this particular point, 382 new teachers as divisions reduce their class sizes. There are 437 more K-to-3 classes now than there were when this initiative started; 91 per cent of classes now have 23 or fewer students; and 66 per cent of K-to-3 classes have 20 or fewer pupils. There has been a 90–59 per cent decrease in the number of K-to-3 classes with 24 or more pupils, 376 fewer classes in this category now than in 2011.

Thanks to the incredible co-operation and support of school divisions, we are making significant progress, not progress measured in modest increments, but in real tangible advances that parents and teachers see and welcome.

As part of our commitment, too, we have to date invested almost \$40 million toward capital projects. This represents 66 classroom additions and renovations at 28 schools since 2012. We know there is more to be done and it will be done, and we continue to review and proceed with aligning future operating and capital needs funding in order to meet full implementation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Bill 2 formalizes the promise we made as a government back in 2011 to bring down and cap K-to-3 class sizes. The investments made today and those to be made in the future are significant but essential. Bill 2 enshrines that commitment, sets the requirements on K-to-3 class sizes for school divisions to operationalize between 2017 and will allow the minister to set out in regulation the type of information parents can expect to see on class sizes in their children's schools through such online reporting as the class size tracker, which divisions already use.

Extremely proud of this initiative, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to stand on the shoulders of those who went before me, of my friend from St. Vital who had made such a monumental contribution to this Legislature and to the public education system in Manitoba. I'm proud to stand here today and speak in support of it, echoing the views of so many parents and teachers who know and see what a difference it makes for kids, and strongly recommend to all my colleagues throughout this Chamber that this legislation be passed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any questions on this matter?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of Education could provide a cost estimate for the cost of this conversion to smaller class sizes that the government is undertaking.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from River Heights for that question. Of course, he knows that in the creation of the small class size initiative, the commitment that we made just a few years back, we committed \$20 million in operating in order to hire more teachers in order to ensure that divisions have the wherewithal to produce those kind of small class size results.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we've contributed significant dollars in relation to capital investments. The budgets for future years are still

being evaluated as we go forward. Of course, we want to pass the legislation and I know I'll get my friend's support in doing so, but he knows what the numbers are—have been to date, what it has cost to date in terms of the original commitment, what the capital costs have been in terms of the original commitment. I'm not saying those costs will continue into the future, but he does have an indication of what those costs have been.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, just a question: In regards to the promise or the commitment from the government for the new Syrian refugees coming into the province, what is the minister's plan in regards to the increased enrolments possibly within our schools?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think my friend would mean that in relation to the small class size initiative, at least I think that is what he's suggesting. Of course, Mr. Speaker, we are—this government proudly supporting the relocation of Syrian refugees to Manitoba and proudly do so in collaboration with many community agencies. We're busily partnering in terms of education, of course, of what our contribution will be to ensuring the smooth transition of those children and those families into our public schools. We'll certainly be incorporating that kind of planning into the small class size initiative going forward, but I can say that all departments in this government are working together day in and day out to ensure the smooth transition of our—of Syrian refugees to Manitoba. We're proud that they're here, and I can't think of anything other than to say that we'll be giving them a warm welcome embrace when they do arrive.

Mr. Ewasko: So my question to the minister is then: What type of resources are—has his department shared with one another, with the other departments that is going to be coming from the Education and Advanced Learning budget to help with the supports of the new students coming to our K-to-3 schools within the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Allum: I thank my friend for that question.

Of course, the strategy that's being development to host Syrian refugees in order to ensure that they have a place in our communities via the—a home and a neighbourhood, access to a classroom, whatnot, is being done interdepartmentally within our government, and, of course, we are working on the budget implications of that right now in the same manner with respect to the K-to-3 legislation. The impact of refugees coming to Manitoba will be incorporated

into our budgetary thinking. We want to make sure that we provide every opportunity to promote the smooth transition of those young people into our classrooms. We need to—they need to know that there's a welcome, warm place here in Manitoba for them, and we'll be doing everything in our regard to make sure that that happens.

Mr. Ewasko: Has the minister met with the association of school trustees or school boards, Mr. Speaker, on this matter?

Mr. Allum: Of course, I meet with our friends, our partners in the education system on a routine 'bashis.' In fact, those folks from those organizations, MTS and Manitoba School Boards Association, school superintendents, MAPC, Manitoba association of business officers, all of our partners were just in my office just a few weeks ago. It's a very comprehensive agenda. Among the things we discussed was the Syrian refugee issue.

Mr. Ewasko: I'd like the minister to put on the record again which associations actually were within his office within the last couple of weeks talking about the new Syrian refugees. Name all the stakeholders, please.

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I just did that. We—I'd have to look back at my calendar at the exact date that those folks were in my office, but, of course, we had representatives from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, representatives from Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, representatives from the Manitoba association of school boards, representatives from Manitoba association of business officers, representatives from Manitoba Association of Parent Councils.

I think I've, if I haven't repeated myself, I think I've got the five there. Of course, it was a very comprehensive agenda. We went through a variety of things. And, of course, it wouldn't be possible to be in a room like that without discussing the Syrian refugee question.

Mr. Ewasko: How many K-to-3 schools are there presently in Manitoba?

Mr. Allum: If I could ask the member just to repeat that question.

Mr. Ewasko: How many K-to-3 public schools are there in Manitoba?

Mr. Allum: Well, I think, you know, that is a level of specificity in the question offered by my friend

from across the hall. Be gladly able to provide him with the exact number of schools.

To date, we have a very comprehensive tracking data that will provide him with the full numbers in terms of participating schools, participating school divisions, which, of course, exist across the province, number of teachers hired, dollars invested, progress to date, what remains to be done. I'd be happy to provide him with all of that specific information in due course, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ewasko: It's interesting that we're discussing Bill 2, the public schools amendment act for small-class sizes for K to 3, and the minister's not coming with that information. But I will take him at his word that he'll be getting me that information rather quickly.

So in regards—I know he mentioned a few percentages earlier. What are the percentages of those class sizes that have started to comply to Bill 2?

*(16:00)

Mr. Allum: In fact, the numbers to date are very, very promising. I can tell the member that, currently, through the small class size initiative, 91 per cent of classes—there are 91 per cent of classes with 23 or fewer students and 66 per cent of classes with 20 or fewer. So the reality is that the progress date-to date made on this initiative has been quite positive. It has met with tremendous success across the province. It's been greeted well by school boards across the province. I don't need to tell my friend across the floor teachers love this initiative, students love this initiative, parents love this initiative. I only hope that when the time comes, he will also love this initiative and vote for this very important piece of legislation.

Mr. Ewasko: The minister mentioned in his speech to the bill there about percentages of teachers surveyed as far as 90 per cent and 80 per cent and that. I'd like to know how many teachers specifically were surveyed on the K-to-3 class size initiative, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Allum: Of course, I was referring to a survey undertaken by the Manitoba Teachers' Society that was conducted in the fall of 2013. And just to reiterate, I said that in that survey, in regarding K-to-3 classes, 90 per cent of the K-to-3 teachers surveyed indicated that this has made a positive impact on student engagement. And 80 per cent of these teachers suggesting that student behaviour was

also positively impacted. So it's pretty clear from that survey, Mr. Speaker, that teachers are finding this initiative to meet with their approval because they can see the results right crystal clear in the classroom. I would direct my friend to the Manitoba Teachers' Society to talk about other elements of that particular survey. But we wanted to highlight the findings of that survey in relation to the K-to-3 initiative for the benefit of the House.

Mr. Ewasko: I know that the outgoing member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) had stated that she possibly has a couple questions on this matter, but I'm sure she'll get an opportunity shortly.

So, when we're talking about the amount or the number of teachers that—the minister stated the percentages, but I'm actually asking if he does have the actual specific number of teachers that were surveyed on this or had completed the survey.

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not privy to the actual survey numbers that was undertaken by the Manitoba Teachers' Society in the course of undertaking this very important survey. What we know for sure is that the Teachers' Society surveyed their membership. What we know for sure is that 90 per cent of the teachers that were surveyed indicated that the initiative had made a positive impact on student engagement. And what we know for sure is that 80 per cent of the teachers surveyed suggested that student behaviour was also positively impacted.

And it's important for us to take this information that's been provided by the Manitoba Teachers' Society, to use it to the benefit of our future planning. And what this—these numbers clearly tell us, Mr. Speaker, is that their members are—the vast majority of their members are greatly satisfied with this particular initiative. They want to see more of it. I know that they supported its enshrinement in legislation. We want to do well by the children of Manitoba not only in this generation but for generations to come, and I'd invite my friend to support the same cause.

Mr. Ewasko: Out of the schools in Manitoba that have the K-to-3 classes, I'd just like to ask the minister how many of those schools actually have split grades in the K-to-3 area.

Mr. Allum: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the member is asking for a level of detail that I obviously wouldn't have at my fingertips at that—at this point. Certainly happy to get him that information as well. But what

we do know, and what we can say about this initiative, as I said many times already this afternoon, parents are loving it, students are loving it, teachers love it, because it creates that kind of classroom environment that promotes successful learning and promising academic outcomes.

I would ask the member to make sure that he talks to all of his colleagues in supporting this very, very important piece of legislation.

Mr. Ewasko: So it is upsetting, Mr. Speaker, that when we're coming into the House and we're discussing Bill 2, and the minister's, you know, not new at this either. I mean, we're both graduates or of the class of 2011, and he knows that the rules have changed and there are going to be some questions. So it would be handy if the minister, for future bills, would come in with some sort of prep-prep work done.

In regards to the K-to-3 classroom cap, is he seeing coming up in the future his government putting a cap on grades 4, 5, 6, and continuing on, Mr. Speaker? Because there is going to be a bit of a sort of a log jam there, and I know with gymnasium capacities and all those it is interesting, so I'd like to get his two cents on that.

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the member's suggesting that he's going to be putting forward legislation to cap class sizes in future grades. All that I can tell him at this point is that this government has made a commitment to a K-to-3 initiative a few years ago in which we've made incredible progress working with our partners. We're now enshrining this legislation—or enshrining this initiative in legislation so that we can be sure that, were government to change—in the unlikely event that government could change—that you wouldn't just be able to unravel this initiative, that you would—that there would be support and a legislative foundation to ensure that at those earliest possible years that there is one-on-one time—classic one-on-one time between a teacher and a student from kindergarten to grade 3 in a small class size setting because as the evidence clearly shows, it promotes social engagement and certainly makes students able to work in a more collaborative, congenial atmosphere with their fellow students.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, and as the minister well knows, legislation which mandates class size is an example of part of the issues or in the details of how it is applied. And I'd just like some clarification on a couple of issues. One is, you know, if a class has

23 students in September, but then there's a gain of one student in October, does that class have to divide up so that there's only a maximum of 23 students?

If, on the other hand, a class starts at 24 in September and then loses a student in October, does that, you know, now dual class, can it come back together again?

Second, in terms of how this would operate, clearly, and there's been some comment of this, that there tends to be, when you limit class size to 23, for example, that there would be often—or more often than before, classes which are mixed, say, grade 1 and 2, or grade 2 and 3, or even kindergarten and grade 1, and that, for example, if you have, say, grade 1, grade 2 and grade 3 each with classes of 24 and you now need to divide them up, if you divide them up each one in half, you would end up with six classes needed. But, if you mixed grades 1 and grades 2 you'd—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time to pose a question has elapsed. The honourable Minister of Education, to provide an answer.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, I'll thank my friend from River Heights for those questions. I have to say the second part of that question reminded me of a very complicated LSAT question. I often had time to follow—a hard time following those questions in my youth and I want to say that, but what I can say is that what we've done is to ensure that class sizes—we capped K-to-3 class sizes at 20 students in 90 per cent of division classes, and a maximum of 23 students in 10 per cent of division classes, and what that suggests is that we've built in the kind of latitude to deal with the very kind of circumstance that the member is suggesting where suddenly a child moves into the neighbourhood, moves into a school, creates a little bit of a larger class size, that kind of thing, so the kind of parsing that he's talking about doesn't really happen. In fact, the legislation contemplates, as the initiative has already done, that there is some flexibility and some latitude to deal with changing circumstances, and so I thank the member for his question.

* (16:10)

Mr. Speaker: Time for questions on this bill have elapsed.

Is there any debate on this bill?

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to put a few comments on the record in regards to Bill 2, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

And I just want to remind members that this is an initiative by this government that has been in place for quite some time now because of the importance to education in the early years. This legislation, actually, was the first announcement that we made in the election campaign in 2011, and it is an election promise that we made and a commitment that we have worked on very hard with our stakeholders over the last five years. And I am very proud to stand here today and speak to this legislation and want to thank the Minister of Education for bringing forward this legislation because it's very, very important.

And many times across the way, we—I got a kick out of actually some of the questions that were being asked, particularly by the opposition member and the critic from the Progressive Conservative Party because we're really not sure what's going to happen with education when they get into power. We haven't really had—they haven't rolled out their education plan yet, and they didn't—they had the whole time, the whole period of time during 2011, during the election campaign, to talk about education. And we never really heard a lot from them. So I'm quite sure they will be supporting this legislation, though, because the MLA was advocating for expanding it beyond the K-to-3 class size. That's what I heard today in this Legislature, that it was going to be expanded to grades 4, 5 and 6. So that is music to my ears. I think this would be terrific and certainly something that I look forward to in their education plan for the election campaign.

This is very, very important. When we first got into government, we started—Fraser Mustard was the education guru for early years. And he commissioned a couple of reports that were very important to us in government in regards to the importance of early years and how young people at a very early age learn so quickly and so very, very important that we continue to provide programs and services to our youngest children so that they can get a solid foundation. And this particular initiative in regards to ensuring that there is smaller class sizes so that our youngest learners can get more one-on-one time with teachers and, of course, with support teachers in the classroom as well, this is very, very important to providing our young people with an education at the very earliest so that they can get a

better start in life. And parents—of course, the consultation with our stakeholders was important, as the minister has said, but all across this province, when we were in schools, we were hearing from parents that—how important it was to them that their children got a strong start in school so that they could see the results of a good education when their children were older.

The legislation was introduced, and we—or, sorry, excuse me—the initiative was introduced in 2012, and we have made remarkable progress, as the minister has talked about, in regards to having smaller class sizes. And we've invested over \$13 million in supporting the hiring of over 380 new teachers since 2012—new teachers. And this is all across this province. And these are teachers that are working in classrooms all across this province with our youngest learners to ensure that they are getting the supports that they need and particularly important, as well, with newcomer students that come to our province who sometimes need extra supports. That's what is the—that is what is so critically important about this, is that they can get these supports.

Also, I wanted to take this opportunity, once again, to thank the advisory council that worked with the minister's office. The advisory council were the five stakeholders, and I'm not going to go through that again because the minister has made that—talked about it in his remarks and has asked the question who they were. We all know who they are. They are our partners in education, and they are—they were so—they are so critical at advisory council to making sure that when we have these kinds of policy announcements, and it involves the pedagogy of education, it was so wonderful to have them working with us as we move forward in regards to making good, solid, sound decisions about what was in the best interests of our young people and the best interests of parents. And I just want to take this opportunity to say thank you to them for all of the work that they have done on that provincial oversight committee.

They've also worked very, very closely, not just with the minister, of course, but also with the staff people in our department, and we have some of the best staff people I believe in the country. I'd like to thank our deputy minister, Gerald Farthing; and I'd like to thank Aileen Najduch, assistant deputy minister; and David Yeo, another assistant deputy minister; and Jean-Vianney Auclair, assistant deputy minister in our department. They just have done such

remarkable work with all of our education partners throughout this province and, you know, quite often we get to take, you know, we get to take the credit when things are going well in our communities, but it's really fabulous to have fantastic bureaucrats to work with, and we certainly have in our Department of Education.

We have benefitted from their counsel and benefitted from their advice because they are on the front line working with education on a daily basis, and they have just provided us with such invaluable insight into the implementation of the smaller class size initiative and working with the advisory committee. At the same time, we just feel—felt—I know when I was a minister, I felt blessed to have them in my department and to have the advisory committee to work with.

And, of course, there's so many moving parts to this initiative, as the minister talked about, it's not just the class size piece and the teacher piece that is so important, but then, as the initiative started to roll out over a couple of years, we realized that the other thing that we needed to make sure was moving at the same time was the infrastructure piece because quite often we have many, many aging schools in this province and quite often it involved infrastructure, more classrooms and ensuring that there was space for those classes so that we could make sure that we were meeting that cap-size limit.

And, of course, the other interesting thing that was happening that—at exactly the same time was the legislation that kicked in in regards to any school that was renovated, we needed to ensure that there was an earlier space for our youngest—for our young people that—our early-years children even before they got into kindergarten. So it was really—there is really—it's a very complex strategy with a lot of moving parts, and we were just so thrilled to be able to work with all of our stakeholders and our departmental officials on this to make sure that we got it right.

We have made some incredible progress in reducing class sizes in the early years. We've increased the number of classes with 20 students or less by 61 per cent. I think that is a record. We have also reduced the number of classes with 24 or more students by more than 59 per cent, and now 91 per cent of our classes have 23 students or less, and that was our target. Our target was 90 per cent because we wanted to—as the minister talked about—we needed some flexibility in that policy area to ensure that if there were situations that people—that

MLAs across the way talked about where you had, you know, we—some populations in our province are transient and you have people moving in or moving out, and because of our Provincial Nominee Program and newcomers coming to our province, you—we needed to have some flexibility to ensure that it wasn't a hard cap that would disrupt the school year.

* (16:20)

Once a teacher starts with a group of students you wanted to ensure that that class wasn't disrupted by mobility. And, you know, young people, particularly in those age groups, they develop friendships and they develop a connection with the teacher. And that connection, as we know, in public education, is so important, particularly at the early years where there is a connection between the student and the teacher. And so that flexibility is built into this policy area, and they're very important.

The—you know, we continue to work in our public education sector as we move forward with this policy area, and we continue to invest in education because we know how important that is. We have built and are building right now at this—35 schools throughout the province, and we've invested more than \$29 million to create and renovate 49 classrooms—\$29 million to create and renovate 49 classrooms. I was a school trustee in the '90s, and I know people don't want to talk about that, but their school budgets were cut to the quick, and they could—they had to make serious reductions in their budgets every year. It was very, very difficult.

And I'm proud to stand here as part of a government that has made education a priority. And we made an announcement in 1999 that we would invest in our public education system to the rate of economic growth, and we have kept that promise every year since we got into government. And it is a very important promise to keep in regards to making sure that our young people have an education. I mean, I believe education is the equalizer. I believe that regardless of a young person's prior learning experience, regardless of a young person's economic circumstances, education is the equalizer. If they can have an education and they can get that certificate in their hand, that high school certificate in their hand, they can go on to follow their dreams. They can go on to post-secondary education and they can get a good job. And that's the whole reason why public education is so important to young people because it provides them the opportunity to follow their dreams.

I know that these classrooms that we are building and this initiative where we have students having more time with teachers is an addition, as well, to all of the investments that we have been making all across this province, not just in classrooms but also to renovate schools, to add new gymnasiums, to build new science labs.

I know I went to my collegiate in MacGregor quite a few years ago, and—[interjection] Yes, MacGregor, Manitoba. And I was visiting that school, and I walked down the hallway, and I walked into my science lab just because I wanted to check it out, hadn't been there for a while. And I walked in there, and I looked at it, and I went, uh-oh, Houston, we've got a problem. It was the same science lab as when I went to school, and it wasn't just yesterday, I got to tell you. So I was so pleased when we rolled out our whole science lab initiative, because I don't know if you folks have seen some of the science labs that we're building in these high schools today. They are absolutely state-of-the-art, amazing facilities, and they are just so wonderful.

And, you know, the MLA across the way is heckling that it's not political. No, actually, it's about preparing young students for the jobs in this—in the economy. And it's an initiative that's been going on for quite some time now. Many, many—it wasn't just rolled out yesterday. It's been going on for quite some time now, the fabulous science labs that we have, because how can our students be educated and prepared for jobs in the new economy if we don't have these kinds of science labs? And they are fantastic because—[interjection] Yes, I'm really glad the MLA across the way isn't arguing with me, and I'm sure he will support this very important legislation because then that way we know for sure that he's going to—he supports us and believes how important this is.

I also want to just comment on the Leader of the Opposition's comment recently about how grade 9 boys are incapable of learning much at all and that teachers should just fail them. This was a comment November 12th, 2015. It's kind of current. So I thought I would just work it into my speech today because I have no idea how he has a commercial out, you know, going on and on about he was from a family of teachers and, you know, he was a teacher too. But, obviously, I don't know where he got this notion that grade 9 boys should just be failed because, you know, they really can't learn anything. That's not what we believe on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

We believe that absolutely every student that is in our schools today deserves a chance to succeed, and that is why we have made investments in our public education system at the record of economic growth that is—that—and these investments that are happening here in Manitoba are not happening in other jurisdictions in Canada. We are leading the country in investing in education, and we are proud of that on this side of the House.

And we are—and this initiative, there—I believe there are only two or three jurisdictions in Canada that have class-size initiatives. We took—we looked at what was happening in Ontario, and we saw the benefit that that had in regards to making sure that young people got a good start and a good foundation. So we, you know, we're only the second or third jurisdiction in Canada, once again, leading the country in education policy here in the province of Manitoba because we believe that young people need to get a good education, and then that way they can go on and get good jobs and they can participate in a civil society.

And so, once again, I just want to say thank you to the Minister of Education. I think embedding the small classes, K to 3, the class-size initiative, in legislation is absolutely critical. It is critical because we know how important this is in regards to our communities all across this province.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin my comments on this piece of legislation by recognizing and thanking the teachers and the principals and the others who work in our school system for the work they do in helping to educate our children and our grandchildren because it's pretty important work and very important for the future of our province.

I'm in support of this initiative. I've read results of a number of studies which suggest that there are significant benefits to children, particularly in the early years, from a class-size reduction, and—but I also note that there is some significant work as well, which suggests that it is not just about reducing class size, that there are other components in terms of learning which are important at the same time to be able to adapt the way that teachers teach and to make sure that the other components of learning are working well in the class size because reducing class size doesn't automatically improve learning.

* (16:30)

Indeed, I note that the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, in 2012, by Don Drummond, indicated that when people look at—across countries and the OECD program for international student development has shown that among systems with comparatively high levels of spending on education, that those that prioritize small class size, that the performance levels and the results are mixed.

And so I'm very interested in the committee stage and having presentations from people so that all of us can better understand what the results of the research and the work and the comparisons with other countries has shown, because it's really important that we get this right. And, if there are other factors in addition to class size, which are tremendously important to the learning of our children, then we should be aware of that and we should be making adjustments in those areas as well.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will pass it on to my colleague from Lac du Bonnet and look forward to this bill going to committee. Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 2, the small class sizes for K to 3. It's very interesting that, as we're standing today and we're doing second reading and debating on this bill, that the New Democratic Party members have said it's been quite the initiative on their part. As a matter of fact, it is something that they really saw was a game changer in the education world, and to say that they've been working on this for quite some time, and now it was brought forward, I believe it was first introduced in 2014.

And so it's the only ones that they have to blame, Mr. Speaker, for holding this bill up, is them themselves. It's interesting that they're talking today about how they want to bring this forward and they want to instill change within the schools, and I know that a lot of the great schools and teachers and superintendents, trustees, and parent councils have been working on—working diligently on trying to make sure that they're following the rules set out by the Minister of Education and his predecessor, the member from Gimli, and I know that the member from St. Vital cited the fact that their K-to-3 strategy was top on their priority.

As a matter of fact, I do know, back in 1999, that when they ran on the promise on the grade 3 guarantee, which basically was back then,

Premier Doer, the Doer government had said that they were going to make sure that all students, by the end of grade 3, would be reading at quite the—at full reading comprehension in that grade level, and we know that over the last 16 years, under this NDP government, we've been doing anything but improving. We've actually gone the other way on a steep curve decline in regards to literacy, numeracy, and science.

So, when the member from—the outgoing member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) stands up and talks about how the K-to-3 initiative is something new and a game changer, it's interesting that its taking 16 years, and even that they seem to be failing our Manitoba students, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the principle of the bill, I mean, we agree, right, that small class sizes are one factor improving educational outcomes and opportunities, but the reality of Bill 2 is that it only covers part of the topic, Mr. Speaker. Many studies have concluded that more important than class size is class composition, something which the bill does nothing to address.

Class composition is a fundamental factor in determining the workload and challenges of each unique classroom. This is one thing that I'm thinking, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Education and his predecessors have forgot, is that a lot of the school boards, the makeup of the school boards, the elected officials, they actually are the ones, you know, with their teachers and their administration, principals and educational assistants, everybody all the way down the line, is that they actually have their fingers on the pulse of what's happening within their school divisions.

And so it's interesting that this Minister of Education is taking this as an opportunity to once again download, offload, onto school divisions, and do-as-I-say, not-as-I-do type of thing. Watch your budgets, make sure you're balancing, but at the same time, you know, make sure that your class sizes are under 23. And it's interesting that this minister—I've asked him many times in the past to give some evidence as far as why the numbers 20 and 23. But, I mean, that's just something, Mr. Speaker, just for food for thought for him. I know that since 1999—and, you know, the PISA and PEAC scores have been coming out basically since the early 2000s. And we were—we were a leader in the country. We were in the top three in Canada, and now we're absolutely last. We're 10th. It's—it doesn't seem to be getting any better.

But I'm assuming, Mr. Speaker—and you know what happens when you assume something—but I'm assuming that the Minister of Education is upset with the fact on how poorly his government has handled the Education portfolio over the last 16 years and absolutely taken us right to the bottom of the barrel. There is hope for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, though, because we are seeing that there's going to be a change for the better coming in April 2016. And I know that the member from Burrows probably wants to get up and speak, but what's interesting is that Bill 2, we're on second reading, and it seems that they want to speak their own bill out and not give other members of the House, you know, a brief opportunity to speak. Because I know that the member from St. Vital spoke, you know, probably almost 20 minutes, 20-plus minutes.

So, now, I mentioned the—I mentioned our decline in regards to our literacy and numeracy and science scores, Mr. Speaker. But, because we're talking about the K-to-3 class size, capped class sizes, I'm wondering if this initiative really came about because the grade 3 English literacy scores for provincial was 50.6. This means the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations—meeting or exceeding expectations—at the grade 3 literacy level, 50.6 per cent. That is absolutely abysmal. I can't even believe that this government is standing here and patting themselves on the back for many of the initiatives that they're trying to bring forward, but 50.6—is that maybe one of the reasons why they're bringing this, the K-to-3 cap size on to schools?

Now, I know the member from St. Vital mentioned how—something about they're in favour of possibly capping the class sizes for grades 4 and 5 and 6 and so on. It is very interesting that they're talking that way because maybe that is in their plan, Mr. Speaker, because a lot of the times, we don't see what exactly is their plan. I know our plan is to make sure that our K-to-3 students are going to be achieving higher and going to be the most improved province within the next term. That's our promise because the way that these guys are going, I can't even fathom of where our students are heading.

And, again, 50.6 per cent of the students meeting or exceeding expectations. And that's with the literacy. It does get a little bit better, Mr. Speaker; it does get a little bit better in regards to numeracy. Grade 3 math, percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations, now, 53.1 percentage. Percentage of grade 3 students meeting or exceeding expectations, 53.1 in regards to numeracy. Now,

what does that mean? I asked the Minister of Education, I don't know, about a week ago, week and a half ago, in regards to his knowledge on some of these questions and that, and I know that the minister is relatively new in the education world besides his being—him being a professor. But, as far as the teaching profession and actually working with the K-to-12 grouping, I know that his experience is limited. But I know that he's learning, and he is doing a lot of reading to catch himself up.

* (16:40)

But 53.1 per cent of students are meeting or exceeding expectations. Student uses mental math strategies to determine answers to addition and subtraction questions to 18. So, example, 8 plus 10, 18; 18 minus 6 is 12; 53.1 per cent of grade 3 students are able to do those types of questions, Mr. Speaker. It is very interesting and they have nothing to say. There's no heckling. There's no commenting right now—usually, they're up and they're talking and they're patting themselves on the back—because they've got nothing to say to that. Sixteen years of failed policies in regards to education.

But, again, we have hope, Mr. Speaker. We are going to be seeing some change for the better this coming spring.

Now we take a look at students who use a variety of strategies to calculate and explain a mental math problem. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, those percentages are not much better. As a matter of fact, they're worse 50.8 per cent. It is actually unbelievable. It's unbelievable that we've gone from, again, a leader in the country to dead last.

Now we've talked about—I started talking about the composition versus class sizes, and I don't think the minister would necessarily argue with me that composition is very important. And, matter of fact, I know that he wouldn't argue with me because many studies have said that with students with additional needs, which includes learning disabilities, behavioural challenges or language barriers, often require more attention and time from their teachers and as such can't simply be tallied into class-size counts without special consideration, Mr. Speaker.

Now where do we get some of this information? Many studies including a 2002 commission on class sizes and composition, Mr. Speaker, from this very government have found that it's not only class sizes; it indeed has to do with composition as well. In fact,

the commission states that composition is even more important than class size. This is coming from his—one of his predecessors. Recently, the Alberta commission on learning suggested that legislating hard and fast rules about class sizes could unnecessarily burden school administration. This is why I asked the question earlier, Mr. Speaker, what type of consultations is this minister having?

I think it's very interesting that he does say that he's met with all these organizations and associations and some of the stakeholders, and I'm not going to say that the minister is not telling the truth about that. I do believe that he is meeting with them. I—and—but the fact is, are they talking about—is everything out on the table, Mr. Speaker? And sometimes I wonder if these associations and organizations are more in fear of this minister and his government because it seems that they want to have everybody, everything underneath the thumb of this government, and that's why they're again instilling this legislation and making sure that everybody is abiding by those rules. They don't feel that those people who are elected officials within their own areas can actually make those decisions.

I can't imagine how some of those people who have gone to great lengths to become elected trustees or have worked their way into senior administration within school divisions, that this minister is saying that he does not necessarily trust their decisions to set class sizes to make sure that each and every child in this great province of ours has the opportunity to learn at the best—at their best capabilities within their schools. And, for those senior admin, principals, teachers and trustees to be able to make those decisions, he is saying that they can't—they can't—make those decisions that's what he's saying.

By bringing in this legislation, he's going to tie their hands and without taking into consideration—and I know the member from Brandon East, I'm sure, he's rather upset with his colleague, possibly, from the other side, the Minister of Education, because this commission that we—that I mentioned back in 2002 acknowledges how the unique makeup of each school and division complicates notions about class sizes. Students with special needs or those whose first language is not English have different needs than their peers.

You don't have to be a Ph.D., like the Health Minister, Mr. Speaker, to know that that's not necessarily the case. This is the same conclusion that was reached by a study commissioned by the

member from Brandon East, as I mentioned, back in 2002, this report from the Department of Education found that a province-wide blanket approach to class sizes would fail to meet local needs.

Their words, not mine, Mr. Speaker. As we've seen, you know, as far as the trust with this government, we've seen their Cabinet ministers talk about trust and confidence in their leadership. Those are their words. We're just—we're just repeating and making sure that everybody is hearing them loud and clear.

The government may want to visit or revisit this study, as it has many interesting observations and findings back in 2002. It's not necessarily something, Mr. Speaker, that you have to recreate the wheel. Take a look back. It's their own commissioned report. The former minister—the Education minister, thought and said when it was first released that there were interesting observations. He also said, among the findings was composition is everything. In many ways, it is more important than class size. This is his own member from Brandon East.

I know the member for Brandon East is now the Minister of Local Government, and I'm certain that their offices are not all that far apart from one another, Mr. Speaker. So I would ask that the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum) maybe take a stroll over across the way and have a conversation with his predecessor, the member for Brandon East, who, at one time, was the Education minister, because it seems like—like they're not communicating very well, and I know that in the recent—over the last year and a little bit already, we've seen great evidence within their party, within Cabinet ministers and that, are proving that they're not really communicating all that well.

In fact, the Education Minister even repeated this finding in his press release on the matter, noting that determining optimal class size depends on children's varying needs and abilities, a direct quote, Mr. Speaker, right from the member from Brandon East. Yet, in this bill, the NDP government has no interest in determining optimal class size based on needs. Apparently now class size is the NDP's only concern and composition is a problem for the teachers. Their words, not mine—it's interesting.

It's unfortunate that this government won't heed its own advice, because teachers interviewed—teachers interviewed, Mr. Speaker, in 2002 commission, clearly expressed a major concern that class sizes should reflect student needs, and all of a sudden

the Minister of Education states today that teachers that have been interviewed just recently, he didn't say necessarily when that is, but, I mean, I know that, you know, Bill 2, because we had questions and we're debating Bill 2 today, the minister didn't necessarily come with all his prepped notes and that on the bill, but we'll have another opportunity because I am very interested—we are very interested on this side of the House to hear from people at committee. So it will—this bill will be moving on to committee soon and we'll be looking to see what the various stakeholders and people, who want to come to committee, want to share their views on the matter.

*(16:50)

It's interesting when the Minister of Education brings forward this bill, and I know that the Minister of Education, he's inherited this bill, Mr. Speaker. I know that this isn't his—necessarily his brainchild. But there has been, as the member from Morden-Winkler has said, that there's a lot that this minister has inherited, and it's many, many years, as the three of us share that we're the class of 2011 election. We know that the NDP government has passed along, not only to the Minister of Education, an incredible decline in our test scores for numeracy, literacy, and science, but also the ever-increasing debt within this province. And he—they haven't just passed this on to the Education Minister or some of his other colleagues, who have seen the opportunity to get onto the front bench since the rebellion, but also the increased debt is not only going onto our children but our grandchildren, the very people that they are impacting with this K-to-3 class size.

Now, we know that as I've mentioned, that our students have some of the lowest achievement scores in the country, and in some cases, the lowest, and I've mentioned the grade 3 numeracy and literacy scores, and, again, those are provincial scores, Mr. Speaker. This is not just numbers that I'm pulling out of thin air, much like the minister's cap size numbers; he doesn't have any evidence showing that 20 and 23 are the magic numbers for increasing learning capacity.

Unfortunately, we see that this is not only affecting students in schools, but this is also affecting various locations across the province. We talk about Brandon School Division—has been quite vocal about their recent struggle to fulfill the mandate put forward in this bill and the small class sizes initiative. Trustees in Brandon say that they would

need 30 new teachers to meet the mandate but aren't receiving funding promised by the government to support these new positions. And so, when this bill goes through committee and comes forward for third reading, I would like the Minister of Education to answer potentially another question. So here's the question that's going to be coming in third reading, Mr. Minister, is: How many additional funds have been promised or given to Brandon School Division to help them with this initiative?

Because of this increased enrolment within Brandon School Division and lack of provincial support, the Brandon School Division has been forced to divert attention away from newcomer students to fulfill the class-size requirements. Ignoring the composition of classes is damaging to these students with additional learning needs. How does this NDP government plan to support areas like Brandon that are seeing significant increases in enrolment—as a result, struggle to meet the measures in this bill? That's a question, Mr. Speaker, and I can almost—I can tell you what the answer is going to be from the Minister of Education. The answer is is that he's gone out and his Premier (Mr. Selinger), and what have they done? They have promised a new school for Brandon.

They promised a new school for Brandon. What has happened? Brandon will not be fooled again. In Brandon East, they're tired of the NDP's broken promises. What happened back for the 2011 election? Back in 2011 election, the Minister of Education and his 56 other candidates went door to door and promised two gymnasiums for Brandon School Division in the city of Brandon. And what ended up happening? They ended up falling short on that promise. Go figure, Mr. Speaker. Go figure that the NDP government and all those candidates had gone door to door promising something that was not fulfilled.

Now, the minister is promising this new school in Brandon, and, of course, when asked about any kind of dates or timelines or whatever else, there's just nothing there. Again, it's empty promises, empty ribbons. The ribbon machine is almost run out, almost run out because there's no plans; there's just a lot of promises. And I know that the Minister of Education has gone across this great province of ours, and he's making promises with his Premier, matter of fact, \$6-billion worth of promises. But they really don't have a plan to get those things actually into play.

Now, even a task force established by the Manitoba Teachers' Society found that policies around class sizes should take into account composition, citing that both class size and composition were significant challenges to teachers. Now, being a teacher myself and many other members on this side of the House—and there's a couple on that side of the House as well, and, actually, one that has gone on to other things, the member from Gimli—we know that composition is very important, Mr. Speaker. We agree with the teachers. Acting on one and not the other is ineffective, incomplete, and is not good enough for our children.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those brief few words, I'm looking forward to seeing Bill 2 go to committee and hearing from various stakeholders, the public of Manitoba on this matter. And with that, I thank you for the time, and I'll give other members an opportunity to possibly put a few words on the record. Otherwise, we'll see Bill 2 in committee.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate?

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just say on short notice that experts have said that size does matter when it comes to education, so I wanted to say thank you for a short, short speech.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this matter?

House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 2, the public schools amendment act, small class sizes, K to 3.

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

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

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call for debate Bill 7, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools)

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I move, seconded by the

Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors (Ms. Crothers), that the public—that Bill 7, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Allum: It is, once again, my great, great privilege to rise in the House to speak in support of Bill 7, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools). You know, our government put a premium on early childhood education. It has its expression in our commitment to ensure that there are child-care centres built in schools. And it relates more broadly, Mr. Speaker, to our government's belief that investments need to happen in those very early years when brain development is in—is growing and as it—at its most important level, that we make sure that we have significant and sizeable investments in early childhood education.

The truth of it is, Mr. Speaker, that our government has been building one of the best early-learning and child-care systems in the country and, as with the K-to-3 small class size initiative, early childhood education is critical to future academic success. Accessible child care is critical to children and meets the needs of parents in accommodating their employment or learning needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: —debate on this matter? Any questions, pardon me, before I get to the debate?

The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on questions.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Can the minister provide us with the number of daycare spaces right now, actually—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the debate will remain open and we'll be proceeding with questions before the debate continues.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 30, 2015

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Applied Behavioural Analysis Services	
Bill 11–The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act		Cullen	337
Mackintosh	325	Martin	337
		Piwniuk	338
		Smook	338
		Wishart	339
Members' Statements		Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank–Pedestrian Safety	
Alice Evans		Schuler	339
Caldwell	325	Manitoba Interlake–Health Care	
Dr. Michael Bruneau		Eichler	340
Ewasko	326	Manitoba Interlake–Request to Repair and Reopen Provincial Roads 415 and 416	
Abdo El Tassi		Pedersen	340
Jha	326	Community-Based Brain Injury Services and Supports	
Nurse Practitioner Day		Helwer	340
Driedger	326	Grievances	
Vincent Massey Trojans		Friesen	341
Gaudreau	327		
Oral Questions			
Balanced Budget Timeline			
Pallister; Selinger	328		
Average Weekly Earnings			
Stefanson; Chief	329		
Competitive Bidding Practices			
Helwer; Ashton	330		
Keeyask Project Inquiry Request			
Eichler; Robinson	331		
Grace Hospital ER			
Driedger; Blady	332		
Child and Family Services			
Wishart; Irvin-Ross	333		
Student Debt Burden			
Gerrard; Selinger	334		
Victims of Domestic Violence			
Lathlin; Mackintosh	336		
Christmas Tree Cutting			
Martin; Nevakshonoff	336		
Petitions			
Proposed Lac du Bonnet Marina–Request for Research into Benefits and Costs			
Ewasko	337		

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