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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 |
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| MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon. | St. Johns | NDP |
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| 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, March 14, 2016

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

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of bills? Seeing no bills, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Paul the Apostle Choir

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, in all types of faith, a sense of community is crucial. Coming together in a spiritual space is about making connections with the people around you. The church choir has an indispensable role in the church community by bringing people together.

And you'd be hard pressed to find a community as energetic and generous as the people at St. Paul the Apostle parish in St. James. With a diverse representation, the parish takes an active role in welcoming new Canadians and, most recently, reaching out to some of the 2,000 Syrian refugees who are coming into our province.

Nimfa Arbilo has been the music co-ordinator at St. Paul for seven years. And before that, she was at St. Edward's Church choir on Arlington for 26 years. She puts in countless hours preparing music, organizing rehearsals, playing piano or guitar at Sunday Mass and working with the other choir director, Heather Maxwell.

They are currently gearing up for Holy Week at the end of this month. The most significant time in the Christian calendar year, Holy Week calls for both sombre reflection and grateful celebration. It means

that the St. Paul choir will be helping to set the tone for each Mass with traditional hymns.

Having had the opportunity to listen to the choir myself, I can attest to the impact their arrangements—which include piano, guitar and percussion, combined with the choir's beautiful harmonizing—have on those in their presence. It is an experience that brings comfort, reassurance and hope. The choir gives the congregation the opportunity to participate along with them and, in so doing, people discover they are not alone in the challenges that life can bring.

Nimfa, Heather and the members of the St. Paul choir dedicate so much of their time and talents to supporting the St. James community through music. I am grateful for their work in keeping the St. Paul congregation engaged with their faith and their community.

Thank you for your commitment to the choir, Nimfa and Heather and the congregation, and may you continue to bring faith to our community members through music for many years to come.

Thank you very much.

Jan Kreutzer

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): It's an honour to be able to rise today as the MLA for Riding Mountain and to pay tribute to an accomplished Manitoba athlete, my constituent and good friend Jan Kreutzer.

On February 22nd, Jan passed away in Russell hospital after a short but courageous battle with cancer. His love, Holly Keating, as always, was by his side. Holly has made the trip in from Birtle today and is a special guest of mine in the gallery, and I thank her for being here.

Jan grew up in St. Vital and he was an all-around athlete at both Glenlawn and Dakota collegiates, where he played basketball, volleyball and soccer.

Jan was always confident that the teams he played on would be successful. That trait was wonderful. When he shared with friends their accomplishments, his smiling—his encouraging smile and intense interest in their success was heartwarming.

However, on the court, his fierce determination, competitive nature and his unparalleled skill as an agitator would destroy the confidence of many an opponent. At five foot-10 with no fear, he was a joy to watch.

Jan, with his Glenlawn and Dakota Collegiate teammates, realized many athletic accomplishments, including several provincial championships. He also won several national volleyball titles with friends such as Dennis Nord, who shared the eulogy at Jan's funeral.

It was no surprise when a few years after graduation a Jan Kreutzer trophy award was annually presented to a deserving collegiate student athlete who demonstrated many of Jan's fine skills.

Mr. Speaker, after graduation, Jan played basketball with both Bemidji State and Brandon University. Following his university career, he was a member of the national championship Nicollet Inn senior men's basketball teams.

When Jan's playing days were over, he was a member of the Dakota Collegiate sports hall of fame, the Brandon University Basketball Hall of Fame, the Manitoba Basketball Hall of Fame, the Manitoba Volleyball Hall of Fame, the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame.

However, it was Jan's friendships and the memories made with that Jan cherished most. Brad and I truly loved the carefree nature of our friend. My children often commented on his kindness and care in wanting to know what they were up to. Never-near the end of Jan's life, many friends came to Birtle with-to visit with Jan and Holly, with so many more at his funeral.

A quote shared at Jan's funeral truly summed up The Kreutz: People will forget what you said and people will forget what you did, but they will never forget the way you made them feel.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Big Things Happening in Concordia

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, when I was elected I was given a clear mandate by the people of Concordia to strengthen our education, protect our health care and improve our aging infrastructure. While there's always more to do on these fronts and more, I'm proud to say that I've delivered on key priorities that are important for our community.

For the first time in a generation, new classroom space is being built in our neighbourhood at both our primary and secondary schools, and young children are already seeing the benefits of smaller class sizes. New daycare spaces have been built, including at Sherwood School, which was once on the school closure list, I might add, and now has a separate daycare space and infant spaces.

Kildonan-East Collegiate is an amazing school, and I've always been a vocal advocate for the incredible vocational programs there, whether it be autobody, HVAC repair or culinary and pastry arts. To support this, new classroom space at KEC has been built and new, upgraded equipment is being installed to train students for the jobs of tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, Concordia Hospital has grown and is now a centre for state-of-the-art health delivery and research with new clinic space.

* (13:40)

New housing at Concordia Village IV has been built with excellent mental health services on offer. The \$45-million health and fitness centre has been committed to, and I'm excited to see this project take shape.

Mr. Speaker, we've built brand new community club space at East Elmwood, a neighbourhood where it's so important for kids to have a positive space to stay active. At Valley Gardens community club, improvements to the building and field make great additions to the community.

And our infrastructure is continually being improved. Molson Street has been twinned and upgraded. The first leg of Chief Peguis Trail with its active transportation component is complete and will be extended. Replacing Louise Bridge, something I advocated for before becoming elected, has been prioritized. And Highway 59 and the Perimeter, a \$200-million interchange, Mr. Speaker, is being built as we speak.

I couldn't possibly list all the amazing things that have been done in just the two minutes I have here today. What I can say is we're just getting started in Concordia and in our province. I'm excited for our future and I look forward to being able to continue that work into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ukrainian Immigration to Canada

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): This is the year that thousands of Canadians of Ukrainian descent will be celebrating the 125th anniversary of the first wave of Ukrainian immigration to Canada in 1891.

There are over 1.2 million Ukrainians living in Canada with close to 200,000 here in Manitoba. Ukrainian history, culture and heritage has played an important role in Manitoba's development. The early settlers lived extremely difficult lives, like many others going through tough times; the church played an important role in overcoming these hardships.

When you look at the history of communities that were settled by Ukrainians, you will find a church. The first Ukrainian Orthodox church built in Canada was the St. Michael's Ukrainian Orthodox Church built in 1899 in Gardenton, Manitoba. It still stands today, and I have had the opportunity to attend some of the annual services held there. Manitoba is also home to some of the best Ukrainian dance groups in Canada, which win many awards. Dance is an important part of Ukrainian culture, and I am proud to see the number of Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian children involved with Ukrainian dance keeping up the tradition.

In the past 125 years of Ukrainians immigrating to Canada, all Manitobans can be proud of the contributions that have been made from agriculture to arts and culture and, of course, the food we eat as well. Everyone loves a perogy.

Over the next year, I encourage all Manitobans to go out and experience the heart of the Ukrainian culture if they have never done so. Whether it be watching a Ukrainian dance event or checking out the Ukrainian pavilions at Folklorama this summer, there are plenty of ways to engage with Ukrainian culture right here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my thanks to all Manitobans that will be celebrating this important 125th anniversary.

Thank you.

Conservative Fiscal Plan

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, what can you buy for a million and a half dollars a day? I'm here to tell you what you can lose if that's how much you cut because that's what the Conservative agenda means: one and a half million dollars every day, cut.

Mr. Speaker, in these uncertain economic times, families are facing a clear choice to keep building or to put it all at risk. The Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives are promising reckless cuts of more than a million and a half dollars a day, cutting deep into health care and education that will hurt Manitoba families. The proposed Conservative cuts will deeply undermine the services that Manitobans rely on. This means real people like nurses, teachers, public service workers will be losing their jobs. Now is not the time for reckless policies that would derail our economy.

One and a half million dollars a day in cuts means working and middle-class families will suffer. What are the real numbers on one-and-a-half-million-dollars-a-day cuts mean? Mr. Speaker, one and a half million dollars a day in cuts means firing 22 nurses, firing eight doctors, firing 27 teachers, firing 26–36 social workers, firing 38 early childhood educators, firing 21 Crown prosecutors, 28 corrections officers or 42 conservation officers every single day.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition needs to come clean with his plan for reckless cuts and austerity that will hurt the middle class and working families in this province. The risk is just too great. The Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives will bring this province to a standstill. What we really need is to keep this province moving. That's what our side of the House will do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: And just prior to oral questions, I have guests that I would like to introduce.

Seated in the public gallery we have with us today Nimfa Arbilo and Christine Prendergast of the St. Paul the Apostle parish who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Crothers).

And also seated in the public gallery, we have with us today from Munroe Junior High School, we have 90 grade 9 students under the direction of Jeff Sinnock, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

And also seated in the public gallery, we have Holly Keating, Jaye Feener and Norma Boisvert who

are the guests of the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tendering Practices Ombudsman's Report

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my questions for the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today pertain to the scathing Ombudsman's report that was released in January, harshly critical of the conduct of the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) in his capacity as minister. In response to that report, the Premier said, and I quote: The minister has received a lesson in how to do things properly, and we've all learned from this experience.

Mr. Speaker, the report outlined a failure by the minister to get value for money, a failure to follow the rules on shopping and tendering, a failure to disclose information and a failure to work effectively with civil servants and respectfully with civil servants. Harsh criticism, indeed. And the minister's response was to say, quote, I make no apologies.

So we know that the minister is incapable of learning anything, but the Premier did intimate that he had learned something from the experience.

I'd like the Premier to tell the House today: What was it he learned?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, there's several things that have been learned in the last period of time by members of this Chamber. First is that members opposite have no plan and their only plan is to attack personally anyone that they can.

Their other plan is—I have been in this Chamber now for 25-odd years and I've only heard of one person who believes they're perfect. And that's the Leader of the Opposition. Not once in this Chamber has he apologized for some of his distortions, his inaccuracies and his personal attacks. And he could start with last week's attack by members opposite about the misinformation regarding a company moving from Manitoba to Saskatchewan that they inaccurately put on record.

Mr. Speaker, we do not trust the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope none of the young people in the gallery are deterred from considering a life of elected public service by the non-response of the member opposite. You can always tell when someone is afraid to give an honest answer. With an attack like that, it's totally unjustified and disheartening, I'm sure, to young people watching today.

But let me again ask: The Premier failed to answer as to what lesson he had learned. We know that he did not learn a lesson about shopping smart because we know this is the Premier who failed to tender on a helicopter and went out and did a photo op on it just a few hours before the cut-off last election. We know this is the Premier who rushed the stadium project, costing Manitoba taxpayers so far over \$30 million in the interests of a photo opportunity. We know that he's pushing out contracts as fast as he can on the east-side road and the bipole project, hurrying up to spend money without tender or disclosure. So we know that the Premier has not learned how to shop smart.

So if that wasn't the lesson he learned from this scathing Ombudsman's report, what was the lesson the Premier learned?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Leader of the Opposition has asked about the Ombudsman's report. He may want to read the part of it that says, we found that the overall process of seeking Treasury Board approval was undertaken; an RFP was issued; evidence demonstrated that MIT always intended to seek Treasury Board approval; evidence they reviewed indicated the department viewed the invoice; an issue that the members opposite made for specific equipment was not an invoice; evidence confirmed that regardless of funding source, it would be a competitive process.

Mr. Speaker, during this entire process, the issue of conflict of interest was raised—the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen). I point out the independent commissioner indicated no conflict with donation, minister gets independent opinion.

* (13:50)

And let's put on the record, Mr. Speaker, that the one thing we make no apologies is being there for the flood-affected First Nations, and I note that in the member's question, he's also going after the east-side road. We know he would cut that. He would do absolutely nothing for those First Nations. That's

what we make no apologies for, being there for First Nations.

Mr. Pallister: It's already clear that the minister was incapable of learning anything and now it's eminently clear again. But my question, and a very straightforward question, I might add, to the Premier (Mr. Selinger), was what has he learned from this? And I still haven't received a response.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has not demonstrated his willingness or ability to shop smarter. He spends more—his government spends more on self-promotional advertising campaigns than any other government and less on promoting the province, by the way. They put out special deals as recently—discovered as recently as last week through Manitoba Hydro, untendered. So, they haven't learned that shopping around actually helps get a better deal, as Manitobans have to with the highest increase in taxes of any Canadians.

Now, the hundred-plus promises the Premier's pushed out the door pre-election, also, in an effort at frenzied vote buying, Mr. Speaker, have to be paid for. So, he's not really shopping for value for Manitobans, is he? He's probably shopping for votes for himself. I think that's pretty evident.

So, let me ask the Premier of Manitoba again: What lesson has he learned from this scathing Ombudsman's report?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, I guess the member's version of shopping around is holding his alternative throne speech in a guest-only, non-public-participation alternative throne speech, Mr. Speaker. I guess the member's concept of shopping around is, have a leadership convention when he's the only candidate. I guess the member's shop around is that I will cut \$500,000 from the budget, but whoa, I won't tell you what I'm going to do because an election's coming.

Mr. Speaker, I'll stick with our slogan that we're running in this campaign on, which is: Because Everyone Matters. And that's what we're doing every single day when we develop in the North, when we build housing for people in the inner city, when we provide senior tax rebates, when we hire nurses and doctors; it means everybody matters, not just the Leader of the Opposition and his little shopping list.

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

Mr. Pallister: Well, with tax time coming up, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans know that everybody

matters to the NDP when it comes to gouging them and making them pay more taxes.

If the government was committed or had any semblance of understanding the need for transparency and openness, they would have put a budget out, Mr. Speaker, and they failed to do that. So the Premier has obviously learned no lessons about transparency.

He's the Premier who covered up the misconduct of the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) in trying to organize a partisan political protest rally and get civil servants involved, knew about it for a year, did nothing about it. Then when she told the truth and said he knew the whole time, he fired her from caucus, Mr. Speaker.

Covered up the Jets tickets; everybody else is accountable except the Premier, apparently.

So transparency from this Premier, I don't think so. Obviously not openness. He didn't learn these lessons, didn't learn—didn't learn these lessons at all, Mr. Speaker, led by example in not demonstrating any understanding of transparency.

So I want to ask him again: Would he tell us, since he learned no lessons about shopping smarter or transparency from the Ombudsman's report, what was the lesson he learned?

Mr. Chomiak: The managing of a government is more than just lip service and shopping around, Mr. Speaker. It means caring about people; it means providing programs; it means building.

And if the Leader of the Opposition wanted to learn, perhaps he should learn from the biggest scandal in the history of Manitoba, when Chief Justice Monnin, when talking about the Conservative Party, of which he was in Cabinet and he refuses to acknowledge, said he has never seen any more liars in his life than in that Cabinet, Mr. Speaker. Learning starts with yourself.

And, Mr. Speaker, everyone matters in this province, and we're working for everyone. We're not all perfect. The only person I know who claims to be perfect in this Chamber is the Leader of the Opposition. He is the only one who still walks around and says he is perfect and he won't tell us what his platform is.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Mr. Speaker, a critical betrayal of trust by the Premier and his colleagues, who all went to the doors of Manitobans in the last election, knocked, looked people in the eyes and promised

them no new taxes. And \$5,000 later, for the average household, \$5,000 later, Manitobans know who they can trust in this election campaign, and it ain't over there.

Perhaps, because I am imperfect, Mr. Speaker, I went about this the wrong way. Let me approach it this way. Maybe the Premier (Mr. Selinger) doesn't care about what's better for Manitobans. Perhaps he only cares about what's better for him. Perhaps he's learned from the MLA for Thompson. Maybe the MLA for Thompson's example has taught the Premier something. After all, the member for Thompson is successful at hiding untendered contracts for years, giving special business deals to his pals for years, covering it up. Everything's okay with that member because it's always an emergency. Now, perhaps that's what the Premier has learned.

Has the Premier learned from the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) how to put the interest of himself ahead of the interests of the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, the member opposite trying to give lectures to anyone about how to handle a flood when he quit as EMO minister with the months going into the '97 flood. He actually quit provincial politics in the middle of the flood. And when it came to the flood in 2014, he was AWOL.

But I want to put on the record, the kind of misinformation the member opposite put forward, he made a lot about a contract that was issued in 2010—yes, for tiger tubes. What he did not follow up in terms of, Mr. Speaker, is actually the department contacted three suppliers. The cheapest price was tiger tubes. They were available immediately. There was another producer; it would have taken three months for the same price. There was another producer that was more than double the price that would have taken 18 months.

When you're fighting a flood, you need a flood equipment, you need flood mitigation, Mr. Speaker, in the middle of a flood. So we don't take any kind of lecture from the member opposite. He knows nothing about how to fight a flood.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Manitobans are learning how to fight a flood of lies from that member, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The language that was just chosen by the Leader of the Official Opposition is clearly unparliamentary, especially in its reference to another member of this Assembly, so I'm going to

ask the Leader of the Official Opposition to withdraw unconditionally the words that he just used.

Mr. Pallister: Withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, to continue the question.

Mr. Pallister: The Winnipeg Free Press editorial, Mr. Speaker. Lingering stench. Flat out, what the member for Thompson did was conduct unbecoming of a minister of the Crown. He is unworthy of public trust. His actions were never reviewed under a code of conduct for MLAs and ministers, but the smell of betrayal of his duties to his office, his departmental staff and the taxpayer is sickening. He is unworthy of office.

Mr. Speaker, if there was ever any more graphic image of the lack of understanding of accountability and openness and its importance in delivering government services to the people of this province, I don't know what it is beyond that member sitting four down from the Premier and him doing nothing about it.

I ask the Premier again: What did he learn from this scathing—scathing—report into the misconduct of his own minister? What did he learn, if anything?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I take no lectures in integrity from the member opposite.

Ten years ago, Mr. Speaker, before he was able to manipulate the Conservative Party into an uncontested leadership, he actually campaigned around the province using taxpayers' money. In fact, Charles Adler, not a known supporter of the NDP, described the Leader of the Opposition of having sponged off taxpayers.

I point out for the record that I was asked whether I had gone to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen). I did. I want to read again, no conflict with donations. There were two Ombudsman's reviews, Mr. Speaker, of the matter. It was reviewed in November and again reviewed in May at our request. And I point out for the record that no contract was issued; it went to tender in terms of the \$5 million and it was for the purposes of First Nations.

So to members opposite: Absolutely, we could always do better, and I've indicated on the public record, and we have. The next contract that came out, we went to tender, Mr. Speaker. But he has—

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

Ethics and Transparency Government Record

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): You would hope that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) would take some responsibility that five members of the Legislature resigned Cabinet because of that member, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to ethical violations, this Premier (Mr. Selinger) is a chronic offender.

* (14:00)

This is not the first thing that we've heard when it comes to Tiger Dams and the particular instance here. This is part of a long list of things.

When the Premier was confronted with the issue of Crocus, he said that Crocus was strong. And then when it failed, Mr. Speaker, he blamed the bureaucrats. When he was faced with his own falsified election return, he didn't take responsibility; he blamed his party. And, of course, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was the chair of that campaign, Mr. Speaker.

What we find out is that this Premier refuses to ever take responsibility for his own ethical violations.

I want to ask the Premier: Why doesn't he stop blaming others, start playing by the rules and take responsibility for his transgressions?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, it's funny. We're into about the ninth or 10th question. The members opposite, they're not talking about issues that are confronting Manitoba. They're doing the attack-dog tactics of Tories.

Mr. Speaker, I was door knocking all weekend, and you know what I heard about? I heard about fears about what the Tory 'platform'—platform's about. I heard fears about why they blocked our statement on the economy last week, why they did 14 statements to try to block it, why they didn't allow us to table our economic statements. I heard fears about what they did on Filmon Fridays when they were in government. I heard fears about the Leader

of the Opposition and his agenda that's hidden and how many cuts they're going to take.

They're trying to misdirect attention away from the real issues facing Manitoba and have it anything but focus on the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm shocked, Mr. Speaker, that a member who just previously said he's been in this House for a quarter of a century would say that Manitobans don't care about ethical behaviour. We believe they care about ethical behaviour in this government.

Now, in fairness, I'm actually going to defend the Premier. I actually think that maybe he can't help himself. Maybe it's just something he does out of reflex. When he talks about Crocus and he blames other people, maybe he can't help himself. When we had the issue around the civil servants being used in a partisan way and he blamed staff and he blamed other people, maybe he can't help himself.

Maybe the Premier should tell us today is this something that he just can't help himself. It's just a reflex whenever he has an ethical problem and an ethical transgression. He just has to blame somebody else. Maybe we would know.

Can he just not control himself when he does something that's unethical or illegal and he just has to blame somebody else because he has no other way, it's in his DNA?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, when I was door knocking this weekend I ran into a couple women who were suffering cancer, and they said to me how thankful they were that we cover cancer drugs at home, that, in fact, saved their lives. One woman had to have an injection of—that costs \$1,400 every two weeks for an injection. That's an issue that's facing Manitobans. And they were worried. They knew that the Conservatives had turned down that proposal to pay for drugs, for cancer-care drugs, at home, that a form went out and they were against it.

That's what Manitobans are talking about, Mr. Speaker. They want to turn the channel—if they want to turn the channel to ethics and scandal, then let's talk about the biggest scandal in the history of Manitoba, the Monnin inquiry, which said they—the—said—when Judge Monnin said he'd never seen more liars in his life than the Conservative Party.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, it's not just that the Tiger Dam scandal happened; it's just that there are

so many other things that have happened before it, you almost tend to forget.

There were the false election returns. There was the Crocus scandal. There were the bundled donations that the NDP accepted illegally. There were the hiring of defeated MLAs to try to help to cushion the blow. There were the taxpayer-funded Jets tickets that so many NDP MLAs and ministers took. There were civil servants that were used politically. There were massive political payouts to staff that didn't support the Premier (Mr. Selinger). And there were so many elections violations, Mr. Speaker, I'd have to ask leave to get them all in in the time that I have.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Premier refuses to take responsibility for any of these things. Why doesn't he 'asmit' that as long as he is Premier, as long as he occupies that chair, as long as he is in the office, nothing is going to change because he is incapable of change?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I would say changing downtown Winnipeg to build the Hydro building, MTS Centre, to move the Red River downtown and bringing life back to downtown is a change.

I would say recognizing First Nations and providing hydro contracts and employing up to 30 per cent of staff which is First Nations is a change, Mr. Speaker.

I would say building social housing in Manitoba, for all Manitobans, is a change, Mr. Speaker. I would say providing doctors and graduating more doctors this year than any other time in history is a change. I would say voting for a government that includes everyone and not just the elites at the Manitoba Club that the Leader of the Opposition supports, is a change. I would say having men and women that represent every proportion of the population, every colour and every ethnic group on this side of the House is a change.

I would say that all Manitobans have the opportunity to have an education across Manitoba and have more jobs than anywhere in Canada. That is a change that Manitobans want, Mr. Speaker.

Community Benefits Agreements First Nations Communities

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, it has recently been disclosed that the NDP government is in a frenzied rush to sign millions of dollars in community benefits agreements, or CBAs, with the

days ticking down to a provincial election. Some First Nations communities are being favoured over others; some are being bullied into signing CBAs.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's playing politics just ahead of an election and committing Manitobans to millions of dollars more in contracts.

Who gave the order for the rushed process? Was it the Premier or the minister?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I assume what he's talking about is the fact that we have committed to the flood-impacted First Nations in the Interlake that we would follow the same process that we did with the East Side Road Authority, which has established community benefits agreements which ensure they have job opportunities and training for work that takes place in their backyard.

It parallels, Mr. Speaker, what we've done with Manitoba Hydro. We're building a hydro dam, the Keeyask dam, in partnership with the First Nations. I put on the record that more than 50 per cent of the employees are northern and Aboriginal Manitobans.

Let's put on the record, Mr. Speaker, where the Conservatives stand. They would shut down hydro development; they would cut the East Side Road Authority; there would be no benefits; there would be no flood mitigation. That's their policy.

Mr. Helwer: It's estimated that \$56 million in CBAs have been signed since January. First Nations that do not sign have told me as recently as today that they feel they are being bullied, they are being blackmailed.

Mr. Speaker, how can this minister justify this last-minute signing of contracts or these bully tactics?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear that we have a different approach, and we know that approach applies to project labour agreements.

We've had project labour agreements at Manitoba Hydro since the 1960s. It is one of the key elements that ensures that First Nations people, who are the most impacted historically by flooding from hydro, have the first opportunity in for employment. That's why the majority of the employment, Mr. Speaker, is Aboriginal.

Right now at Keeyask, what do members opposite want to do? What does the anti-union fanatic Leader of the Opposition want to do? He

wants to rip up the project labour agreement of Manitoba Hydro that was first negotiated by Duff Roblin.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between us and them. They want to jam on the brakes and they want to exclude First Nations. We want to include First Nations and build flood mitigation for those communities.

Mr. Helwer: The Auditor General made it clear that when you rush to sign contracts, Manitoba taxpayers pay more. This NDP government has not learned its lesson when it comes to awarding contracts, except on how to hide them.

Mr. Speaker, the minister—will the minister admit that, with his bullying tactics and by rushing the project, 'russing' the process, all Manitobans are going to pay more and get less?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic any Tories talk about bullying in this House. That's what they did when they wouldn't stand up to protect LGBTQ kids on Bill 18.

But I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about holding things up, intimidation, the rest of it. What about the Leader of the Opposition who, when he was a Stephen Harper Conservative, tried to block the construction of the floodway because, again—please quote me—he's an anti-union fanatic. He didn't agree with the project labour agreement.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone should be concerned I can tell you right now it should be the First Nations in this province, the flood-affected communities, because if he was to be premier, he would apply his extreme ideology: he would shut down hydro, he would rip up community benefits agreements. That's what people should be scared about—this province.

* (14:10)

Interlake Region Physician Shortage

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, Friday was a very emotional day in Eriksdale where 300 fearful people rallied to try to save their emergency room. The NDP has closed over 20 rural ERs, and Eriksdale seems to be the next one on the chopping block because of a severe doctor shortage.

Can the Minister of Health tell the people of the Interlake why she has failed to recruit doctors for the

Interlake? Why are Manitobans having to pay more and get less from this NDP government?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. I would also like to thank my colleague, the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Nevakshonoff), for going out to the community. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't want to name him by name. I just wanted to make sure that, you know, that we let folks know that we are committed to working with communities on recruitment and retention of health professionals and that we will fight against calls for cuts to our health-care system. And that is the reason why we created the rural physician recruitment advisory committee in partnership with the AMM to work with, towards every community having the supports they deserve.

We will support our communities and continue to build so that they do have the access to high-quality care that they want and deserve. And so much a part of that is recruiting and retaining more doctors. And, again, this is the side that increased class sizes for doctors; that's the side that cut them.

Mrs. Driedger: She doesn't understand that she is failing right now. She just puts forward a lot of spin but she is failing. The Interlake is facing a severe doctor shortage of up to 40 doctors, according to the CEO of the RHA. It has been getting worse under this Minister of Health.

Keith Lundale, a councillor in the area, said, and I quote: Our health services are in crisis. Our citizens' lives are unnecessarily put at risk. End quote.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to—why she is continuing to break her promises, and as Mr. Lundale said, put citizens' lives at risk.

Ms. Blady: I want to thank the member for the question and reassure folks both in Eriksdale, in the Interlake and across the province that it is this side of the province that has—this side of the Chamber that has been working with physicians, has expanded class sizes and has been doing the work, but there is still so much more to do, which is why the rural physician recruitment advisory committee and the partnership that we are building and have built with AMM is so important.

Again, we are focused on investing for immediate results and, again, not going back to a time when they fired over 1,000 nurses and sent 117 doctors fleeing. There's absolutely much more to

do, Mr. Speaker, but, again, I will always put our worst year of only gaining 10 doctors against their best year of flatlining at zero any day.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I don't think this Minister of Health gets it. There were 300 people there railing against the mistakes of this government and the failure to recruit doctors for the Interlake. Three hundred people were there.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Lundale also said, and I quote: Highway medicine is the new hallway medicine. We need more doctors in rural Manitoba. Despite NDP spin and bafflegab from this Minister of Health, over 2,300 doctors have left Manitoba under this government, and Manitoba has the worst doctor-retention rate in Canada.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health to confirm that she will not close the ER and hospital in Arborg as well, as new reports are indicating, and force people to take ambulances elsewhere and pay the highest ambulance fees in Canada.

Ms. Blady: I thank the member for the question and I'd like to put some facts on the record.

We have committed to Eriksdale and other communities that no emergency departments will be closing. And, again, we are the ones that increased school spaces for medical doctors. We are the ones that have signed collective agreements with front-line workers to make sure there are no layoff clauses, meaning things will always get better. And, again, we have also had a family doc finder that has helped folks across the province.

We have more doctors practising than ever before and we will continue to do that. Meanwhile, the members of the opposition, they—she and her leader lack the vision to build Manitoba, create jobs. They've stated that they will explore American-style two-tier health care, and they don't offer any vision for home care, personal-care homes, family doctors or nurse practitioners.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, we will stand with doctors, nurses and communities. They talk about half a billion dollars of cuts; I'm not sure how you keep the Eriksdale ER open under those circumstances.

Child and Family Services Facilities Missing Persons Reports

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): The number of missing persons reported to Winnipeg police continues to climb, up 40 per cent since 2013. Seventy per cent of the missing persons reported are

female. Of those, 85 per cent were from child and family services facilities. The top 36 places of origin for missing children were all child and family services facilities. This leaves increasing numbers of children in care at risk on Winnipeg streets.

When the minister finally removed children in care from hotels, she committed to safe facilities staffed by professionals.

Are these numbers what she meant by safe?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Every day, we constantly work with our agencies and our authorities to address the needs of children across this province. We know when children are not in a safe place with their family and their community or if they are in care, in a supportive environment. When they are on the streets, they are at risk. That's why we have made investments in a program called StreetReach. These are professionals that work every day to engage the young people, to work with them, to identify a safe place for them to be.

We have expanded our services as far as providing services for children with complex needs, making sure that they have the mental health services that they required as well as the addictions services. We will continue to work with them. We also need to focus on prevention, prevention within the community and the family.

Mr. Wishart: Well, as the numbers continue to rise, it doesn't look like prevention is working very well under this government.

Having more children in care vulnerable or missing is bad enough, but it is also a significant load on the Winnipeg Police Service.

Mr. Speaker, hasn't this government's inability to deal with child and family services children put an unwarranted load on Winnipeg Police Service to find these missing children?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We work very closely with the Winnipeg Police Service as well as the RCMP across the province to address the needs of vulnerable children. They are partners with us every day, seeking to find the child that is missing and to return them home.

StreetReach has been effective in returning over 400 children back to a safe place. We're ensuring that we're providing the resources that are necessary.

As I was speaking, we need to continue to invest money on strong, early interventions when it comes to mental health and family support.

I ask the member opposite: What does a half a billion cuts do to non-profit organizations and services that provide those supports to Manitoba families?

Mr. Wishart: Comparing cuts to clawbacks, the minister has clawed back over \$29 million, leaving children in hotels, improperly supervised, was unconscionable and led to—and led to tragic results such as the death of Tina Fontaine. Leaving them in CFS facilities where they are still vulnerable as runaways is asking for more of the same.

The minister promised better results.

Are we going to get them?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I can assure you that we will get much better results because of our investment and our commitment to families and communities than the members opposite and their half a million dollars' worth of cuts and the slashing and the firing of civil servants across this province.

We need to be very afraid of the reckless and—the reckless cuts that are being promised by the members opposite. We need to keep making those investments to support families to ensure that children are staying within their families in the communities.

I ask the member opposite: Will he support the passing of Bill 15, the customary-care bill?

Northern Manitoba Communities Housing and Living Conditions

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to the people of Pimicikamak Cree Nation for the trauma they continue to suffer with so many suicides and so many children under a suicide watch. We all hurt to hear one of our children say, there's nothing for me in the community. This is one of our Manitoba communities. We need to do better for our youth in the North.

I ask the Premier: Why have conditions in the Pimicikamak Cree Nation not improved since 1999 so that there is still such heartbreaking concern about suicides today?

*(14:20)

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): We know suicide is

devastating for families and entire communities, but I would say it's especially difficult in close-knit and remote communities such as Cross Lake, and we're working hard to support families and young people across the province to prevent youth suicide, and we've been working very closely with local community leaders, the band council, health professionals, the Northern Regional Health Authority and the federal government, as well as Pimicikamak Cree Nation leadership, and we're making sure that we have in place resources that will be available for the community members. They were available before the weekend and, currently, the Premier and the MLA for the area, as well as the Minister for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, are with the community today.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Shamattawa Chief Jeff Napoakesik highlighted that the No. 1 reason for despair in the North is living conditions. Where has this government been for 16 and a half years? Through 16 and a half years of NDP government, northern Manitobans have had to live in overcrowded housing with concerns about nutrition and extremely limited opportunities for young people.

After all this time, why hasn't the Premier done the right thing and committed to directly investing to improve housing in the North as Manitoba Liberals have committed?

Ms. Crothers: Mr. Speaker, I think the issue today is not just youth suicide, which we are talking about, but it is a broader discussion, and I think that that discussion has been ongoing for some time. We have always been supportive of our remote communities and tried to find ways to provide them with the resources that they need but with the understanding that we need a counterpart, which is the federal government, who is willing to engage and be supportive of our First Nations people. And I think that, frankly, we have more positive engagement with the current federal government.

I would ask why the members opposite haven't made those requests when their own cousins were in power at the federal level. They didn't do it then.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the commitments by Justin Trudeau and the Liberal government in Ottawa to do something about the North. We are shameful at the NDP lack of attention in the North for 16 and a half years. Manitoba Liberals' commitments toward housing and nutrition in northern Manitoba add up to \$40 million—new

dollars each year to improve living conditions, subsidize healthy food options, and enhance nutritional education. This is much improved from what this government has ever done in 16 and a half years.

Why has the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his government failed to provide sufficient investment to help people in northern Manitoba so that we have one problem, one crisis after another?

Ms. Crothers: I think in terms of the broad statements that the member opposite is making here about whether healthy eating or housing or education—we have made investments within numerous departments on this side of the House to make sure that we're supporting all Manitobans, but, you know, Mr. Speaker, any of those investments that we make, we don't get support from any of the members from either the Liberal Party or the provincial Conservatives—Progressive Conservatives, and I can't manage—I can't understand or manage the idea that they seem to think that by voting against the very things they're asking us to do, that that's in any way logical.

Job Creation Rate Provincial Standing

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, just to follow on that question, the Leader of the Opposition and their party have done nothing in the North, and that's what we see. We saw the austerity of the federal PCs, and we see the austerity that the Leader of the Opposition is willing to put forward, again, for a choice for Manitobans. He was repeatedly asked today on CJOB what the cuts would be, and he repeatedly refused to answer.

We want to know what the Leader of the Opposition's plan is. This isn't the first time he's tried to hide his agenda. I would like him to put on record what his plans for cuts are for Manitoba.

Could the Minister of Jobs and the Economy tell people what our plan is for the further growth of Manitoba?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Our government is proud to stand with business owners, Mr. Speaker, proud to stand with our labour leaders, our training institutions, and we're proud to stand with young people. And it's because of them Manitoba did the best of any province for creating new jobs last year. It's because of them last year Winnipeg had the best job creation rate in more than two decades. Because of them the number of

new people working in Manitoba was the best of any province in Canada last year.

And it's because of them that the Bank of Canada—these are a group of folks that provide financial analysis; they're economic forecasters; they provide fiscal policy. They're experts, and what have they said about Manitoba? That Manitoba will be one of the top performing provinces for 2016-17. We're proud of our businesses, Mr. Speaker, we're proud of our training institutions and we're proud of young people.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It's now time for petitions.

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 used 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 crosswalks, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by R. Orchard, B. Cooke, R. Coyle and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: No further petitions, we'll move on to grievances.

The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a grievance?

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Yes, on a grievance.

I rise today to grieve this government's treatment of Cindy Hykawy and the shameful health care she received over a year. Time and time again, this NDP government has neglected to make the necessary improvements to our health-care system for the benefit of all Manitobans. Long wait-lists, inadequate health care the lack of a dedicated stroke unit has left three boys without a mom following Cindy's passing on February 10th, 2016.

The struggles and grief this family has gone through could have been prevented if this government had taken the time to listen to the needs of patients and made the necessary changes. Cindy's struggle in our failing health-care system began in 2014 when she required surgery to fix ongoing issues with vertebrae in her neck caused by accident—a car accident 10 years earlier. In Manitoba, the wait-list for this type of procedure is 18 months to six years.

At almost the same time Cindy's family found out about this ridiculously long wait-list, my colleague from Morris asked a question about why the operating theatre this government had opened at Ste. Anne's was only funded for three days a week. We have surgeons in Manitoba that are waiting to do more procedures in a timely fashion but were unable to do so because the operating space was not made available to them.

The acting Minister of Health only said: We work with the regional health authority to ensure that staffing is in place to enable them to perform surgeries and other clinical procedures across Manitoba and we'll continue to do that. She did not seem to have an answer for why this operating space was not available every day.

Cindy's doctor agreed that waiting 18 months to six years was unacceptable and made arrangements for the surgery to be done in Regina in just three months. Unfortunately, there were complications during the procedure resulting in Cindy suffering three strokes. This was November 12th, 2014, and she would have to remain in hospital or rehab centre

for the next year. During this time, she was shuffled between Regina, Brandon, Russell and Roblin.

* (14:30)

Meanwhile, here in this House, the NDP government was refusing to, yet again, pass a private member's resolution calling for them to create a specialized interdisciplinary dedicated stroke unit. The resolution was first put forward by the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) in 2012.

This NDP government has repeatedly ignored the pleas from the Heart and Stroke Foundation and has sat by and watched as every other province has taken the advice of professionals and have established their dedicated stroke units, leaving Manitoba to suffer the consequences.

Instead, every time we sit in these seats to debate the resolution my colleague for Charleswood put forward, an NDP minister will stand up and talk about the needle-to-door time, the prevention guide strategies that have been put in place. Cindy was 42 years old when she passed away and, frankly, Mr. Speaker, neither of these speaking points could have helped her situation, but a dedicated stroke unit would have.

Cindy was moved from Regina to Brandon hospital in January 2015, where she continued her treatment and rehabilitation for the paralysis on her right side, including her vocal cords. Cindy stayed in the Brandon hospital for almost four months as Cindy's progress plateaued, and she was able to move on May 1st to the Russell hospital, and then again on June 3rd to the Roblin hospital to be close to her family. Despite the progress, the plateau witnessed by the doctors at the Brandon hospital, plans were made for Cindy to go back to Regina to the Waskana Rehabilitation Centre. That features a dedicated stroke unit, Mr. Speaker, because of this unit, Cindy was able to improve further.

This is just another way that all other Canadian provinces have taken care of their constituents that have suffered from strokes, allowing Manitoba to fall even further behind in health-care options.

Mr. Speaker, even last week, the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady), instead of responding to our questions on the need for a dedicated stroke unit, she repeatedly and somewhat arrogantly chose to argue about a quote made and activities that happened over 17 years ago, instead of explaining why her department, her government, has been unable to keep the promises they made to Manitobans.

Before I continue, Mr. Speaker, I want to share with you a bit of news that came out just weeks before—after Cindy returned home from the Saskatchewan dedicated stroke unit. After years of voting against the resolution for a dedicated stroke unit, including most recently in October 2015, the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) spoke to the press on December 7th about a dedicated stroke unit for Manitoba, saying it is one of the first things that we've talked about, and I've been working with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the department to see how we could roll something like this out. It's something that is really important to do prudently.

Manitobans should be happy for this announcement, but it came as no surprise to me that this statement was made only hours after an election promise was announced that there would be a stroke unit part of a campaign.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government's track record for keeping promises speaks for itself. After her stay in Saskatchewan, Cindy was wanting to get home. She was unable to do so using home care—oh, she was able to do so using home care on November 12th. During the time Cindy came—finally got to be at home, she was sent to Winnipeg and Dauphin for tests, and near the end of December a decision was made to change her medication. From this point on, her family watched as she began to deteriorate. Within two weeks she was admitted back to Roblin hospital. At this point, Cindy was in pain and began to show signs of mental illness. Two days later she was transferred to the Brandon ICU because Roblin hospital, like most of the hospitals in rural Manitoba, did not have the resources necessary to care for her.

The state of health care in rural Manitoba has continued to worsen rather than improve, and I do not agree with the Minister of Health when she stands and explains all the money they have invested into different programs to advance health care in the province. Some things are very much needing assistance. However, I do question how she seems to be able to wear blinders that keep her from seeing beyond the perimeter of Winnipeg and, on rare occasions, outside of Brandon.

Instead of listening to Manitobans and improving health-care scenarios outside of Winnipeg, this NDP government sits by while Manitobans are shuffled back and forth hundreds of

kilometres between facilities and expect that these nurses and doctors can maintain consistent treatment.

Cindy Hykawy's struggle is an example of exactly that. After two weeks in Brandon's ICU, she was deemed stable and transferred back to Roblin on January 20th, only to worsen and get sent back to the ICU in Brandon less than 48 hours.

Mr. Speaker, that is a drive in approximately 250 kilometres one way and when somebody in Cindy's condition—that is the worst possible care that you could receive.

Cindy's last move was to Russell hospital on February 5th, a final frustration, as the Roblin hospital is nearest her family but lacked the resources to deal with her issue. And Cindy was again put in a situation of dire straits. She passed away five days later, leaving Bradley, Michael and five-year-old Drew [*phonetic*] without their only parent.

Mr. Speaker, Cindy's mom, at the Brandon hospital during one of Cindy's stays, had the opportunity to meet the Premier (Mr. Selinger), who, without asking her why she was at the facility, began to brag about the Brandon hospital and the upgrades that they had seen and was bragging about how nice the facility was. She could not believe his gall. Cindy was dying, and the Premier was bragging about his health-care system, a system that for over a year failed her daughter so badly.

At this point, she let the Premier know directly, in no uncertain terms, that his government had and was failing her daughter, that a dedicated stroke unit was a necessity for this province, and because we don't have one, her three grandchildren, one of which is only five years old, had to watch her mom's condition get worse, instead of better. They had to watch their mom die because this NDP government failed to create a service Cindy so desperately needed but was denied.

I hope that by standing up today, Mr. Speaker, I remind the Premier and his colleagues on that side of the House of this very serious and very devastating conversation that was shared. And I think that it's important that he knows the results from everyday Manitobans on how his government's lack of action and lack of interest in the health-care system within rural and northern Manitoba has taken a family that now has no mother and no father for these three children.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any further grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, could you canvass the House for leave after the vote on the Opposition Day motion for the House to sit until 7 p.m. to deal with report stage amendments and concurrence and third reading on Bill 18, concurrence and third reading Bill 5 and second reading on Bill 6? Although we know there's not time to proceed to committee, this Assembly could send a strong message to the future Assembly that The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act is very important.

And, Mr. Speaker, could you ask for leave for that to happen until 7 p.m., after the opposition vote?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to proceed to the Opposition Day motion and then when we've concluded with that portion of the business, the House—[*interjection*] I understand that; I'll get to it.

Is there leave of the House to proceed to concurrence and third readings of Bill 18, 5 and 6 and to permit the House to sit to 7 p.m. after we have concluded the business of dealing with the Opposition Day motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on point of order.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I'm reluctant to stand on this point of order and to speak about House negotiations in the House. I had no notice from the member opposite that he was bringing this forward. I do not like to speak about House negotiations in the House. You've cautioned us about that before, and I respect your caution.

I've made it clear to the Government House Leader, if the government is willing to bring forward a budget, we are absolutely willing to say—sit later

and longer, and for him to bring this forward on the House is not respectful of the process [*inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

* (14:40)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. The member—the House Leader for the Conservative Party, although we had negotiations, stood up and indicated on Thursday that they wanted to pass a bill forward that was outside of the parameters of what we were discussing. I was simply moving that forward in conjunction what the member said on Thursday in this House. And I'm sorry he took offence to it, but he had proposed the same type of proposition on Thursday.

I don't think it's a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), I thank honourable members for their advice on this matter. I did not hear any reference to a particular breach of a rule of the Assembly, and I have often said in this House that I would prefer that the negotiations with respect to House business occur between House leaders and not on the floor of the Chamber. And so I will again encourage House leaders to have that discussion, and then, whatever their decision is, that will be the will of the House.

Therefore, I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mr. Speaker: Now we'll now proceed to call the Opposition Day motion.

The—and the entitled of the Opposition Day motion: That the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to bring forward the 2016-2017 provincial budget in the current sitting of the Legislature to ensure Manitobans have a full and detailed disclosure of the finances of Manitoba prior to the April 19th general election.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to bring forward the 2016-2017 provincial budget in the current sitting of the Legislature to ensure Manitobans have a full and detailed disclosure of the

finances of Manitoba prior to the April 19th general election.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, of all the important issues that we are debating before the House currently, this is perhaps the most important because today's resolution goes to the very heart of the NDP's hiding and failing to be accountable and responsible in their role as a sitting government.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution calls on the NDP to bring the budget, and indeed the resolution proceeds from the Finance Minister's own declaration a year ago that there would be another budget before the election. He indicated that Manitobans would know what their plan is before they went to the polls. These were the words of the Finance Minister himself a year ago outside of this Chamber after the last budget. And, indeed, by failing to bring a budget now, this government is covering up their plans of what they really want to do.

Mr. Speaker, this—what they have declined to do is to bring a full and transparent and complete accounting for the state of the Province's finances. And what they have disclosed—even though they are hiding, even this NDP government cannot hide the extent of their betrayal of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, last week in this place, the Finance Minister indicated—disclosed—that the deficit has rose—has risen to \$773 million this year. This is appalling; it is shocking; it is historic; it is a betrayal of the trust of Manitobans. Nowhere did this Premier (Mr. Selinger) and Finance Minister provide any kind of warning to Manitoba ratepayers, to Manitoba non-profit groups, to Manitoba businesses, to Manitoba families, to Manitoba seniors, to Manitoba students that they had failed to miss their own mark, their own projection, their own target by \$350 million.

It is—it would be a farce were it not so serious and were it not the case that at the end of this, Manitobans are the ones who are left holding the bag. Manitobans are the ones left paying the bill for this NDP financial mismanagement. Front-line services will be left paying the cost as more and more money flows to debt servicing costs.

Governments have certain responsibilities. The responsibility of a government is to bring a budget, and this very responsibility is the one that this Finance Minister, that this Premier and every member of that government is shirking now in the

very moment that the most transparency is owed to Manitobans in the wake of this colossal deficit that they have put on the table. In that context, the government goes and hides. They say, trust us, but we submit that this government cannot be trusted.

Mr. Speaker, the Winnipeg Free Press referred to the Finance Minister's fiscal update as a fruitless attempt at dressing up really ugly numbers on the Province's finances. They went on to say that while this government loves to blame anyone, there's really no one to blame at this point. The only ones to blame are the government members themselves.

In another place, a media source referred to this fiscal update as a hastily prepared, unenforceable and, at times, confusing statement. They said to call it a mini-budget would be overly generous.

In another place, a member of the press referred to it as a little more creative with its reporting, and there lies the rub, that their failure to bring a full budget means that the government then enjoys the ability to take liberties, to not report, to not disclose, and this government cannot be trusted to act in the best interests of taxpayers. Manitobans are owed a greater degree of accountability, and instead what they get is less.

Let me provide you, in the short time that is allotted to me, with one case in point of where the government neglects to bring more information and offers less instead. This government has revised its original declaration. They said, before the last election, that they were definitely going to balance the budget and they would do so by 2014. Later, they changed their mind and they indicated we failed to do so, but we will balance the budget by 2016.

Then the Finance Minister even said they were ahead of schedule. Then they revised their forecast again and indicated that they would now eliminate the deficit in 2017 and 2018, and, Mr. Speaker, in this non-budget document they now table, there is no projection five years out that would show that the government has any indication of balancing the budget.

Now, let us be clear. Budgets include projections, and if the Finance Minister would listen, he would understand that projection shows a declining balance to zero. This is the fundamental responsibility of the Finance Minister to go into his room, listen to his officials, and come back with a document that then discloses to everyone—to families, to seniors, to students, to business, to

investment community, when they will eliminate deficit, when they will get their books back in order. I'm on page 26 of this non-budget, and there is no schedule.

I can assure the Finance Minister that in previous documents there was a schedule that indicated how they would get there, and now, when they are out of ideas and their incompetency is shown for what it is, what does the Finance Minister do? He runs that page through the shredder and in 2017-18 he shows a net result going forward of \$471 billion in deficit, and for the 2018-19 year, well, there is no 2018-19 year. There is—this is a fantasy, Mr. Speaker. It is not a budget.

Mr. Speaker, that might be why one media source pointed out that the cost of debt from core spending under the numbers that the Finance Minister has tabled will rise nearly 5 per cent. That is faster than the rate of spending increase to core government programs, the same programs that that NDP purports to want to invest in. But I submit that their deficit—or that their debt and their debt servicing costs are rising more quickly. Why? Because of the profound mismanagement.

*(14:50)

Now, Mr. Speaker, the warnings were there. Debt—credit rating agencies were warning in 2014 they had to change something because their mismanagement was going to threaten front-line services. And I will read it to you: Moody's indicated, in 2015, when they said that further downward pressure in the event of further erosion of the NDP's, in this case, fiscal position, leading to substantial increases in deficit and greater accumulation of debt beyond the existing plan.

That's what the experts said. And how did they respond? They did nothing. They did not heed the warning.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, debt as a proportion or in relation to revenue is sitting at 143 per cent. Just five years ago it was at 116 per cent. And now the experts warn it will go higher.

Why does it matter, Mr. Speaker? Because a government that cannot or will not balance the budget, that will not actually do the work that a Finance Minister is required to do, puts front-line services at risk. They force themselves, they back themselves into a corner, where the only way out is higher debt-servicing costs and higher taxation.

So now the government runs and hides and they say to Manitobans, well, it's not a real budget, but you can trust us.

Mr. Speaker, this government cannot be trusted. They have shown—remember, this was a Premier (Mr. Selinger)—every member on that side went to the doors, they knocked on the door, they said, you can trust us, we will not raise taxes. And they have broke their word time and time again.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have to sum up by saying, it matters. It matters to Manitobans. It matters in their pocketbooks because when this government doesn't get it right, it is every Manitoban who pays. There is only one outcome that is available to this government if they want to proceed with accountability and integrity and that is they must table a budget. It is time for them to release the budget.

If they agree in debate this afternoon to release a budget, we will sit 'til midnight. We will be here. Will they be here? Will they be here? Will the minister go back in his office, grab the budget that's obviously written and bring back the real news and table those numbers and stand by the numbers? Will he do it today, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it's a honour to rise today to speak to the member's motion. And I will remind the member that just last week in this House we tabled a very robust fiscal update. All the member would have to do, and I have a copy of it for him, I'm sure he would have, you know, spent the odd evening reading it before he went to bed. I'm sure if he did he would find out many of the answers to his questions that he just posed to the Chamber about the government's fiscal and economic plan.

I'll remind him that his friends in Saskatchewan, they know they like to—I think the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) likes to say, they put on their green helmets, you know, they're big friends of the Riders, big friends of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan government, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party, when, just before they went to the polls, released a document 13 pages long—13 pages long, and that was their—that is what they were offering to the fine people of Saskatchewan as to what their fiscal and economic plan is for that province.

But I will note one thing. That government, Mr. Speaker, when they introduced their budget last fall,

projected \$100-million surplus. In his—in their fiscal update, the Finance Minister for Saskatchewan now noted that his economic plan now requires the Province to go into red, into the red, almost \$450 million. So within—between the tabling of that budget and their release of the third quarter, they've already lost almost six—\$550 million it—out from their original projection. And yet the member have the gall to stand up in this House and to criticize the process we're taking here in this province.

I'll also remind the member that, in 2007, when his leader ran away, just after he ran away in the middle of the flood, we know his leader is good, when the flood waters were rising in 1997, Mr. Speaker, and the waters were coming slow up the valley, I remember it well. I was a member of this Chamber, you know. We were in Selkirk getting ready for it. What did he do? He ran away. He ran away in the middle of a flood. But where did he go?

As a Alliance member or Reform member, I'm not sure what it was, he went to Ottawa. He went to Ottawa and he became the chair of the Finance Committee, the federal Finance Committee, and this is what he used, and this is what he uses so he can speak with authority on fiscal matters.

You know, I was a chair, he said. I was a chair of the Finance Committee. So, either—it meant two things: either, one, he simply sat around and recognized the members, or, as he likes to lead us to believe, that he actually had impact upon the decisions of the government of the day when it comes to fiscal matters.

Well, if we believe the latter, Mr. Speaker, what did they do that very year—what did they do that very year—in 2007, what did the Harper government do? They released an economic statement. So it can only mean two things: either the Leader of the Opposition, he supported it, or he spoke against it and no one listened to him. It can only mean two things because that is exactly what we provided to this very House last week was an economic statement, which outlined where we're going, for all Manitobans to see.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in the economic statement, it was noted that the economy is still struggling. In fact, that was one of the legacies of the Harper government, when they were removed from office last year, was very weak and tepid economic growth. Originally, the forecasters had the Canadian economy growing over 2 per cent. In fact, it grew just over 1 per cent.

For two—actually, for the first half of 2015, the Canadian economy was technically in recession, Mr. Speaker. I'll remind the members that the global economy is struggling as well. You know that China used to grow in the double digits; now they're growing 6 or 7 per cent. Europe is as well seeing weaker growth. The United States has not recovered as they did post-2008-2009 recession.

And that has had an impact on what we're doing here in Manitoba as well. Originally, we forecasted that our economy would grow at 2 and a half per cent—still one of the best in the nation, still one of the best in Canada—but it grew—now we're predicting it will grow around 2 per cent, Mr. Speaker, because of factors well beyond our control. As I remember the minister from Saskatchewan said, he said, if I could predict where the price of oil would be, I'd be in a yacht in Hawaii right now. If I could predict the future, he said, I wouldn't be here; I'd be able to retire. Well, nobody could predict the future. No one could predict where commodity prices would be, and that is having an impact on our resource—on our fiscal bottom line. Hundred and fifty million dollars less in revenues this year.

Now, one of my colleagues said, maybe if you were in Costa Rica where the Leader of the Opposition spends most of his—most of the winter when his colleagues are up here toiling away—toiling away—you know, trying to develop Conservative strategy. He's down in his villa in Costa Rica, you know, working on his secret plan on holidays to fire 1,000 nurses, or on his secret plan to fire 700 teachers. But, you know, it's really not even a secret any longer.

You know, they had their rally the other day and from what I could tell, it wasn't a very exciting event. But what they did do—what he did do—he said, well, you know what I'll do, I'll get rid of all middle-management employees in the province. You know, that's how I'll balance the budget, I'll get rid of all middle-management employees in the province. Well, that is about \$600 million worth of middle-management employees. Even if they make \$100,000 a year, which they do not, that's 6,000 employees—6,000 employees—that he's threatened to fire, and that is his plan.

The other day, he was on the radio and I found it quite interesting—it was on TV, actually. He was being interviewed by the Winnipeg Free Press editorial board and it was quite interesting. They had the Liberal Leader which is quite entertaining, but

they had the Leader of the Opposition and they asked him, how can you possibly—like, your plan doesn't make any sense. How can you possibly, you know, make massive cuts to your revenues, and then they're going to increase expenditures and they're going to balance the budget all at the same time.

You know, I'm reminded of when Bill Clinton—one of the great Bill Clinton quotes, he said it's all about the math—it's all about the math—you know, you can't make massive tax cuts and then make massive expenditure increases and then you cannot balance your budget all at the same time. Well, what he did—he did come up with one thing. He said, well, I know—well, I—well, okay, you're right; you caught me. He said you completely caught me but I'll tell you what I'll do. He said, well, I will, in the middle of a flood, next time it's flooding—and assuming he doesn't run away, assuming that he stays here in the province, the only thing he offered up was, in the middle of the flood, he'd ask the flood waters to stop rising. Can you just excuse me, can you stop rising while I go out and tender—will take me 40 days, but I'm going to go out and tender for floodfighting equipment. That's the only thing he offered up to Manitobans as a solution, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:00)

We know they want to—they know they want to fire—we know, Mr. Speaker, we know they want to go ahead with—well, you know, the member's trying to—anyways, as I was saying, the Leader of the Opposition, they have no plan. It's becoming apparently clear to all Manitobans what—and then contrast that, however, to this government's plans.

Just on Friday was released the unemployment rate numbers, the survey of employment in Canada. We are one of the few provinces, one of the very few provinces that had our unemployment rate fall. We're at 5—we're at 6 per cent here in Manitoba; Saskatchewan's 5.9. They lead the nation at 5.9, but we are at 6 per cent. We're one of the few provinces in Canada that created jobs, and it's because of our economic plan because of our plan to continue to invest in the economy, our plan to continue to grow the economy. The Conference Board of Canada has said Manitoba has a bright future when it comes—the Royal Bank of Canada has—Manitoba will have a great future when it comes to growing the economy, Mr. Speaker.

Let's—well, let's also—let's not forget the Liberals in this equation. Let's not forget the Liberals in this equation because you have the Leader of the Liberal

Party goes out and says, well, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to fire 855 liquor workers. I'm going to take 855 liquor workers and fire them, throw them out on the street. That's going to be now about \$300 million in revenues that's going to be lost. As well, Mr. Speaker, she's also decided, well, that's not enough revenue cut. I'm going to take—I'm going to cut the health and education tax, which is applied to only 5 per cent of the businesses—5 per cent of the business brings in \$471 million in revenue. She's going to eliminate that.

So here's her plan: She's going to fire 855 liquor workers and provide tax cuts to the big corporations and to the big banks, Mr. Speaker. That is ridiculous—that is ridiculous. That'll do nothing to grow our economy. We're focusing on small business. That is why we're the first and only province in Canada to have eliminated the small business tax.

I ask members to reject this ridiculous motion put forward by the members opposite.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): And I want to thank the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) for bringing this very important motion forward in the Manitoba Legislature for debate today. And we know that if members opposite weren't so afraid of what the real numbers say, we know that they would have tabled a proper budget here in the Legislature. We know that they would have done that so we could have debate over the real numbers.

The reason that we are before this Legislature with this motion today, Mr. Speaker, is because of the phony financial forecast statement that members opposite—that they tabled in the House last week. And what's unfortunate is that they won't bring forward a budget. But we are giving them the opportunity today to do the right thing, to table the real numbers in the form of a budget in this Manitoba Legislature for debate today, and if they do so we're prepared to sit until midnight tonight to properly debate it for Manitobans because that's what they need, want and deserve.

Mr. Speaker, on—we need only remind Manitobans that on the last provincial budget—on the day of the last provincial budget, the Finance Minister said that there would be one more budget before the election. That's what he said then. On the day the public accounts was released, which showed a \$100-million greater deficit than was budgeted in the past year, the Finance Minister again said that

there would be a budget tabled prior to the next election.

However, he started to change his tune when the numbers started to get worse, Mr. Speaker. He started to change his tune and he said we're weighing our options as to whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP was so serious about Manitoba's finances, they would have tabled a budget in this Legislature already so that on the eve of an election Manitobans would know exactly what the real numbers are so that they can decide for themselves in the next election about who they want to support, whether they want to support an NDP government that wants to hide the numbers, as they have been doing, or if they were more transparent with the numbers. Those numbers were probably not as good as they are—as were tabled in the way of a phony financial forecast in this Legislature. But Manitobans deserve to know what the real numbers are so that when they go to the polls April 19th they have all the facts before them so they can decide who to vote for in the next election.

Unfortunately, because members opposite are refusing to agree to that, refusing to put the real numbers before Manitobans today, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate because that Manitobans will not be able to see the real numbers that we are facing here in the province of Manitoba. This lack of transparency on behalf of this government is unbecoming; Manitobans deserve much better than what they're getting under this Selinger government.

Mr. Speaker, we know that members opposite have broken their promises time and time again to Manitobans. We know another promise that they made before the last election; they promised to balance the budget by 2014. And there's a whole litany of quotes that I could say, but in the interest of time, the members opposite promised to balance the budget by 2014. And then when they got into power, the first thing they said, no, well, we're not really on forecast at this stage.

It was only after the election, only after members of this province—after people in this province voted in favour of their government because they—because this NDP government promised to balance the budget by 2014. They said they were on track. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) said he was on track to do that, and then right after the election they took back and broke that promise to Manitobans; shame on them I say, Mr. Speaker. And Manitobans have had

enough of the litany of broken promises made by this NDP government in the last election. That is merely just one broken promise.

But let's look at one of the most egregious broken promises made in the history of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, the promise by this NDP government not to raise taxes. In fact, when the Premier was asked whether or not he would be raising taxes he said that the very notion of that is nonsense. He said it's ridiculous that he would be raising taxes. But we knew at the time that given all of the promises that they made to Manitobans the only way that they would do it is by raising taxes.

Now we know in January, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite made another 113 promises to Manitobans, equalling more than \$6.6 billion worth of promises to Manitobans, but not one member opposite has indicated how they plan to pay for that.

Manitobans know how they paid for it last time—a litany of broken promises made by members opposite. They know how they paid for it last time. They were promised that they wouldn't—that the NDP government would not raise taxes, and the first available opportunity that they had, they expanded the goods and services that were subject to the PST, and then right after that they raised the PST from 7 to 8 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Manitobans know that this government, the 113 promises that they made just two months ago, Mr. Speaker, they know that those are nothing but future broken promises here in the province of Manitoba. But, if members opposite want to go door to door, if they want to continue to reiterate those future broken promises, they are going to have to explain how they plan to pay for those promises, and that's \$6.6 billion worth of promises. So members opposite need to explain to Manitobans how they plan to pay for it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's great to see you in your role there. I welcome you to that Chair today in your capacity. But I think you recognize—I think you recognize more than all the other deputy speakers that perhaps what we need is a new government that will be there for Manitobans, that will be transparent, that will be accountable to Manitobans, and I know that you, more than anyone, recognize the need for that.

We know that members opposite went door to door in the last election campaign; again, another

broken promise by this NDP government. They knocked on the doors of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, and they promised not to raise taxes and then they did. They broadened the PST; then they increased the PST.

*(15:10)

But I think one of the most egregious acts that this government could have done is that they stripped Manitobans of their very right to vote on a tax increase. That was something that was there by law in Manitoba. It was their right to be able to have a say in the way of a referendum in major tax increases in this province, Mr. Speaker, and every NDP MLA voted in favour of stripping away the rights of those Manitobans from being able to have a say on that tax increase.

Now, maybe it's in—the devil's in the details, Mr. Speaker; maybe members opposite didn't see that as a major tax increase or a major tax change. But we know that Manitobans see that, that the increase from 7 to 8 per cent as a very significant hit on their finances, their own finances and their own pocketbooks within their own budgets and their households.

And the people that it hurt the most are those most vulnerable in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, low-income Manitobans, that this government decided to take even more money out of their pockets when they're trying desperately to make ends meet on a day-to-day basis.

They did it to seniors, seniors who live on fixed income in this province. They took money, again, out of their pockets and left them in a more vulnerable position than they are now, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

So Manitobans know, Mr. Speaker, that they are not going to be fooled again by an NDP government that makes a whole host of promises that they never plan to keep. Manitobans deserve to know what the government is planning for the future. Manitobans were looking for a budget from this government because that's what they were promised, and Manitobans deserve to know what the real numbers are.

I know the numbers that were tabled are not exactly a positive outlook for Manitobans, but Manitobans deserve to know how deep the hole really is, Mr. Speaker, and how bad the financial outlook for this province really is. They deserve to

have the real budget introduced for the—for debate in the Legislature.

And it's not too late, Mr. Speaker. In fact, if members opposite see fit to vote in favour of this motion or perhaps if they see fit to table a budget this afternoon, we would be happy to sit until midnight to debate that, because Manitobans need, want and deserve to know what the real numbers are in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Stuart Briese): The member for Pembina–Emerson, pardon me, Emerson.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I couldn't get my seat belt undone in time to jump up.

If there—Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we have is a situation. And I'll—first of all, I'd like to thank my colleague, the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), for bringing this motion forward. This is a motion that shouldn't have to be brought forward in this House at this time. It shouldn't have to be brought forward. It's being forced by incompetence and negligence on behalf of the government. It's unfortunate they would get into a rut that they can't get out of. They can't seem to get united on that side where they agree on anything. And then it leads to this kind of a situation.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see that there's been 113 announcements. These are in a blackout period or before the blackout period, 113 announcements of \$6.6 billion—\$6.6 billion after increasing the debt by \$4.4 billion in the last fiscal year. Where does this money come from?

Oh, let me think. I'll bet it comes out of the pockets of poor Manitobans. And, when I say that, about poor Manitobans, I would like to refer to what my colleague has just said. When they raised the PST by 14 per cent, raising it to 8 per cent, what they did was they targeted—they targeted the most vulnerable in our society, the low-income earners, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the seniors, those less able to pay, seniors who are on a fixed income. And the low-income earners are being forced to pay for the pure folly of this government.

And when I say it's pure folly, I mean that. When they raised the 8 per—the PST by 14 per cent to 8 per cent, what they said was, oh, that's for education. Oh, no, maybe not, even though that we're the last—we're the last in math and reading and science in the province of Manitoba compared to the rest of the country. *[interjection]* Yes, it is. the

member from—responsible for education just doesn't have a clue. He should have spent more time in school.

At any rate, education didn't fly. It didn't resonate with the people of Manitoba. They knew it was wrong. So then what did they do? They switched over for health care. It's for health care. But we know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know very well that the wait-times are the longest of any place in Canada. We also know that you could fly to Europe and back while you're waiting here to get in to see a doctor. Doctors have been leaving this province left, right and centre. Why? Because they're being threatened with taxing the rich. They're going to tax the rich. That's what they've proposed. That's one of their plans is we'll tax the rich. Well, the rich are being taxed here already a lot quicker than they are in any other province.

But, on top of that, ERs closing; throughout Manitoba we have ERs closed—30 ERs closed and today what did we hear in the House? We heard the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) saying, oh, well, we might be able to get doctors and we might be able to open the 31st one again, though she has no intentions of opening it. Nobody believes her. I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but nobody believes anybody on that side of the House, and they have good reason for that. Good reason, because each and every one of them went door to door, knocking on the door, saying we will not raise the taxes.

And what did they do? The first thing they did was they broadened the PST to cover everything. They covered things like vehicle registration. They covered things like hairstyling, and while we speak of that, a good friend of mine owns a hair shop; his name is Terry Bugera. Terry expands—he expands his place because he believed the First Minister. He believed that they would not raise taxes, and so he expanded and expanded and he's still suffering. He's still suffering from that very tax that they expanded to cover hairstyling, vehicle registration, house insurance. So many other things have been covered by that.

That wasn't enough; that didn't satisfy them. And, when they were accused—prior to the election, they were accused of raising the PST, and it was the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) that said, that's ridiculous; that's utter nonsense. And what did he do? He raised it by 14 per cent. That 14 per cent has cost Manitobans \$500 million a year—\$500 million a year—and what does this govern-

ment do? What do they do? They run a deficit of \$5 million a year. They're addicted; they're addicted to wasting money. They're not spending it anymore; they're wasting it. They don't even know where it goes.

Ms. Jennifer Howard, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't know if you know, but it could be seniors' abuse for removing the former Deputy Speaker. I apologize. I might be out of line.

But, regardless, the raising that 8 per cent when we know in the background, they had said, amongst themselves, we should be going 9 per cent. We should go to 9 per cent. It was discussed. We know that now, but, no, they went door to door and said, we will not raise the taxes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Manitobans are not going to be fooled by that again. Trust is so terribly important in any business—in any business that you're in. Politics is one of them that very few people trust politics, unfortunately. They have a bad name and this is—leads to it. This adds to it.

* (15:20)

And we know from the dissension in the ranks of the sitting government today that some over there wanted to maintain their dignity and they stood up to their leader. They stood up to their leader and said, no. No, that minister has to put things through Treasury Board. He has to tender.

And so after six months or seven months or nine months—who knows how long the infighting was going on—eruption. Eruption, five members go public—go public—and still—still—we see the deficit rise. The deficit rises and then make 113 promises in January alone that's going to be worth \$6.6 billion? If we could take the word of the NDP government that that's what it would cost—but they've never, never have they been able to bring in a project on time and on budget. They're always over budget. And we'll take instances like the stadium just went a little bit over, just a few million dollars over. The hydro bill went a few million dollars over.

Just goes on and on, Madam Deputy Speaker, but, at the same time, the NDP government took it upon themselves to pay themselves \$1.3 million so they wouldn't have to knock on doors anymore by taking a vote tax. But continuing to run a deficit and not paying attention to what Moody's have to say to you to get your house in order, to get the house

in order, in financial order, so there wouldn't be a downgrade. But, no, we're paying over \$800 million today in interest.

And I'm sure that it's over eight hundred; could be over nine hundred now. But, regardless, if the interest goes up at all, we're really hurting. But the downgrade pushed up our cost of borrowing, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that, again, hurts our low income and our seniors that are on fixed income that don't have an opportunity to go out, get a job and raise more money. We are at a disadvantage to our sister province next door to the west, where their personal exemption starts \$6,000 after ours does. This puts money in their pockets.

The one thing that Manitobans have got to look forward to: a change for the better is coming and it's coming soon, on April 19th.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to talk on this resolution which emphasizes the need for a budget, a proper budget. I'm in full support of this resolution. Manitoba should have a budget. There should be no question. The NDP have one more day and one more chance to produce it but so far there's no sign that they will.

The NDP have provided every excuse in the book for not being responsible and producing a budget. The bottom line is that the NDP are being irresponsible in not producing a budget. The fiscal update document that was produced and tabled by the MLA for Kildonan in this Legislature had so many shortcomings. It was so far from being a budget it is appalling.

You know, just as one small example, there is one line for Justice and other expenditures. There is no line for Agriculture. There is no line for Culture, Heritage, Tourism, Sport. There is no line that the government is saying that they're going to spend any money on science and innovation. The minister says it was a robust update. It was so robust, Madam Speaker, that it forgot to include Agriculture; it forgot to include Culture and Heritage and Tourism and Sport; it forgot to include science and innovation. It's hard to believe, but the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) says it was robust.

Child and Family Services—we have an extraordinary crisis in our province. We have had this crisis ongoing for years and years under the NDP government. Just this morning, we had Kyra Wilson, who has been involved in advocating for children, coming forward and saying she is ready to put

herself on the line to be a candidate, because she knows that there are huge problems in what is going on at the moment and there needs to be change. There needs to be better support for families. There needs to be an understanding of what can be done to change this whole system, which the minister seems to totally lack, unfortunately. There's no look at outcomes. There's no talk about outcomes. There's no talk about, you know, how many—much reduction this government actually wants, if they want any, in terms of the number of children in care.

We have stories coming to us daily of children who are separated from their parents when the families could have been supported, when there was not—the reason that the families shouldn't be supported. We have a daily protest in front of the Manitoba Legislature about this broken CFS system—day after day after day. And it goes on. And yet we have a budget, which has one line for all of Family Services. We have no breakdown. We have no line by line in terms of what they're actually going to spend on child and family services. Where is the money going? And yet the minister says it was, and is, a robust update. It is so robust, Madam Speaker, that all these normal lines were completely missing. And we have no idea what that money is going to actually be spent on because all we have is one line for all of Family Services.

Madam Speaker, it is shocking that the fiscal update is so skimpy that we don't even know if the NDP have allocated funds for the support of midwives and midwifery services. The services of midwives are so essential and so important to Manitoba mothers and to Manitoba families. Midwives do so much to help mothers and families to prepare for the birth of their child. At the time of the birth and during the period after the birth and before the birth, midwives play a tremendously important role. And this vital service is really important for children to get the best possible start in life and for Manitoba family members to make the best possible adjustment to their new circumstances with a new baby. The Minister of Finance has delivered a fiscal update. He says it was robust. But it was so robust, however, that we have no idea whether there's any money in there for midwives because there is so little—so little—detail.

Madam Speaker, one of the most important people in our province and in our society are people with disabilities—or I would rather say special abilities. How societies and governments support those who are less well off is the hallmark of a

society and of a government. And yet, when we look at the fiscal update, the minister says it was robust, but it was so robust that we have no idea how the money is going to be spent and what sort of support there is actually going to be in the NDP plan for people with disabilities or people with special abilities.

* (15:30)

And I say that people with special abilities are of extraordinary importance because so much of what we depend on every day is a result of people caring about those with disabilities. We have telephones; we have iPhones, and we have all sorts of communication, and so much of it depended on the work that Alexander Graham Bell did with people with disabilities.

Think where we would be as a society and a planet without that sort of inventiveness and creativity and care for those who have disabilities. We need more, not less.

We should have had a budget which provided the detail. We have one more day to have that budget. Maybe we will. We hope so. But, so far, there is no sign of it, and we are all wondering if it is really there or not.

Madam Speaker, we are live at an important time. We live at a time when the federal government under Justin Trudeau—the Liberal government, has made a decision to welcome thousands and thousands of new immigrants from Syria and from other countries, and this is a welcome development. It is a caring development. It is a development which reaches out to people around the world and helps them, but it is also a development which helps us because immigrants have done so much to build our province and our society and, indeed, here, quoting from *The Globe and Mail* today, research shows immigrants are less risk-averse, more likely to start new businesses and often bring valuable skills. They are so important to innovation, to creativity, to building enterprise and to building a province like Manitoba.

And yet there is not even a budget there, not even a budget line for Labour and Immigration. It's buried somewhere in this complex mass of—and other expenditures. But the minister said it is a robust budget. It is so robust that it completely forgot to give any mention, any line, any dollar figure, for supporting immigrants.

It is astounding, Madam Speaker. The minister says it was robust, but I have looked at it. It is so robust that there is so much missing, so much wanting, that the only possible alternative that the NDP could do is to bring that budget in the next day. They have one day to do it. If they miss that day, that robustness of the minister will stand forever as a hallmark of a dying government.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm honoured to put a few words today on the opposition day motion to bring forward a budget by this NDP government. I want to thank my colleague from Morden-Winkler who brought this opposition day proposal, and on one—on the day that the last—provincial budget, the Finance Minister said that he would put one more budget before the election, and on the day the public accounts was released showing the deficit of \$100 million greater than the budget in the past year, the Finance Minister said he would bring forward a budget before the next election.

However, he stayed wavering right after announcements saying we're weighing our options as whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election. If the NDP are serious about Manitoba's finances they should be—table a full budget in the real accountability in the Legislative Assembly already. We've given them opportunities to do so and yet, still undecided on whether or not to bring forward the promise to Manitobans.

The NDP is trying to avoid the full accounting of their expenses, promises, to bring higher taxes to Manitobans and more debt for future generations. In the month of January alone they actually announced 113 announcements. And yet who is going to pay for these taxes, for all these promises? And that promise for—that they promise if they get it back in, is \$6.6 billion worth of promises.

Manitobans have been fooled already once in the 2011 election when the NDP came knocking on the door and saying that, you know, we're not going to raise taxes. And what did they do? They raised taxes. I remember that election so well. You know, many Manitobans were fooled by this NDP government and I knew that darn well that what I've seen in western Manitoba, the 'disparity' between Saskatchewan and Manitoba, I've seen the differences. I've seen our retail stores being hauled out by closing-up sales and a lot of retail spaces empty. And this is because they raised the PST from the last election that they promised they weren't.

When you actually have 8 per cent PST on this side of the border and you have 5 per cent on the other side of the border, and we had a 'rebut' oil industry that was happening in the 2000—the last 10 years. And when you have corporations that are so frustrated with the red tape that this government has given and for them actually building—constructing and waiting for time to get a licence to build a building in the Manitoba side of the border, they get so frustrated.

Even the RMs are frustrated because it takes so long for all the red tape to actually get the permits for these builders to a point where, even when they do Autopac, to do auto insurance with MPI, they get so frustrated because a lot of times when a person is registering a vehicle in Saskatchewan, they don't have to pay PST if they're transferring from one company to the other company. But, if it was their individual—they were individuals and they wanted to put that money—the vehicles in their own corporation, they had to pay PST. In Saskatchewan you don't.

So that's why a lot of companies had set up corporations—new companies that were going to be in the oil patch—set up in Saskatchewan. It, again, shows that Manitoba, with this NDP spending on so many different things foolishly and untendered contracts, it's creating more unfairness to our residents on our side of the border, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We've seen also when that's the case, we're losing out on opportunities for development, especially when the oil patch is—now that the oil patch is now having some troubles, they're—it goes in cycles, we're not—with this government, this NDP government having so much revenue in the last 10, 15 years, increased revenues from the oil patch, now they can't rely on it anymore.

Saskatchewan, which is a lot healthier with their budgets and their fiscal responsibility are—can weather the storm a lot better than we can do in Manitoba. And now I find the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is using that as an excuse why the—we're not—we're getting more into a deficit than larger than was expected is because of the oil patch. But what had happened to the rainy day? It was this government kept on spending, spending, spending and not worrying about the economic crisis that were looming. And we don't know—it's not if the next financial crisis happens in the world, it's when the next financial crisis happens in the world. It is so

important that we get our books in order so that we can weather these storms that are coming.

And like our leader says, you know, animals disperse different ways when there's a storm coming. But Manitoba bison, when a storm comes, they face it directly and they go around in circles and they protect the young, the vulnerable. And that is why it's so important as—in government to do that, to protect the misfortunes of young individuals, young people who can't—who are coming up in the ranks who need to have a good start and have an economic good start when it comes to having to pay less in taxes.

Again, Madam Deputy Speaker, we see the difference between Saskatchewan and Manitoba, families, young families are paying three to four thousand dollars more in taxes than they do here in Manitoba.

My brother, for instance, he works at the Esterhazy mine. And he sees the difference between what his co-workers make and what they actually keep at—take-home pay compared to what, he now lives in Manitoba, that the taxes are taken out for that.

And that's why it's so important to, instead of always increasing the minimum wage, Madam Deputy Speaker, and because what is happening is you're putting it into one pocket of that individual, but you're taking it out on the other side of the other pocket when it comes to our personal exemptions. We have one of the lowest personal exemptions than any other province and the opportunity to raise that personal exemption—instead of raising minimum wage, it gives more money in the pockets of the individual.

And we also have to look at tax—creeping too, Madam Deputy Speaker. When a person makes more money and you're not indexing the tax brackets, the person's going to get taxed more and more as they get a higher income. And that's what's happening with our—even our vulnerable poor right now who are making minimum wage. They're paying more and more taxes all the time because of the bracket creeping and personal exemptions.

*(15:40)

In Saskatchewan, their personal exemption, I think the highest—well, the highest tax bracket in Saskatchewan is well over \$125,000. Here in Manitoba it's \$62,000. There's a lot of people, especially even within unions who make incomes higher than \$62,000, that—more money they make,

the more money this government takes. And it concerns me, Madam Deputy Speaker, because right now we should be looking at, because of—how would she brag about economic opportunities and how well this province could be doing, why wasn't—why isn't more debt being paid down? Why is the deficit decreasing? This is a time to decrease these deficits.

And, you know, this government does not have a revenue problem; it has a spending problem. And one example of the spending problem that they have is untendered contracts when it comes to the STARS helicopter or when it comes to the bridge in—Coulter bridge. Remember—it was tendered for \$6 million, but instead, the tender went up—the actual cost of that bridge was over \$11 million.

This is where the money's being—is being misspent, Madam Deputy Speaker, and there's—there should be more responsibility when it comes to government. When I was in business for many years, we always had to do a budget for ourselves to know where we're—where our projections are going for five years, 10 years down the road, but also, it get— it helped my business partner to understand where we're going, what direction we're going. It actually showed security to my—our employees, where our business was going.

Then, when I sold my business to the credit union, we had members to have to count for when it came to the profitability of our company, where our projections were going. We always had to be accountable. And then government now, you have to be accountable to the taxpayer, and you—this government, this NDP government, has not been accountable to the taxpayer, and I—the things we need is to change this, and if change is going to happen next month when—on April 19th, we need to change this government because of the carelessness that they have when it comes to spending.

When even in the last July, when we had a downgrade, being in the financial business in the world, you know, when I was an investor—investing my clients' money, it was so important that we had to take care—we had to worry about economics, when it comes to general economics of the world. We had to look after geography, what is the opportunities for growth opportunities, what is the stability in the world, and where the money should be—to be invested so that there's a maximum return on your investment. These are all different indicators that—where people are going to invest money, but if we're going to have a—such a great deficit and a lot of debt,

is investors want to invest in Manitoba? They have a lot of concerns right now, Madam Deputy Speaker. And this is why I want to talk to you today about putting a few words on the thing. It concerns me. Our future is in jeopardy if we continue projecting like this. We could be the—Greece—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Honourable member's time has expired. Thank you.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the motion asking for the government to bring forward a budget because there was some—something was tried to be tabled last week, this, I guess it's this document, the best I can see is it's maybe a fable, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's—but usually in a fable there's some redeeming features, and I didn't see anything redeeming in this document. I kept looking through it, trying to find something that would—more of a tragedy, and it is, indeed, a tragedy when I see the opportunity lost in Manitoba. There's so much opportunity that's been driven away by this government, it is really unbelievable.

You know, I look back to the promises made by this government, and I know that their promises really don't mean anything to them, but they did promise that all of the gas tax would go towards infrastructure, and that didn't happen—increase—and then they promised that when they broadened the PST in the budget, well, that would go to infrastructure. And, of course, that didn't happen. Then there's another one brought in, the vehicle registration fee, and that would go to infrastructure, and, of course, it didn't.

So then they—there was something that they promised in the last election. Prior to it, they said they would not raise any taxes, and, of course, they did. And then they raised the PST by 14 per cent; no referendum, did away with that, did away with the right of Manitobans to vote on anything. And, again, they—then they thought, well, we'd better really find something that we're going to spend all this new money on, and they searched around and searched around, and, finally, again, they seized on infrastructure. So it'll go to infrastructure. Well, again, not one dime, when we look back at the budget. In fact, they underspent by \$2.2 billion. And only in the last year, prior to the election, did they come even close.

And then, when I look at this document, obviously, it shows that the PST increase was not required for infrastructure, because it didn't go there;

it went somewhere else. But they still managed to run a deficit—a huge one.

And, when I look at these projects that the government has run, over budget and overdue and all the money that was spent on them that could've gone to front-line services, could've gone to health care, could've gone to make the children safer in Child and Family Services, could've gone to justice, could've gone to just any one of the front-line services that Manitobans depend on. But, instead, projects that were overdue and over budget and then, on some of them, we're borrowing the money for it and then we're paying interest on that money, you know.

So, when I look at this, again, it's more of a fable, and what they put in—what the minister put in there it's, you know, it's—you could say, well, missed it by that much, you know, not that much, Mr. Deputy Speaker—Madam Deputy Speaker, not the little bit between your fingers, but that much, as far as what your arms could reach; that's how much they missed it by—not even an attempt. So, obviously, hitting the target is not a serious issue for the—this government here.

You know, I do recall a time not that long ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, when I was Justice critic and I was in Estimates with the minister who was—the Justice Minister, at that time, was the MLA for Minto. And it was the same year that the PST had gone up 14 per cent. So I'm looking at the Justice Estimates and there's a line item in Corrections; it had gone up coincidentally 14 per cent as well. So I asked the minister, well, can you tell me what's in that line item? And the minister huddled together with his staff, and they consulted, and they talked to each other and then they came back and they said, we can't tell you.

Okay, so we went on to some other questions and I thought, well, the next day they'll 'surlly'—surely they'll have researched this a little bit. So I thought I'd give them another opportunity to answer the question, and I asked them, you know, what's in that line item? Why did it go up 14 per cent? And, again, they huddled together, and they consulted each other, and they texted someone else on the BlackBerrys to try to find out the answer, and this time the response was: We don't know. We can't tell you.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you don't know what's in a line item, you can't possibly follow a budget. You can't adhere to that budget, so, obviously, at that time, the minister and the government had no intent to follow any

budgets whatsoever. And we see that again in this document, that it really—I don't know what it says to Manitobans. I've asked a few of them. Most of them really don't seem to understand what this government's trying to do, but, certainly, we can't see that there's any plan there. And, you know, it's quite shocking that they don't know what's in the budget, so they can't follow it. They can't come to the end of the month and go: You know what, we're getting close to that budget item; we're running out of money in that particular area. Do we need to make this expenditure this month, or can we hold it off to the next month?

Or even is there perhaps a message of restraint? Because, even in MPI committee, I do recall asking the CEO at that time, you know, is there any message of restraint from the minister responsible, who, coincidentally again, was the MLA for Minto, and she looked at me with this shocked look on her face, said: No—no—there's no message of restraint coming from the government; we haven't received that at all.

It's just a free-for-all, just free spending as much as you want to spend on whatever you want to spend.

And, of course, in Manitoba Hydro, and in MPI and in other areas, we see that there is no restraint. We see contracts that are let without, you know, going through the tender process. We see contracts that are let to friends. We see—more disturbing, I think, is that we see contracts that are let to people and not disclosed; they're hidden—they're hidden—from Manitobans in substantial amounts of dollars. We see somewhere in the millions of dollars range and, on Tiger Dams, I think that they were not tendered, issued to the company that provided the Tiger Dams and hidden, because they were not disclosed.

And we brought this to the government's attention and they said, oh, well, yes, we should—I guess we should put those on the list. Yes, we'll get right on that; we'll do that. And then we found some other contracts that were also untendered and undisclosed. Yes, the government said, I guess, yes, we'll add those to the list as well.

* (15:50)

So, when you run into this time and again, Madam Deputy Speaker, you kind of start to wonder what else are they hiding and is it intentional? Is it accidental? Is it because the government doesn't know or the government doesn't care? Some of it I

have to assume from this regard is intentional because, again, we see just recently the government signing any number of contracts at the last minute here. We are within a day, two days, a week of an election, and yet we're signing—the government's signing millions of dollars in new contracts that will last over five years or more. And in some regards, we've heard from these people that they're being bullied into signing these contracts. They feel they're being blackmailed. They feel that the government is putting them in a very awkward, uncomfortable position that they have no choice.

I don't think that's a good way to do business. If you're forced to do business with somebody that bullies you into it, it's probably not going to be a good relationship.

And with many of the First Nations, we hope we have good relationships and we want to create further good relationships. But when you're bullying First Nations to sign contracts, when they feel that they're being blackmailed to sign that contract, I don't think that it's going to be a comfortable relationship. It's not going to be a positive relationship. And it's certainly not something that you're probably going to see a good outcome. Indeed, some of these CBAs, I'm told, you know, the—obviously, with a CBA, some of the education is to go back to the First Nation training, and that's all admirable, that training will go back into those communities. However, there was one particular case where I'm aware of some million dollars was set aside for this training and, so far, they've had two seminars on operating a chainsaw.

Now, it is—a chainsaw can be a dangerous piece of equipment. It's very, very good that you are trained in the operation of a chainsaw. However, I rather doubt that it costs half a million dollars to produce a training regime, a program, for how to safely operate a chainsaw. Just one of the many indications, Madam Deputy Speaker, of—

An Honourable Member: Running with a chainsaw.

Mr. Helwer: Running with a chain—of the dangerous things that we see with this government.

So bring forth a budget, tell Manitobans what your plan is and then they can determine how much they trust you. But it's obvious now that there is no trust for this government.

Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Madam Deputy Speaker, I, too, wish to speak briefly to the motion at hand, very important motion.

Over the years, members might know, certainly those who got elected before me or at the same time as myself, that my children have always been a very important part of my life and spent many, many hours and days and months at all kinds of sports events and even coached. In fact, the first year I took my kids to East St. Paul and lined up with hundreds of other people, the president of the club, now a good friend of mine—I didn't know him as well then—we just didn't have enough coaches.

So he started down the line, and I happened to be standing there and he said to me—I'm not allowed to use my last name—he said to me, are you prepared to coach? And I said, no, actually. I—other than having played soccer, I actually don't know how to coach. He said, okay, nobody's going to coach; your kid's out of the program, went to the next guy. Standing behind me was my neighbour, and he said, so, are you going to coach? And my neighbour said, well, no, I haven't really, other than played a little. He said, well, then your kid's out of the program.

He said, wait, wait, wait, wait a moment. You know, wait a moment. We'll—between my neighbour and I, we'll figure it out.

And that's how we became coaches of this four-year-old team. And it was a great experience, and that's the last year I coached because that was about the extent of my ability of soccer. And—[interjection] But—and by the end of it, they were better than me. I'd like to thank the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) for pointing that out.

And, I mean, there were a lot of good lessons we learned. For instance, they have short attention span but great memory. And the other thing is is that they don't really come for the coaching. They don't really come for the sport. They actually come for the treat. And so we always made sure we had a really good treat. In fact, I have got a great video of my son, who was three, and we put him on the team because if his sister was on the team, he had to be on the team. And he would line up—he was always the first one—he'd get his treat first. And then about, you know—I was videotaping it, and then about two minutes later, he was back in line getting the second treat, and then he was always the last guy in line getting another treat.

But what we also learned from all of that is that you needed to have a plan, that you'd show up at the

soccer field and you'd have all these kids who—it was like herding grasshoppers with a pitchfork. I mean, they'd be all over the place, running in different directions. And I learned, Madam Deputy Speaker, that if an airplane flies by, just stop the game and everybody look at the airplane and wonder how it got up there and enjoy it. And then when the airplane's gone, then you resume the game. But you needed a plan even for—even for—the practice. And that, actually, is what we're trying to recommend to the government is that you need a plan.

Really, if you're going to put a sports analogy to it, the budget is actually the plan on how you're going to run your team. It's how you plan on moving things forward. You need a plan. And it's the most fundamental—fundamental—argument that you could make is even with four-year-old little wannabe athletes, you need a plan. Does the plan always work? No. We know that. We know that there's all kinds of things that come at governments, and economic upswings or a catastrophic event like 9/11 can really affect what a government's going to do. But the problem is, if you don't have a plan, if you have no plan, if you have no economic plan in place, none whatsoever, and something like a 9/11 comes at you or some kind of a financial crisis, if you don't have a plan—like, right now, the Province of Manitoba is going through a year with no economic plan.

So, if something happens, there's nothing the government can change because they have nothing there. So, if you find that you're doing something wrong, the Cabinet now would meet and they'd say, you know what, this isn't working. So what would you change if you don't have a plan? Well, nothing. And that's the problem when governments like this government, after 16 years—we're not talking a rookie government. We're not talking about newbies. We understand when governments first elected they take more time. You know, perhaps some advice to the federal government: perhaps a few less selfies and a few less traveling around the world having receptions and maybe spend a bit more time on a federal budget. But, again, it's a new government; they're putting together their plan. We understand that.

The government here in Manitoba has been there for 16 years. It's not like this is the first time around the block. They're—it's not like they've never done this before. They need a plan. It's the way you move things forward.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson)—I had the absolute pleasure of being at an event on Friday evening. And, of all the events we go to, this was truly one of the more important events you could be at. And it was a dance competition. Now, I'd like to—I would love to be able to tell the House that it was the member for River East and I dancing, but my kids would have a word for that, and I won't repeat it, so—but, you know, I—they—the—every time I want to get my teenagers in line, I just have to threaten them that if they don't get into line, I'll start dancing. And they're, no, Dad, no, no, no. Please, no dancing. Just—we'll do whatever you say, do whatever you want. Just don't start dancing.

* (16:00)

Anyway, I digress. The member for River East and I were at this dance competition, and it was very interesting because my daughter was on one team and her two grand—my daughter, Corina, was—Corina Schuler was on the one. And the member for River East, her granddaughters—[interjection]—Lauren and Serah Kisil—and they are the cutest two little girls. And they were also dancing. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, what's interesting about that is the kind of routine that they have to practice because they don't just go out onto the—on the floor. This was—there was—the Royal Winnipeg Ballet was there. Ken Peter's, what's the—[interjection]—dance academy. My daughter goes to LA Dance Academy. But there were academies from all over. And the Royal Winnipeg Ballet academy, they cleaned up a lot of them.

But I was very—I'm very pleased, and I know the House wants to know how my daughter did. Her team won first place. So they did very well.

But it's the routine that they take on—and you know I—this isn't a place I would normally spend a lot of time at, but it was interesting watching even the individual, the singles, the way that they would perform on the dance floor. They are just outstanding, and they have an amazing routine. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, even a dance team, even at six and seven years old, they need to have a plan. They need to have a routine.

And you would think that province like ours, the province of Manitoba, it needs a plan, it needs the routine, it needs something in place that we would say in our—with our fiscal house, this is where we are at, and this is where we plan on going forward. It is important—just as important for a girls' dance team to

have a routine, to have a plan, or any kind of a sports team to have a plan. If it's as important for them to have a plan, it's just as important for a province to have a plan. We must have something that we say, this is how we're going to move forward.

Like I—like, for instance, there were some comments made—and I've been to different events. My daughter's also involved in some of the music competitions. And at the end, they say, you know, in your routine, in your plan, you might want to try this, or you might want to try that approach. But they've got something in place that can be changed. Without a budget, we have no idea where we're going. We have no compass. We have no plan. We have no routine. We don't know where the province is going.

I would recommend to the government members: go down into the basement; dust off that plan that you have in place. We know the budget's been done. The consultations have been done. Go down, blow the dust off the cover, come up here and present it. And we said we'd be prepared here to sit here and allow that to happen. I think Manitobans would appreciate it. And I believe even our financial creditors around the world would like to see where the province is going.

And those few comments, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion put forward by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Madam Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the resolution—the motion, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Madam Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Call for a recorded vote.

Madam Deputy Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

* (17:00)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The question before the House is the Opposition Day motion by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

Division

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

Yeas

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Helwer, Martin, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.

Nays

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Blady, Braun, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Pettersen, Rondeau, Saran, Struthers, Swan, Wiebe, Wight.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 17, Nays 28.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 14, 2016

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