

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 12, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 15—The Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention Act (Advanced Education Administration Act and Private Vocational Institutions Act Amended)

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I move, on behalf of the Minister of Education, seconded by the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke), that Bill 15, The Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention Act (Advanced Education Administration Act and Private Vocational Institutions Act Amended); Loi sur la sensibilisation et la prévention en matière de violence à caractère sexuel, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, this bill is intended to support the safety of students on campuses in all of Manitoba's post-secondary education institutions. The amendments will require that all universities, colleges, the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology, degree-granting institutions and private vocational institutions have appropriate policies and procedures in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence on campus.

The bill amends two statutes, The Advanced Education Administration Act and The Private Vocational Institutions Act. It sets new requirements on institutions to develop appropriate sexual violence policies in consultation with students, to raise awareness and inform the campus community of the services and supports available and to report publicly

on the activities and the results of activities under the policy.

Madam Speaker, some of the key components in this bill which we believe will strengthen protection and security on post-secondary campuses include a sourced and well-constructed definition of sexual violence, and I am sure all members can agree that the inclusion of social media within its scope is important, as there is an increase of growing harassment which takes place online.

This bill also includes 46 private vocational institutions in addition to our public post-secondary institutions because our new government believes that all students should be safe, no matter where they choose to study in Manitoba.

This bill is a result of extensive consultations, and we look forward to having this bill passed unanimously in the House.

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

Bill 16—The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Repeal Act

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I move, seconded by the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations, that Bill 16, The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Repeal Act, now—be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pedersen: Bill 16 keeps a commitment our government made to the people of Manitoba. This important legislation is a necessary step to eliminating waste and duplication. It does this by restoring Manitoba Infrastructure as the single source for the delivery of highway infrastructure.

This bill also makes clear agreements made in good faith, as well as construction and maintenance of roads on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, will continue under Manitoba's new Progressive Conservative government.

Thank you.

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

**Bill 208—The Royal Canadian
Mounted Police Day Act**

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), that Bill 208, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Day Act, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Graydon: Manitoba has been an important region in the history of the RCMP and its predecessors, and as such, this bill proclaims February 1st in each year as a Royal Canadian Mounted Police day to honour their history and acknowledge the significant role they've continued to play within our communities.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the second quarter financial report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the months ended August 31st, 2016.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Virtual Classroom Experience

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): Madam Speaker, I rise in the Legislature today to speak about an educational innovation in my community.

On Wednesday, September 14th and Thursday, September 15th of this year, Island Lakes Community School teacher Tim McIntyre invited me to participate in two 15-minute Skype sessions with his classroom. As this virtual classroom experience began, I was greeted by eager grade 5 and 6 students, here today, who asked me some very engaging questions.

The students were quite interested in about what life is like in politics, and what is the life like of an MLA. The dynamic between students and a teacher was very impressive. It's times like this that I feel most rewarded as an MLA, feeling privileged to see Manitoba's future in action first-hand.

I believe that the integration of virtual classroom experience in our schools is very important as it

gives students the ability to interface with someone who they probably would not otherwise do. Whether it be an astronaut in the International Space Station or their local MLA, the innovation of the virtual classroom will continue to expand and shape the young minds of this and many generations to come.

* (13:40)

Such innovation is applauded by the Manitoba's new government as we are committed to a bright future with better education leading the way to personal success and growth for all young Manitobans. Investing in education benefits not only the present-day students; it's an investment in our province's collective future.

Our mandate and future course is clear as we are committed to making Manitoba the most-improved province in Canada.

I'd like to thank Island Lakes Community School for allowing me to participate in their virtual classroom. I really enjoyed talking with each and every one of these students, and I wish them all the best in their bright futures.

Madam Speaker, I now request leave to submit the names to Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Just so that Hansard can ensure that they recorded this all, I will ask again if there was leave to have all of the names recorded in Hansard. [*Agreed*]

Students: Sasha Abramovich; Ethan Alsip; Grace Aprile; Jordan Ballesteros; Liam Beniac; Josh Biswanger; Yana Cabral; Paige Chambers; Ivan Chen; Madison Devlin; Gurmehar Dhillon; Avery Dudych; Kristen Fong; Talia Keryluk; Jenna King; Aiden Kurtz; Noah LaForte; Joan Laquette; Hannah Patton; Ravi Pawar; Rylan Skiba; Casey Stevens; Matthew Thach; Ryland Wallace; Brooke Wiebe; Anabela Barreto; Molly Cooper; Rahul Jaryal; Jennifer Lee; Wisdom Ojo; Jayde Paggao; Ben Schaffer; Lucas Sontag; Ashley St. Laurent; Marysa Stevenson; Elliot Swenarchuk; Grace Wilson; Ammar Zuabi; Sofia Andromidas; Eric Bechard; Sabrina Gordon; Hussein Haddad; Sunyoung Han; Riley LeBrun; Neil Olsen; Rachel Parsons; Jiro San Antonio; Mica Villanueva; Veronica Zinowko; Abdul Moiz.

Teachers: Tim McIntyre; Nicole Molin.

Parent Volunteers: Krista Wiebe; Jody Dudych; Angela Parsons.

General Byng School

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, General Byng School in the Pembina Trails School Division is a safe, caring and welcoming environment for students from kindergarten to grade 9. Last week, General Byng celebrated 60 years of service in our community. For six decades, General Byng has been a cornerstone in the lives of students and their families while, at the same time, building community for everyone. General Byng School has a long history of engaging the whole child by addressing each student's educational, social and emotional needs. The school's exceptional programming includes interactive math games, child-friendly research tools and music composition exercises.

I've spent many happy occasions at this school, especially during I Love to Read Month, and I've witnessed first-hand the incredible work that gets done each day to transform the lives of the students. Even the school grounds have been transformed, not only to promote the value of play and outdoor education but, also, to improve an important neighbourhood asset.

The teachers and staff at General Byng play a huge role in the future of these kids. They are the driving force behind the school's progressive educational approach and a critical support for students and their families. I'm proud to say that my daughter is a teacher at General Byng and is one of the many, many teachers and staff who have made a difference in the lives of children across Fort Garry.

General Byng School is a shining example of a community school. It's a caring space where children can feel like they belong and where they can get the supports they need to succeed throughout their time in school.

I want to thank Principal Judy Pirnie, Vice-Principal Susan LaSpina and grade 6 teacher Shannon Shields for joining us here in the gallery today. To you and to all the staff, students, parents and the strong, caring community which supports this school, bravo, congratulations, may you have another 60 years.

Transcona Legion Branch #7

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): There are many people and organizations that make Transcona such a wonderful and dynamic community, and the Royal Canadian Legion is among the very best of them. Transcona Legion Branch #7 is celebrating

its 90th year of serving not only its hundreds of members, but all of our community. Legion Branch #7 was officially established in 1926 as part of the national organization that was treated at the time to assist Canadians who had served in the First World War.

In 1938, the legion moved to its present location on Regent Avenue, and one of its earliest major projects included the erection of a cenotaph to honour those who had served and fallen during the war. The monument was placed at the intersection of Regent and Oxford, now Day Street, but was eventually moved to its present location in Park Circle after it became an obstruction to traffic as Transcona grew.

Women became part of the organization in the mid-1950s, with former servicewomen brought in as members and wives invited as guests. Weekend bingo games and dances were part of the social fabric of Transcona.

The legion continues to assist the community today, supporting a Boy Scouts group, hosting the Transcona pipe band and sponsoring students to attend legion athletic camp at the International Peace Garden. Branch #7 also sponsors a group of Navy cadets and can be seen leading the parade after serving hundreds of annual Hi Neighbour pancake breakfast meals, which enlisted the member from Radisson and myself earlier on this year to work the griddle.

The legion's mission of remembrance is where it truly shines, from the poppy campaign to the passing the torch ceremony at local schools, as well as the decoration and Remembrance Day services.

Please join me in thanking, congratulating and saluting the dedicated officials and members of Transcona Legion #7 for their long-time service to Transcona and their commitment to ensure we remain grateful to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in fighting for Canada's freedom.

Thank you.

Specialized Services for Children and Youth Centre

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, access to services is essential for the health and well-being of Manitobans. Unfortunately, it's often difficult for families of children with disabilities to find the specialized health and support services they need.

This past spring, the old Christie's Biscuits building on Notre Dame Avenue in the Weston area of my constituency was transformed into a one-stop shop for children living with disabilities.

The centre is a place where families can find all of their health-care appointments on the same day. It's also easier for health-care and support workers to communicate and collaborate with each other.

The centre also provides a fun and welcoming space for kids. The building has a waterfall, indoor and outdoor play areas and even an interactive, computer-generated aquarium that moves and makes noise when touched. The smiles on the children's faces prove how important this place is for Manitoba.

I am proud that our NDP team made the health of Manitobans a priority. We invested in the development of this centre, and I am happy to see it protecting and improving the lives of children with disabilities.

The workers and volunteers of the SSCYC make the centre's vision possible. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to improving the health and well-being of children living with disabilities in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Terry Elias

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to draw to the attention of this House Mr. Terry Elias, who was recently named the Winkler Community Foundation's 2016 Citizen of the Year. Terry was recently inducted at the Winkler foundation Citizen of the Year banquet. He is a long-time resident of Winkler whose diligent volunteer efforts have led to his success in the community and throughout Manitoba.

Terry is currently the president and CEO of Triple E Canada, based in Winkler. His grandfather, Peter Enns, the founder of Triple E, is also a past recipient of the award and has passed on his legacy as a community builder.

Terry was selected for his efforts in residential, commercial and industrial developments. His innovative thinking and business management has helped the community thrive as he works behind the scenes to support many different initiatives and organizations.

Over the years, Terry has been committed to enriching the city of Winkler through building projects at P.W. Enns Centennial Concert Hall, Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church and the senior estates senior housing project.

Providing a vision to give back to the community, Terry has been involved with local organizations like Salem personal-care home, Winkler Flyers and the Bunker Youth Centre, which is where he chose to donate the \$1,000 award he won that evening.

It is my pleasure to recognize Terry Elias for all his hard work as he continues to make Winkler a better place to live and work and raise a family. With his energy and passion, those around him are being inspired to contribute to their community with the same kind of dedication.

Congratulations, Terry, and best wishes in all your future undertakings.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, there are some guests that we have in the gallery that I would like to introduce you to. And I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today members of the Transcona Legion here to celebrate the legion's 90th anniversary: Chuck Collins, Sharon Mortimer, Jeanne Rudniski, Larry West, who are the guests of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski).

* (13:50)

Also in the public gallery we have seated from Garden City Collegiate 50 grade 9 students under the direction of Lia Baffour-Awuah and Brooklyn Linnick, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Curry).

And also seated in the public gallery from Elmwood High school, eight grade 9 students under the direction of Kelsey Drul, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

And on behalf of all honourable members here, we'd like to welcome all of you here today.
[interjection]

Oh, and I'm told that we also have two MPs here. We have MP James Bezan and MP Bob Sopuck, Manitoba MPs, and we welcome them here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS**Manitoba's Economy
Government Plan**

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Since this government was sworn in there have been 10,800 full-time jobs lost, of which nearly 4,000 were private sector jobs. The response from this government has been astonishing. Rather than build for the future of Manitoba's workforce, the Premier has done anything but.

I ask the Premier, again, today: What is his plan for the North, and what is his plan to retain jobs and grow the economy?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Thanks to my colleague for raising the topic of economic development and growth. It is central, of course, to our plan for a stronger Manitoba and to fix a decade of debt accumulated under the previous government, a doubling of our provincial debt, a decaying tax climate which has hurt small businesses across the province as a consequence of the adoption of higher taxes and more regulations which infringe on the ability of Manitoba's small business community to create wealth and to create jobs.

A failed record, also, under the previous administration on attracting venture capital and making our province a more hospitable and welcoming environment for investment and for job creation. All of these things and a reluctance to work on outreach and genuinely consulting with Manitobans has made for a tremendous repair job, and we are proud to have had the opportunity given to us by the people of Manitoba to engage in that repair.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Conference Board of Canada has affirmed the strength of Manitoba over the last decade during turbulent economic times. That didn't just happen on—in it—on its own. It required an active government to work in partnership with industry and labour.

In the face of some of the worst job losses in many years, the Premier has no plans. It's not good enough for hard-working Manitobans.

Will the Premier today explain his plan to create good jobs across Manitoba? Where is the plan?

Mr. Pallister: Of course, the economic record portrayed by the member is not an accurate one. The NDP government over the previous 10 years ranked ninth in terms of economic growth and job creation among Canadian provinces, only very slightly ahead of the province of New Brunswick.

The reality is that the record, the activist record which the government refers to, was a record of activity that was deplorable because what it meant was higher tax burden on Manitobans, raising taxes on cars and cottages, on home insurance and haircuts and, frankly, Madam Speaker, on benefits as well that working people pay for to support their own families.

These—this erosion, this multiple, unprecedented erosion of Manitobans' ability to save for their own families, for their own investments, for their own small business purposes deterred growth in our economy, and we will arrest these changes. We will address these changes and we will make sure that we do everything we can to genuinely partner with the people of Manitoba to allow them, with a supportive government, to build a stronger province going forward.

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

Ms. Marcelino: I will give credence to what the Conference Board of Canada says more than what the Premier has said.

Madam Speaker, this Premier has shown by his actions what his priorities are. Instead of rolling out a jobs plan, the Premier goes on the attack, picking a fight with organized labour and refusing to raise the minimum wage despite a big raise for himself.

Without a plan, Manitoba is seeing a significant private sector job losses. Will the Premier come to the table with the private sector and labour and find a way to grow the economy and keep Manitobans working?

Mr. Pallister: Well, we embrace that challenge, Madam Speaker. I thank my colleague again for raising the question of economic growth. It gives me the opportunity to point out to members opposite that putting up \$2 million worth of steady growth signs is not the way to build a stronger economy in Manitoba.

I would also remind them that running around to various vulnerable communities with a chequebook trying to buy votes just before the last election is not

the way to build a stronger economy in Manitoba. And I would further remind them that having doubled the debt and giving Manitobans a major increase in taxes, going around and making hundreds of millions of dollars of promises in the last few weeks before the election did not depict a government that has any idea of how to grow the economy.

I'm surrounded by people who have created jobs. I'm surrounded by people on this side of the House who understand how to attract capital—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —how to grow an economy and how to work in genuine partnership with Manitoba labour and Manitoba employers. We will do that. We will succeed in making Manitoba Canada's most improved province in our first term.

Bargaining Units Certification Change

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The current level for automatic certification of a bargaining unit in The Labour Relations Act was established in 1992 by the Filmon government, the government in which this Premier was a Cabinet minister, recognized that that right, and as a minister, he was honour bound to support it.

Automatic certification has been a right in Manitoba for more than 25 years. Why does this Premier see the need to repeal a right that he defended in the past?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, frankly, Madam Speaker, this raises a question of why the NDP felt they had the right to take away a right to a secret ballot for Manitoba working men and women. How did they have that right?

Madam Speaker, legislation we will table today and begin debate on is exciting legislation for Manitoba men and women who work and who want to have their ballot owned by them, not by a boss. Seven other provinces offer this right. We join those provinces. If a working man in Kenora has the right to a secret ballot, why then should a working man in St. Boniface not have the same right? If a working woman in Yorkton has the right to a secret ballot, why does the NDP want to deprive a working woman in Swan River from that same right?

We believe these rights are fundamental to democracy. We support them. This legislation should be supported by all thoughtful members of the Legislature.

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

Mr. Lindsey: In 1992, the Progressive Conservative Minister of Labour Darren Praznik said in his amendments to The Labour Relations Act: I accepted from the LMRC the argument made by labour representatives that there—where a significant number of people sign cards, that that is sufficient enough representation of the will of the majority of the bargaining unit to certify.

Why isn't that good enough for this Premier?

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate the virtually unprecedented praise for a previous PC government. It's a refreshing change.

Madam Speaker, to be fair and to be instructive, I hope, to the member if he would reflect on it, during the recent NDP leadership debacle and the vote process NDP members raised, as he would well know, raised the need for the right for them to have a secret ballot to avoid repercussions as a consequence of openly expressing their views and were afforded such a right.

* (14:00)

If NDP members can have the right to a secret ballot, why can Manitoba's men and women not have that right as well?

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

Mr. Lindsey: Yesterday, the Premier offered up John P. Farrell, the executive director of the federally regulated employers, as an expert in the field of labour relations who expressed certain views on the certification process embodied in Harper's anti-labour C-525, a bill that the current federal government has promised to repeal.

As it turns out, Mr. Farrell lobbied on behalf of some of the largest corporations in this country. Is this where the Premier turned to for inspiration when he was framing Bill 7?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I appreciate the member's vague references to a quarter of a century ago and conflict within our party on differing views over the decades, but let's talk about the views of NDP members here in respect of a secret ballot.

Here's a quote: A secret ballot and the principle of one vote per person are the hallmarks of any fair democratic voting process. That from the honourable Rosann Wowchuk, former NDP Cabinet minister, current member of the NDP executive, in fact. There's room for disagreement on the issue; we accept that, Madam Speaker. But on our side of the House, and I believe with most union members, men and women across this province, we support the right to a secret ballot, as do many of the members of that party opposite.

Tolko Mill Closure Economic Concerns

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): From the beginning, we warned that the closure of Tolko will have a domino effect across the North. As December 2nd creeps closer, people are speaking up and voicing their concerns. Ward Perchuk is the president of Spruce Products, a sawmill in Swan River that sells 40 per cent of their product to Tolko. Mr. Perchuk is worried that if Tolko closes, Spruce Products and the 75 people who work there could face the same fate.

What assurances can the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade offer to the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk), and more importantly, the people of Swan River?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I do appreciate the question from the member opposite.

In our last trip north, we did stop in Swan River, had a conversation with the good people at Spruce Products. Obviously, they expressed their concerns about the possible closure of the Tolko mill. We obviously share that concern. That's why we are certainly working with the proponents of a possible takeover there, of the Tolko asset.

We're working closely with Tolko, the community and the proponents that are looking at possibly taking over that asset.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Experts agree that the Tolko closure would be devastating. Respected 'economists' state that the multiplier effect from closing Tolko could mean two to five jobs in the region could suffer for every job lost at Tolko. Over the long term, for every hundred jobs lost at that mill, there would—there

could be anywhere from two hundred to four hundred jobs lost across the region.

Will the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade recognize that this is an emergency for the North and all of Manitoba?

Mr. Cullen: Again, I appreciate the member's concern in this situation.

We too are concerned about northern Manitoba, recognizing the trickle-down effect that a shut-down at Tolko could have. That's why we've been engaging people in The Pas, people in northern Manitoba over the last several months since we formed government.

We recognize, and I think northern Manitobans recognize, the need for diversification in our northern economy. That's why we're working hand-in-hand with the business community, the local community, the chambers of commerce and the local municipalities, the unions, to try to come to some kind of a resolution that will benefit the community there and, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, the employees that are employed there at this point in time.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The unions and The Pas are fighting for their jobs. Fighting for their jobs means fighting for the jobs of countless northern Manitobans. The town has stepped up with incentives. The community has rallied in support. But there is a missing factor.

My question is: Where is this government and when will they come to the table?

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, I know the member is obviously very passionate about her community. We understand the circumstances around The Pas and certainly the impacts in northern Manitoba. And I know we shared some time when we were there not too long ago with the community and the member. That's why we visited the community.

I can assure the member that we are at the table. We are having very diligent discussions with the proponents that are at the table, the community and also Tolko. It's a very important asset for Manitobans. We want to make sure this is done right for the long-term benefits of all northern Manitobans. So it has to be done right. And we are at the table and we're going to get the job done.

Fossil Fuel Report Report Costs

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, last week, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was asked by myself and my colleague from Tyndall Park to answer a very simple question about the costs of a report from US consultants calling for Manitoba to burn more fossil fuels. The Premier gave two different answers, said that I would have trouble with math and compared me to one of his former students. Manitobans can decide if that's appropriate language and behaviour from a premier.

But if he wants to play professor—if we want to play professor, perhaps he will teach all Manitobans: How much did he pay for a report taking us back an entire century?

Madam Speaker: I would just urge some caution in the language that is used in the House. Remarks that the member has just made can tend to be inflammatory. And I think we're trying to move beyond that and have a respectful question period and debate in this House. So I would just urge caution in terms of the language that is used in questions and in answers so that we don't go down the wrong path and create a scenario that we've just come out of.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. Under his leadership, Manitoba Hydro's debt went from 12 to 25 billion dollars. And our government was elected to fix the finances of Manitoba. And that includes Manitoba Hydro.

We are going to do that. And when we are done, Manitoba Hydro will once again be a jewel in the crown of Manitoba. A public corporation, a jewel of Manitoba.

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

Tendering Inquiry

Mr. Altemeyer: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. It's very interesting that, last week, the Premier couldn't hold back and jumped up to answer questions asked on this topic, and now he's letting his Crown Services Minister answer the question.

So here's the follow-up: Was the contract for this fossilized report ever tendered? Very simple question. I hope we get a simple answer.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

As we've already stated, Manitoba Hydro is in great financial difficulty. Under this member's leadership, Manitoba Hydro went from \$12 billion to \$25 billion in debt. Our government was elected to fix the finances of this province. And that is what we intend on doing. And that includes Manitoba Hydro.

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

Bipole III Line PUB Review

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Well, there is, sadly, Madam Speaker, a final chapter to this very sad story of a lack of accountability. I quote from the Progressive Conservative campaign platform. They stated during the election, quote: A Progressive Conservative government will send the Bipole III construction project to the Public Utilities Board for a proper review.

*(14:10)

It is quite clear that wasn't done. It's quite clear it's not going to be done. The public's not getting any answers from this government on how much this study cost or why it wasn't tendered.

Will the minister or the Premier do the right thing, not break their promise to Manitobans and send the entire issue to the PUB based on \$50-a-ton carbon?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): I'd like to thank the member for the question, and he represents a party of no consultation. Where was the consultation on raising the PST on all Manitobans? There was no consultation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Schuler: —insofar as Manitoba Hydro goes. We've found out that under his watch that he knew that Manitoba Hydro debt was going from 12 to 25 billion dollars. That's what we have to deal with.

Our government was elected to fix the finances of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: –Manitoba, and that's what we intend on doing. We are going to ensure that Manitoba Hydro is once again a jewel in Manitoba's crown.

Social Housing Units Construction Inquiry

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Today the Winnipeg Free Press painted a damning portrait of homelessness in Winnipeg. Many of these people are young, many have aged out of foster care and many are indigenous. We know that social housing is an important intervention that allows people to have stability, to get the mental health supports they need and to improve their overall well-being.

With that in mind, how many units of social housing will the minister responsible for commit to building this year?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): It is important issue, an issue that was brought up today in the Free Press is extremely important and I can tell you this government takes seriously the homelessness issue.

I can tell you, personally, over the last two weeks, have visited homeless shelter in Thompson, Manitoba, as well as a Housing First initiative in Thompson, and it was actually at *[inaudible]* in terms of the food shelter that was there. We know that over the last number of years you talked about the CFS system that you've had over an 87 per cent increase in the amount of kids that are in care right now; 68 per cent of them lead to homelessness that's there.

We're taking this issue extremely seriously and we're here to address that issue.

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

Mr. Kinew: I recently had the privilege of speaking with young doctors in training who say that housing is one of the most important social determinants of health. Not only will be healthier with better housing, which is an important goal in and of itself, but we can actually reduce expenditures in other areas as well.

Will the minister provide a clear answer to the House today and tell us how many social housing units will be built this year?

Mr. Fielding: Again, homelessness as well as housing is an extremely—is extremely important to us. It's an issue that we take seriously. This wasn't

taken seriously in terms of the NDP over the last number of years.

You can see clearly. What this government did over the last budget is we increased the budget by over 56 per cent, \$42 million in terms of housing. We're working with the federal government that will have housing initiatives, housing dollars that are in place that look at homelessness, look affordable—housing as well as social housing.

This is a party for this government; it wasn't under the NDP government.

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

Mr. Kinew: In today's article we learn about Mappy, a 29-year-old homeless youth who is dreading spending another winter on the street. I don't think there's a member in the House today who would look forward to time outside during a Winnipeg winter.

Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and Resource Assistance for Youth want us to have zero tolerance for homelessness. With that in mind, will the minister tell us specifically how many units of social housing will be built this year?

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you for the question. It is important to address issues that Matthew *[phonetic]* raises up with the issues.

I can tell you as a government we are investing in a number of housing projects that are there, social housing. There's a number of programs including Building Futures that helps out youth in terms of their transition—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: –building family homes. Things like the Rent Assist program, Madam Speaker, that we fought for for years in the dying days of that administration, the NDP administration, put it in their budget.

We're ensuring that housing—the housing starts are there, that Rent Assist is there to help people like Matthew *[phonetic]* get off the streets.

Opioid Addiction Availability of Naloxone

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, there's been much attention to opioid overdoses and fentanyl and carfentanil and the deadly effects at times.

One of the concerns has been the availability of the opioid antagonist naloxone, also known to most as overdose kits. In a recent media investigation, it was found that many pharmacies in Manitoba do not have naloxone and that it's hard to get. Although Winnipeg Police may soon be carrying naloxone, there's still much more to do.

What is the government doing to ensure that naloxone is readily available if anyone is found having an overdose of fentanyl, carfentanil or other opioid?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I appreciate the member for River Heights raising an extremely serious question, and certainly we have heard the difficult stories from parents and from family members of individuals who have been exposed to fentanyl and carfentanil and a number of different opiates. There's great concern across Canada for the addiction and the scourge that this drug—and the illegal use of the drug—is causing to many people, not the least of which is young people.

It is something that I am certainly engaged in. I know that other health ministers are engaged in as well, and we'll be having further discussions, and I appreciate the comments and the question from the member.

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

Treatment Options

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, the minister talks well, but will he act?

The tragic story of Jessie Kolb is well known. He died in 2014 of a fentanyl overdose. His mother, Arlene Kolb, is here in the gallery today, and she's raised numerous issues relating to his treatment which are relevant. At one point Jessie was told, in the Health Sciences Centre, that they would not be able to provide any help or treatment for two weeks and that he would have to go back on the street to get the drug fentanyl.

What is the government doing to ensure that individuals who are addicted can get their treatment right away instead of having to go back on the street to use street drugs?

Mr. Goertzen: Again, Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I appreciate him raising a very personal story, and I've heard from a number of different parents and family members

in Manitoba, and across Canada, who have, unfortunately, had young people in their lives who were either victims or who were addicted to this and other very dangerous drugs.

The provincial distribution system for the naloxone I don't believe is adequate. I'd like to see changes to it, and I've asked my department to look for those changes.

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

Detoxification Centre

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I thank the minister.

During Jessie's journey, at one point he was sent to a crisis intervention centre for detoxification. He told his parents it was a traumatic experience. Coming off a drug-induced high is most often very distressing. Jessie was frightened, cold, in an unfamiliar location, and placed beside someone he had known as a drug dealer. Eight times, Jessie reached out for help, and eight times, it didn't work. His mother has argued strongly that there needs to be a proper, medically supervised drug detoxification centre for opioid addiction here in Winnipeg.

Will the minister ensure that there's a medically supervised opioid detoxification centre here in Winnipeg that's closely tied to follow-up treatment?

Mr. Goertzen: Again, Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member for River Heights raising a serious issue. I know he—and all members of this House—take it very seriously. There are a number of things, I believe, that need to be done as provinces across Canada deal with the opiate crisis. And I would say it is a crisis in all provinces in Canada as you look to deal with this particular situation.

I'm not satisfied with the distribution system within Manitoba for the drug that can help to alleviate an overdose. I know that Health ministers will be discussing this next week when we meet and I also believe that the federal government is looking for a more strategic approach to dealing with the crisis, and I support that.

* (14:20)

Labour Relations Act Secret Ballot Voting

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, secret ballots are fundamental to our democracy. We were all elected to this place by a secret ballot, and yet the members opposite don't

want workers to have that same privilege. On this side of the House we respect workers to make their decision free from coercion or intimidations.

Can the minister please tell us how Bill 7 will protect workers?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. We were elected on a commitment to Manitobans to allow employees the right to determine by secret ballot whether or not they want their workplace to be unionized. As Manitoba's new government, we will provide basic democracy to employees voting on union certification through Bill 7.

By introducing or reintroducing secret ballot to Manitoba workplaces, we are modernizing the certification process and bringing our province in line with the vast majority of Canadian jurisdictions. Workers should have the right to cast a ballot without fear or pressure from an employer, union or peers. Intimidation tactics like we saw in the Chamber back in June should not be tolerated in the Legislature—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Sale of MTS to Bell Competitive Environment

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and concerns the takeover of MTS by Bell. A lawyer for the competition commissioner of Canada stated on August 18th, 2016 that the sale of MTS to Bell would mean that Bell may have the ability to exercise market power such as they—the sale may give rise to a substantial lessening or prevention of competition.

Does the Premier agree with the competition commissioner that the sale of Bell—sale of MTS to Bell will lessen competition in Manitoba?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments and his concern over the impending sale. We think over the long time this—long term this could be good for Manitobans. And obviously with Bell promising to commit over \$1 billion of infrastructure investment here in Manitoba, it's going to be a good thing for Manitobans.

It's going to create economic activity. It's going to provide better and faster services for Manitobans

and, I think, for those of us in rural Manitoba, a safer service as well. And that's certainly something that Manitobans in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba are looking for, is better service.

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

Government Expectations

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, the fact is that MTS was already spending at the same level, the full amount that Bell is planning to spend over the next five years. They may have actually spent more than what was promised here.

In its submission to the CRTC, the minister claimed that he has a number of expectations regarding the promises Bell has made to Manitobans as part of the sale of MTS.

What I'd like to ask the minister: Has he made any attempt to formalize these expectations in a memorandum of understanding or is he simply merely relying on the good word of Bell Canada?

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's question. Now, contrary to what the previous government did there was no consultation involved. We have been consulting with both MTS and Bell in terms of the deal going forward.

Obviously, Bell have committed to their western head office to Winnipeg and to Manitoba. We expect they will live up to those conditions. We expect also the employees will be here throughout Manitoba doing work on behalf of Bell in the future.

And the one thing—one point I do want to make with the member opposite is that the billion-dollar commitment by Bell is way above and beyond what MTS had committed in the past. So we're looking forward to a better, faster and more diverse service here in Manitoba.

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

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, the minister has none of this in writing. He just simply has a promise, and there's no written guarantee that any of this is going to happen.

The—Manitoba has among the lowest cellphone rates in Canada at the present time. We also don't have data caps on cellphone plans, which is very uncommon in—a feature in Canada.

Does this minister expect Bell to keep these rates low for Manitobans, and does he expect that—to not have data caps on cellphone plans? When will this minister put Manitoba's cellphone customers first?

Mr. Cullen: We on this side of the House are interested in results, not rhetoric like members opposite are providing.

Madam Speaker, Bell-MTS deal is going to be good for most Manitobans. There's a commitment here to invest over a billion dollars—a billion dollars that Bell have brought to the table does not compare to previous commitments by MTS. Bell and MTS will both tell you that, and this member should be picking up the phone and asking about details.

This is going to be better service for rural Manitobans, better service for northern Manitobans and better service—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —for people in Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, we're interested in debate. We'll see how the discussion goes. There are some regulatory bodies that have some work to do on this, but we'll hear what they have to say about it.

Manitoba Public Insurance Application for Rate Increase

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, tomorrow the PUB, they call it the Public Utilities Board, will hold a general rate application meeting—or hearing. MPI, which is the Manitoba Public Insurance, has applied for an increase of 2 per cent. It has also asked for another increase of up to 7 per cent.

Will this minister commit to putting away his partisan political agenda and work with the board of MPI to put the interests of the ratepayers first to keep rates affordable in Manitoba?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): I'd like to thank my critic for that question.

The question really is, when the member found out—when he found out that Manitoba Hydro debt went from \$12 billion to \$25 billion, what was his answer to that when he was confronted with what happened under his watch?

I'd like to quote for the record, Madam Speaker, and he said, we cannot now second-guess, take a

look at the rear-view mirror and say, look, wow, it was \$1 billion, now is four.

Basically this question was: What's the difference between \$1 billion and \$4 billion? Well, Madam Speaker, I'll answer that for him: three.

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

Public Utility Rates Affordability Concerns

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I'll try again.

MPI is Manitoba Public Insurance, and the Finance Minister has tabled a report indicating that Manitoba pays the lowest—lowest—utility bundle in Canada.

Will this minister commit to keeping the affordable utility rate act and promise to Manitobans that he will keep rates the lowest in Canada?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): I'd like to thank my critic for that question.

Madam Speaker, we know that when the other side was in government they were great defenders of the process, and that's where MPI is right now with the PUB. It's part of the process. In fact, one of their members said, and I'd like to quote, he believes Manitoba Public Insurance and the Public Utilities Board can work out their differences without the heavy hand of government. Who was that great defender of the Public Utilities Board and MPI process? Oh, no, it was the member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

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

Mr. Marcelino: I may have to try again.

The Public Utilities Board has a mandate—mandate—to keep rates low.

* (14:30)

Does the minister agree that it is his responsibility as a minister to ensure that rates are low for Manitobans? Will he do his job?

Mr. Schuler: Yes.

Child-Care Plan Access Rate Targets

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, a new study released by the U of M

on licensed family home daycare indicates this government's child-care plan is, and I quote, short-sighted and ill-advised. The report raises serious doubt about the ability of home-based centres to provide quality, reliable care because it found that half of all home-based centres close in four years or less. They're consistently identified as unstable. Poorly paid employment and lack of trained home-care providers result in poor quality of child care.

When will the minister provide Manitobans with this government's child-care plan and provide us with a definitive access rate target?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I thank the member for the question, and with all due respect to the study she quotes from, that is exactly the environment that most of us were raised in.

Madam Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Bell's Purchase of MTS

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I was really excited there.

I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

Manitoba telephone system is currently a fourth cellular carrier used by Manitobans along with the big national three carriers: Telus, Rogers and Bell.

In Toronto, with only the big three national companies controlling the market, the average five-gigabyte unlimited monthly cellular package is \$117 compared to Winnipeg where MTS charges only \$66 for the same package.

Losing MTS will mean less competition and will result in higher costs for all cellphone packages in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: As follows:

To urge the provincial government to do all that is possible to prevent the Bell takeover of MTS and preserve a more competitive cellphone market so that cellular bills for Manitobans do not increase unnecessarily.

And this petition is signed by many fine Manitobans.

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

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I'd like to call for second reading Bill 7.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader has indicated that this afternoon we will be dealing with Bill 7, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, second reading.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 7—The Labour Relations Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I should repeat also that we are dealing with Bill 7, The Labour Relations Amendment Act.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 7, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: It's an opportunity for us to talk about democracy this afternoon, and we're looking forward to having this debate in the House. I know the opposition members have been eagerly awaiting this debate, and we've been here, I guess six days now in session. We obviously have a lot of other ideas and issues and legislation we have been dealing with in the last few days, but, obviously, we're excited about debating this really important part of democracy here in Manitoba.

We believe that protecting and strengthening the basic 'democrammer' rights is the responsibility of every member in this Legislature. Under the NDP decade of debt, decay and decline, Manitobans have seen an unprecedented erosion of their basic democratic rights. Manitobans elected a Progressive Conservative government focused on fixing our finances, repairing our services and rebuilding our economy. This includes restoring basic democratic rights to Manitoba workers.

The secret ballot is the best protection for Manitoba workers. It protects workers from employer intimidation. It protects workers from union intimidation like the unfortunate display last spring in the House.

We will work with labour and management to improve worker rights with the understanding that workers' rights, like the secret ballot, are not up for negotiation. We are committed to making Manitoba Canada's most improved province, making Manitoban families safer and stronger.

Madam Speaker, this bill is about democracy. This bill is about restoring basic democratic rights to workers, fundamental values that Manitobans and Canadians share. In drafting this bill, the considerations were for workers and how to best protect workers from intimidation by employers or unions.

Manitobans elected a Progressive Conservative government focused on fixing our finances, repairing our services and rebuilding our economy. This includes restoring basic democratic rights to Manitoba workers. The amendments we are proposing here today will benefit all Manitoba workers by making the process of certifying a union more democratic and fair. Secret ballots are used in general elections. Every member of this House was elected by a secret ballot, and we believe that these basic rights should be extended to Manitoba workers as well.

Currently, if 65 per cent of employees sign a union card, the Manitoba Labour Board can automatically certify the union without confirmation by a vote from workers. We think workers should be allowed a vote where they can privately make their decision. Otherwise, workers are forced to share their choice to certify or not certify a union with their coworkers and union organizers.

This bill allowing the worker to make the decision without being coerced or intimidated: workers deserve the opportunity to keep their decisions about union representation private, and to not face intimidation or retaliation for expressing their true wishes. Workers have expressed feeling pressured into making a choice that does not reflect their true wishes. Voting with a secret ballot is the fairest and most accurate way for any group of people to make those important decisions.

Madam Speaker, we believe this legislation will provide protection from—for workers so workers that

wish to certify a union in their workplace will continue to be able to do so. This bill allows for this to be done by a secret ballot. Unions certified by a free, fair vote will benefit from increased legitimacy with employers which may help them in the bargaining process later on. The rules that employers must follow during a certification process are still in place.

Both employers and unions are prohibited from electioneering and distributing printed materials at the workplace on the day of the certification vote. The act provides employees with the right to join a unit and prohibits employers from interfering with this right. Employers can also not lay off, transfer or fire employees, or make changes to their wages or working conditions while a certification application is being considered.

Madam Speaker, this is a very straightforward piece of legislation that we are proposing. It simply restores, reinstates the secret ballot process going forward. And we think this—we know this is—Manitobans are asking us to do. A recent survey said 70 per cent of Manitobans support this initiative. Only—if this legislation passes, only three provinces will be the exception to the rule. We will join the other provinces in terms of having a secret ballot.

* (14:40)

This is an election campaign that we made to Manitobans. Manitobans elected us April 19th. We are just currently now filling out the mandate that Manitobans have asked us to do, and this is an important piece of legislation that all Manitobans are looking forward to having and discussing and debating in the Chamber today.

I look forward to a good, hearty debate over this issue. I know issues come to the floor of the Chamber that we don't always agree on, but I think we can have a healthy debate, look at the options that are put on the table, and I'm optimistic we'll get to a point where we'll be able to have committee, we'll have Manitobans come in from a diverse number and a diverse background of Manitobans come to committee, express their interest in terms of what they think of this legislation. It's a very straightforward piece of legislation, and I know many Manitobans and I know many Manitoba workers are looking forward to having this legislation in place to protect their best interests.

With that, Madam Speaker, I look forward to a debate on this particular issue.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from another recognized opposition parties, subsequent questions asked by each independent member, remaining questions asked by any opposition members, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Can the minister say which stakeholders he consulted with when he prepared this bill? Which representatives of organized labour and which business representatives?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I do appreciate the member's question and I would say, you know, contrary to the previous government, we are an open and transparent government. We believe in consultation.

I know when the now-Premier (Mr. Pallister) became leader of the party, he was adamant that we as, at that time, opposition members, went out and engaged with Manitobans in what they felt were important issues. So we have been, over the last three years, engaging 1.3 million Manitobans in terms of their thoughts on different issues. Clearly, this was an issue that Manitobans are very supportive of.

Mr. Lindsey: I'd like to thank the minister for not answering the question.

Could he now perhaps answer the question? What labour groups did you discuss this with? Who did you consult with? Which business organizations did you consult with? Let's try being open and transparent.

Mr. Cullen: You know, as I mentioned, we were discussing the issue with many Manitobans prior to being elected. Since we've been elected, I would say we've probably one of the most open and transparent governments anywhere.

Our ministers are engaging with everyone, and diverse organizations every day, day in and day out. And certainly, in my department, we—I'm responsible for labour, obviously, and economic development, so we meet on a routine basis with members of the labour community, members of the business community. It's just something that we do by nature and it's, I think, an open and transparent

dialogue, and I think it's very important for democracy.

Madam Speaker: Just a caution to members when asking questions that they direct them in third party and direct them through the Speaker to the minister.

Mr. Lindsey: Does the minister think it's important to help facilitate increased rates of unionization in this province?

Mr. Cullen: I do appreciate the question.

And I think the premise of the question is: Should workers have the opportunity to have a secret ballot? And, you know, we're not stopping any union formation. We're just basically saying we believe that people should have the ability to have a secret ballot vote so that they're not being coerced or intimidated by either their peers or their employers. We think it's a straightforward premise. Democracy is—the basic premise behind democracy is the ability to vote. We think it should be a secret vote as seven other provinces have decided we should have a secret vote.

Mr. Lindsey: Would the minister acknowledge that the benefits increased unionization, including lower inequality and a stronger middle class?

Mr. Cullen: We're certainly not arguing about anyone's ability to form an agency or a collection or a union and have that union do whatever the union wants to do in terms of bargaining rights or accessibility or any other issues.

You know, our concern is from people like Loren Remillard, who's currently the president and CEO of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, and he says, and I quote, I recall my entry into union membership. I had just joined the federal public service. During my first week, two gentlemen arrived at my cubicle one morning with a card that I was told to sign. I was asked whether I had any options. Yes, I was told, sign now or sign before lunch.

That's the sort of thing that we—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Lindsey: I guess at some point in time we'll explain the difference in what a secret ballot vote is about and what the member just talked about—what the minister just talked about.

Does the government agree with the International Monetary Fund when it notes, lower unionization is associated with an increase in top

income shares in advanced economies? Does the government think it's such a good thing?

Mr. Cullen: I'm not going to argue where the member gets his quotations from.

We're focusing simply here on a secret ballot and what we think the secret ballot will do—and I think most Manitobans, most Canadians would agree—that it takes away the intimidation, the coercion, the pressure on workers, and we think this is just the premise of democratic process. We think it's fundamentally the right thing to do. That's why Manitobans have asked us to bring this legislation forward, that's why we're debating this legislation. We're looking forward to getting this into committee and see what other people have to say.

Mr. Lindsey: Does the minister think that 65 per cent is not an expression of the workers' democratic will?

Mr. Cullen: I think the member may be missing the point of having a secret ballot, and the point of having a secret ballot is that those people and those members don't feel pressured to vote one way. If you have an open hands-up vote, then there's going to be pressure put on the workers one way or the other, whether it be through the union side or whether it be through the employer side.

So this is the type of thing that we're trying to put a stop to. What the legislation does, it says if we get 40 per cent approval to go forward, then the Labour Board would have to have a actual vote on that premise, and that's really what it's at. Our—we actually lowered the limit to 40 per cent; if there's 40 per cent sign up, then the Labour Board would have to have a vote on the certification.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I just want to reiterate what the member from Flin Flon asked. Can the minister please share with the House today what businesses he has met with in consultation?

Mr. Cullen: I do—I appreciate the question. I will reiterate for the member opposite that we have met with a lot of the business community. We're meeting on a regular basis with the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. We also travel extensively throughout Manitoba in meeting with the business community and local chambers there as well. And, you know, we have different events; we have different organizations, different businesses coming to our rooms as Cabinet ministers and as MLAs. They provide us feedback.

* (14:50)

You know, just last night the Manitoba Trucking Association hosted an event here at the Legislature. And it was a great dialogue about a number—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Lindsey: Does the government think it's important to protect workers from intimidation, coercion, threat and fraud when workers are attempting to form a union?

Mr. Cullen: And that's exactly the premise that we're trying to protect here. And I will correct for the record maybe some of the comments that were made from members opposite that the existing legislation still does that. I look at section—subsection 48(1), which prohibits an employer or union or any person acting on their behalf from electioneering or distributing printed material on the day of a certification vote at the place or work or the polling place. This is intended to ensure that the vote is conducted fairly and without interference.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lindsey: Not now, boys. Not now.

Clearly, again, the minister doesn't understand the legislation he's attempting to change. What he's read into the record is that they're not allowed to intimidate the day of the election. The part that he's taking out is that they're not allowed to intimidate workers prior to that.

Does the minister think it's important to protect the right of association and assembly? If it—if so, then why are they removing the clause that protects workers against intimidation, fraud or coercion during the organizing of a union?

Mr. Cullen: I'm glad the member raised this question because I think he's going to have to go back and reread this legislation.

In drafting this legislation, it was determined that this language was no longer necessary due to the removal of the provisions allowing for the labour board to automatically certify with more than 65 per cent employee support. That's the way the legislation was written. It was not intended to provide the board with the ability not to certify a union with greater than 65 per cent if the board believed the workers were coerced or intimidated into signing union cards. So this refers back to section 45 of the act, which pertains to determining

employee wishes to join a union. So the member had better go back and recheck the legislation.

Mr. Lindsey: Can the minister tell us how many times or what percentage of times a certification vote, a secret ballot vote that he's so fond of calling it, actually takes place within the prescribed time limits?

Mr. Cullen: I'm glad the member raised that question. I'm looking forward to committee and getting some feedback on that particular issue. And it is something we've raised with the Manitoba Labour Board, as well. And I can't supply the member the statistics today. I do know there is some concern about the time frame there and not being able to get the certification vote done within the—this prescribed time. It's something that we said to the labour board we're going to have to address in terms of the timeliness of that issue. And we're prepared to have a look at making sure those timelines are addressed. And I appreciate the member raising that question.

Mr. Lindsey: Would the minister acknowledge that the longer the length of time is from the time an employer is notified that there's going to be a secret ballot vote it allows more time for intimidation, fraud, coercion to take place against those very workers that he's going to allow to have a secret ballot vote?

Mr. Cullen: I'm not sure I agree with the premise. And again I'll look at the existing legislation, and this hasn't changed in what we're proposing. Section 9 of the act prohibits employer discrimination during the organizational period. So that's during the entire certification application. The legislation says, during this time, if an employer discharges, refuses to continue to employ or re-employ, lay off, transfer, suspends or alters the status of an employee who is a member of a union or has applied for membership in a union, the employer has committed an unfair labour practice. Section 10(1) also prevents employers from changing employees' working conditions or wages during a union certification application. That's the existing legislation. It will not change.

Mr. Lindsey: Recognizing what the minister has said, that every certification now will require a secret ballot vote, recognizing that presently when not all certifications require the Labour Board to intervene and hold a vote and they don't meet their time lines, what increase in resources has this government committed to the Labour Board to at least give them a fighting chance to meet their timelines?

Mr. Cullen: Again, I will reiterate that we're looking forward to committee and hear what people want to say on this particular issue. We have had the dialogue with the Manitoba Labour Board. We have had discussion about options in terms of how we will address the timeliness of any such votes. So I think it's something that's certainly on the table, and we're prepared to address that specific situation.

Mr. Lindsey: I think it's important to protect workers' rights to association assembly. Does this government agree with that?

Mr. Cullen: I do want to just say, in closing, there's a lot of existing legislation that will stay. This is—fine tuning just one component of it.

I will say that the Manitoba Labour Board may certify a union as the bargaining agent for a group of employees if the board is satisfied that the employer or someone acting on their behalf has committed an unfair labour practice and the true wishes of the employees are not likely to be determined. So I think that clause should allow the members opposite to rest at ease. So there is clauses in the existing legislation that will remain in place that should prevent that type of coercion from happening.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has ended.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Order. For the information of the House, I have received a letter from the honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition (Ms. Marcelino) designating her unlimited speaking time on Bill 7 to the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I'd like to thank the interim Leader of the Official Opposition for giving up her time to allow me to say a few words about this bill.

An Honourable Member: Just a few.

Mr. Lindsey: Just a few.

I think that there's a lot of rhetoric coming from opposite about democracy, kind of like the Donald Trump style of politics I'm beginning to see where they throw out a few key buzzwords, words that people read a headline and that's all they see is, well, democracy. Of course, who wouldn't support democracy? And not once—not once—Madam Speaker, has a union ever said they do not support democracy. What they do not support is the

employers' right or their perceived right to attack workers who try to organize.

The minister and the government opposite probably, if they search through the Manitoba Labour Board records, might be able to find an instance where a union intimidated workers, coerced them during a certification drive. I doubt it. But they might be able to. Doing a very, very quick search, we found two or three instances, however, where the Labour Board found employers guilty of intimidating workers and coercing them not to sign, not to vote for unionization.

* (15:00)

And that is why the current legislation is fine the way it is. There has been no suggestion by the government, by the members opposite, by the minister, that there was a great hue and cry put up by anybody to support this current government's desire to change the way unions get certified in this province. They can't point to any study that's been done because there aren't any. All they can do is say, well, our friends, our friends in big business wanted us to do this and we promised our friends during the election that we would do that. Somehow, that's not really my version of democracy. To try and fix a problem, Madam Speaker, that doesn't exist, to try and create a problem so that they can attempt to fix it, is not true democracy.

One of the things that we find somewhat troubling with the current government is they've come out very clearly against working Manitobans. They've denied an increase in the minimum wage for what reason, Madam Speaker? For no discernable reason other than they want to hold working Manitobans down. They don't want working people to get ahead. Their friends in business, the 1 per cent, are the ones that this party is concerned with. That's where they take their direction from, clearly, and that's why they've brought in this particular piece of legislation, because once again, there's been no call for it; there's been no need for it. But what they promised is they would look after their friends in business and they're going to attempt to do that.

Madam Speaker, we've seen job losses throughout the North, particularly, but not just the North. What's the number that's out there now for job losses?

An Honourable Member: Ten thousand, eight hundred.

Mr. Lindsey: Ten thousand, eight hundred job losses in this province since this government has taken over.

And they talk a lot, particularly—well, not so much anymore. They used to talk a lot about having a plan for the North. Every time we asked a question about the North, they had a plan—they had a plan. They're going to roll out a plan someday.

Well, jobs are disappearing throughout the North. The government changed their plan to a concept. They have a concept. Well, we haven't heard much about that concept lately either. It's one more instance where this government is failing to stand up for working Manitobans.

They don't have a plan for the North. They don't have a plan to create jobs. They don't have a plan to build the economy. What they have is a plan to attack working people and that's what this bill is about. This bill is about an attack on working people in this province to drive their wages down, to drive their rights down, to drive their standard of living down, Madam Speaker. And that's not right, and that's why we're opposed to this bill in particular, but that's why we're opposed to the general tone that this government takes when it comes to working Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we've asked repeatedly if the minister could tell us who he consulted with prior to introducing this legislation and all we get in response is a bunch of rhetoric that says nothing. Not once has the minister or the government answered those questions. And they've been asked time and time and time again since this legislation was first introduced.

At one point in time, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the government touted their Premier's enterprise team, their PET team. And we asked them if labour was going to be invited to participate in that team. To the best of my knowledge to date, nobody from a recognized, organized labour group has been asked to participate on that team. And, in fact, I don't even know if that team is in existence or whether that was just one more plan that they had that didn't come to fruition. Seems to be a lot of that lately, Madam Speaker, with this government.

The current level for certification in this province is 65 per cent of workers in the designated group freely signing a union card, freely expressing their desire to join a union. That is possibly the clearest form of democracy that we'll ever see, Madam Speaker, because what the members don't

understand opposite is those cards are signed in secret. The union is not allowed to divulge who's signed a card and who hasn't. If the members themselves wish to do that, they certainly can.

I don't know how many organizational drives any of the members opposite have taken part in. I know the Premier (Mr. Pallister) often touts his union membership, which leaves me feeling somewhat cold. Some of the other members have expressed that they belonged to a union. Have any of them participated in an organizing drive? It seems a pretty reasonable question so that, well, they're introducing this major piece of legislation that attacks working peoples' ability to organize that they might have some experience with it from a worker's side. I don't believe that any of them have.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Now, they may turn around and say, well, wait a minute. Has anybody on your side ever participated in a union organizing drive?

An Honourable Member: Everybody.

Mr. Lindsey: No, contrary to what the member opposite says, not everybody on this side comes out of the house of labour either. But one of us does. One of us has participated in an organizing drive, and although it was under a different set of rules because it was organizing under federal labour legislation, I can tell you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that as soon as that company got wind of the fact that there was an organizing drive going on, there were threats made against workers. There was intimidation, there was talk of layoffs. There was talk of them losing the benefits they already had. There was all kinds of that kind of talk that took place, and that is why the proposal that every time, there has to be a secret ballot that allows time for unscrupulous employers to exercise intimidation, coercion.

Now, don't mistake my words for suggesting that every employer in this province is an unscrupulous employer, because, clearly, they're not.

So which workplaces do we think might be the ones most likely to want to organize? Let's think about that for a minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will the workplaces where everyone's happy, well treated, receives a decent rate of pay for their work—do we think those will be the workplaces that want to form a union? If we think that, then we're sadly mistaken because those are not the workers who want to join a union.

Workers in workplaces where they're not treated properly, where they're not treated fairly, those are the workers that express their desire to join a union. Those workers are the workers that are more likely to be exposed to threats. They're more likely to be exposed to intimidation. They're more likely to be exposed to firing.

* (15:10)

Make no mistake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when a worker freely expresses his or her desire to join a union, they do so knowing full well that they have now exposed themselves to threats, intimidation. They know full well that they've put their livelihood on the line. Those workers know full well that their ability to feed their families has been put on the line. Why did they take that risk? Why would a worker want to sign a union card, want to join a union, knowing full well that they risk so much?

I'll tell you why. They do that, quite clearly, because the workplace that they work at is not a pleasant place to be. They do that because every day that they go to work there's threats, there's intimidation, there's coercion. They do that, Madam—or Mr. Deputy Speaker, excuse me—they do that because the rate of pay they get for the work they do is not sufficient. Those workers decide to join a union very specifically because of all the things that the legislation, as it's written today, protects them from.

By forcing a secret ballot vote in every instance knowing full well that the Labour Board doesn't have the resources to meet those requirements today, never mind an increased workload tomorrow, it will make it that much harder for workers to organize. It will make it that much harder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for workers to be protected, to be protected from the unscrupulous employer, from the bad employer. Keep in mind, again, that it's not employees at the good employers that seek to get organized. It's the workers at the not-so-pleasant workplaces.

So, Madam—or Mr. Deputy Speaker, how does this proposed legislation help workers? The government likes to tout that, well, this is democracy. What this government does is they use kind of a Donald Trump style of coming out with key buzzwords. Democracy, who wouldn't stand for democracy? Well, of course, everybody stands for democracy. That's why we're here in this Legislative Assembly. But make no mistake that a workplace is not a democratic institution. Very clearly there's somebody in charge and they hold all the cards. They

hold all the cards until workers are able to organize a union. Only at that point do the tables start to become more equal. And at no point in time do they really become equal like a free and democratic society that we all dream of or that this government uses as examples when they roll out the words: democracy, democratic action, secret vote.

That is not the reality of a workplace. Even a nice workplace has somebody in charge that makes the rules, which is fine; that's the way it is. But when they make rules that are so hard that workers cannot follow them, when they change the rules, when they show favoritism, when they discriminate openly, when they abuse workers, when they intimidate workers, when going to work every day becomes so onerous, that is when workers express their democratic right by secretly signing a union card. No other democratic situations are 65 per cent classified as the number. Normal democracies, including the democracy that put each and every one of us here, was 50 per cent plus one.

In a workplace, presently, 65 per cent workers expressing their desire to join a union is the threshold. But this government says we're going to have a—I guess—a super democracy in the workplace. You'll get to vote twice. But in the interim, between when you voted the first time and when you get to vote the second time, all sorts of things can take place.

And there are instances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of those very things taking place. And I'm not sure if any of the members opposite have tried to do any research on labour relations, if they've tried to research any recent cases of workers being intimidated while trying to join a union or, conversely, the union trying to intimidate workers to sign cards, which—

An Honourable Member: They've been looking. They haven't found anything.

Mr. Lindsey: As my friend from Fort Rouge says, they've been looking, probably, but they can't find any examples of that because there aren't any, which, in its—of itself should tell this government something. But clearly it tells them something they don't want to know. It tells them something that doesn't fit with the story they've constructed around democracy.

It adds context to what they should have done, which, if they'd done their job properly, they would have soon discovered there was no need for this change in legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For how

many years have we had labour peace in this province? Has it been 10 years? Has it been 15? Or is it the number that the members opposite so often like to quote, 17? Let's go with that.

Now, let's pick a new number, that this government was in charge for how long before the first strike took place, before labour peace was shattered? Didn't take very long, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again, I get back to what I opened with, that every action of this government has, to date, been to either not support working people, as we've seen in The Pas, as we've seen in Churchill, as we've seen in—what's the number again, 10,800? Ten thousand, eight hundred working people, full-time working people that don't have jobs since this government's taken over. No support for working people—as we've seen, they refuse to raise the minimum wage. And yet they'd like us to believe that they have the continued support of the vast majority of Manitobans. And clearly they do not.

There are people that understand what it means to join a union. I'll tell you a story. Once upon a time—

An Honourable Member: Fairy tale.

Mr. Lindsey: It's not a fairy tale. Once upon a time, I grew up on a farm. My parents were not trade unionists; they were farmers. My father's experience with a union was when he tried to sell grain. Sometimes the port workers were on strike. Well, he didn't like that much. Having never worked anywhere except the family farm, he had no exposure to why a worker would do that, nor did I.

* (15:20)

When I left home at the age of 18, went to seek fame and fortune in the wonderful community of Flin Flon, I had no idea what unions did. I was brought up to think that, perhaps, they weren't such a good thing.

Once I entered an industrial workplace it very quickly became evident why unions existed, because even though we had a union—well, in fact, we had nine unions. Nine separate unions certified during the World War II. Whoever allowed, encouraged, set up that type of union certification in a single workplace was a very smart man, was a very smart businessman, certainly not a very smart trade unionist because those unions spent as much time fighting amongst themselves as they did fighting with the employer.

But, having said all that, I cannot begin to imagine what kind of workplace I would have entered had there not been unions there to support workers. Someone convinced me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a fellow—he's dead now, died of cancer a number of years ago; he was my union steward—convinced me that, perhaps, maybe, I'd have something to offer the union and the working people, and that's when I got involved with the union and that's when I began to learn about democratic action in workplaces and who actually stood up for working people.

That's when I began to learn not just who stood up for working people, that's when I began to learn who stood up for Manitobans, who stood up for Canadians, who stood up for the most disadvantaged Canadians, who stood up for the most disadvantaged Manitobans. It certainly wasn't a Progressive Conservative government in Ottawa. It was certainly not a Progressive Conservative government in Manitoba, nor was it a Liberal government in Ottawa. I very quickly came to realize that there was one political party that while it has close roots with organized labour, really shared a lot of the same principles. And that's the New Democratic Party. *[interjection]* I knew you'd be shocked and surprised by that. *[interjection]* So which is a shame that one of the members opposite says that there's never been a New Democratic government in Ottawa.

He's absolutely right, and shame on all Canadians for not voting for a democratic government in Ottawa, because only—only—when there has been minority governments in Ottawa whereby the socialist governments—whereby the socialist parties of the New Democratic Party or the CCF before them—held a balance of power did we really achieve things like universal health care. Those are the kind of things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that unions support. Those are the kind of things that this party supports. Those things would have never got to the floor of the House of Commons without strong union voices. This government wants to muffle those strong union voices.

That's what's wrong with this proposed legislation, is it's not about democracy, it's not about any of the cute little buzzwords that they've rolled out, that they wrapped the flag in themselves and say we're the champions of the people, we're the champions of democracy. That's not what this bill is about. This bill is very clearly about limiting a worker's ability to improve their lot in life. Really,

that's what joining a union is about. People don't decide to join a union so that they can pay union dues because, trust me, nobody likes paying union dues any more than anybody likes paying taxes. Both of them are necessary for true democracy to work. Taxes allow democratic things to take place within a government; union dues allow democratic action to take place within the organized labour movement.

A lot of members of unions have entered into workplaces that were already organized. And, quite frankly, in the last few years, unions have done a really poor job of educating their members, their new members, as to why the union is there and what the union does for them. Shame on us for not doing a better job of telling our members why their forefathers joined a union. Shame on us for not telling our members why their forefathers fought and died to form unions. Forming a union was not something that a government gave freely and openly. It's something that working people fought and died for. I believe next year is a somewhat important anniversary, the strike of 1919, when workers finally had enough and stood together only to be killed, shot by the very police forces that were supposedly there to protect all Manitobans.

With that in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to make sure that people understand that members of the government opposite understand the importance of unions to the very fabric of Manitoba. Unions encourage a strong and robust middle class. What we've seen is declining union density, which means that there's less union members, which means that the middle class is in decline. *[interjection]* Well, I'd like to think that.

The member says maybe it just means that businesses are treating their workers better. It absolutely, positively does not mean that. What is meant is new workers, new Canadians, new people coming into this country are intimidated. Temporary foreign workers come in with no rights. The only right they have is to get shipped back home if they don't knuckle under and obey what the boss says. And that's not right.

The member opposite is out of touch with why workers organize, and I feel sorry for him, because he's going to vote in favour of something that he has no concept of what it's about.

And there's lots of chirping, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about, well, it's about a secret ballot. It's about a secret ballot. It's democracy. It's always about a secret ballot.

It is not. This legislation is not about a secret ballot, because workers have already used their democratic right to express their will by signing a union card in secret at 65 per cent acceptance.

* (15:30)

This bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is about suppressing workers' rights to get ahead. It's about suppressing workers' ability to stand up for themselves and seek a better life for them and their children. That's what this bill is about. Make no mistake.

This Premier (Mr. Pallister) has clearly made a choice, made a choice prior to the election, and it's one of the few things that he promised that he's actually lived up to so far, and that's to take it out on working people. *[interjection]*

And, unfortunately, I hear the member opposite say, get used to it. I am afraid he's probably correct in that assumption, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we will need to get used to this government taking it out on working people in this province, and that's not right.

Make no mistake that this bill is strictly about undermining workers' ability to join a union. That's exactly what it's about. It's about nothing more. It takes away the opportunity. It limits the opportunity for working people to freely express their right to join a union.

The previous federal government—who, thank heavens they're no longer with us—which I believe the Premier opposite was a member of that federal government for a while—*[interjection]*—Harper light, Harper two. Mr. Prime Minister Harper tried to do the same thing that this Premier's trying to do. He brought in laws that were against working people. He brought in laws that made it harder for workers to organize—and if I flip through these pages often enough, I'll find the right number.

Bill C-525. That's what that bill was about. It was found to be unconstitutional in the present government; the present Liberal government in Ottawa has promised to do away with it. And yet this Premier is trying to lead this government and this province down the same path, down the same path to take away workers' rights, down the same path to make sure that organizing in a workplace is more difficult, to make sure that new Canadians that are being abused in their workplace have limited recourse. That's what this bill is about; that's what Bill C-525 is about.

Bill C-525 imposed a mandatory secret vote even when a majority had already signed a union card. Now, Mr.—sorry—the Premier yesterday used a quote that he was using to support this bill. And I started reading that quote, and it goes on: for example, we use secret ballots to elect our officers, ratify collective agreements, vote for strike action. What we object to is forcing workers to show twice that they wish to unionize. Unfortunately, the Premier forgot to finish the quote yesterday. The important part is unions aren't against democracy. What they're opposed to in these bills is forcing workers to freely express their right twice.

Imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if everyone sitting in this Legislature had to go through two votes every time they wanted to get elected. Would we call that democracy? I think not. *[interjection]* I certainly like to wake the members opposite up. I thought some of them were dozing off, so they're back paying attention again. And, hopefully, they'll pay attention to the spirit of what's being said.

The spirit of this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is clear. It's clear to people that have an understanding of workplaces. It's clear to people that have an understanding of unions. It's clear to people that have an understanding of why workers want to unionize. The intent of this legislation is to limit their ability to do that.

During the Winnipeg Dodge Chrysler matter before the labour relations board on June 20th, there were suggestions that there was some impropriety and the labour board made a ruling on that. It seems, through their ruling, that some evidence was presented that somebody had meetings with employees, testified—testimony was that this person had asked members of his management team to ask employees to pop down, if they could. He recalled telling the managers if everyone can make it, great; if not, then I'll understand.

However, the board is satisfied that the manner in which employees were actually told about the meeting signified that their attendance was mandatory.

Coercion takes many forms, sometimes it's not necessarily in the words that are said as much as in the tone of how they're said. The meetings were held and, at the meetings, and I'm just paraphrasing here, I'm not direct quotes all of it, employees were told they should read between the lines. Employees should think long and hard about making life-altering decisions. The meeting ended with the employees

being told that the devil you know is better than the devil you don't. One of the employees felt they were being scolded, and that the meeting was very intimidating. It was all sorts of statements made and shown at the labour board hearings. They continued, final captive audience, meeting took place the day prior to the representation vote.

So what was the outcome of that? I won't bore you with all the details, and there's quite a few pages of details—quite a few pages. But the board is satisfied that the comments made during the three captive audiences meeting constituted interference by the employer with the formation and selection of a union, and that the representation of employees by a union, contrary to section 6.1 of the act, the employees were compelled to attend three meetings over the course of six days, and were subjected to WM's opinions regarding the application, the merits of unionization and subtle and not-so-subtle threats. The board is satisfied that WM conveyed the following negative messages and, therefore, the board ruled in favour of unionization because there were threats.

* (15:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot in all good conscience sit quietly by and allow workers to be intimidated simply for trying to better their lot in life. That's what this bill will allow to take place.

As union rates go down, the standard of living for most Canadians go down. The people at the top will do quite well. With the decrease in unionization rates, the income disparity, the income gap continues to grow. Those at the top will have a greater concentration of the wealth. Those at the middle will fall to the bottom and those at the bottom will have less.

That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is really what we're talking about here, is working people's ability to better themselves, working people's ability to share in the benefits of their employment, working people's ability to give their children a brighter future. This bill limits workers' abilities to do that, and that cannot be allowed.

So—

An Honourable Member: In conclusion.

Mr. Lindsey: No, not in conclusion.

Has there been a great hue and cry from our friends in the press that have said they need to do something to stop the evil horde of unions? I haven't

seen that. In fact, the one analysis that I have before me that—

An Honourable Member: Is that Dan?

Mr. Lindsey: No, it wasn't. It was in the Winnipeg Free Press on the 12th of this month. The headline of the article is: No compassion from the Pallister Conservatives. Proposed antiworker legislation is mean-spirited and further tilts the economy to favour the top 1 per cent.

It's not just the NDP; it's not just the member from Flin Flon that's saying this; Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's the Winnipeg Free Press. I wonder if the phrase compassionate Conservative is contradictory not only in Donald Trump's United States, but also in Canada, including Manitoba.

As a former financial adviser, Premier Brian Pallister must be aware that our economic system has been increasingly skewed in favour of companies—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. When you refer to a member from the—in the House here, you refer as their constituency or the First Minister.

Mr. Lindsey: Sorry for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was just reading from the article in the newspaper. I won't do that again. *[interjection]* Well, you guys are falling down on the job; my own members are heckling me now. Thanks, brothers and sisters. So now that we've had a little light-hearted break, let's get back to the mean-spirited comments.

One indicator of our skewed economy is that the top 1 per cent of earners capture 37 per cent of the overall income growth, another is that it now takes two wage earners in most families to buy a house and support a family. The economic upheaval happened because the ability of workers to obtain a fair share of the wealth that they helped generate has been greatly diminished by things like free trade and other means. One very important weapon was the weakening of unions which help individual workers defend against inadequate wages and benefits or even mistreatment by uncaring employers.

Jim Clark is the chair of the psychology at the University of Winnipeg. He's the one that wrote this: Unions partly created some balance of power until recent decades, but that balance has been almost completely lost in the private sector, and it's threatened in the public sector. In fact, unionization rates in the private sector have declined for 30 years and was only 15.2 per cent in 2014. Greater income inequality and low levels of unionization, it's not

clear why the Conservative government believes legislation is needed to make it even more difficult for workers to unionize.

And that is the crux of the matter at hand, is why does this government want to attack working people. Why do they want to not have working people in this province belong to unions? Because then working people would get their share of the wealth, or at least a better share of it than what they have now. And that's what this government seems to be opposed to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is an equitable share for everyone.

Again, I get back to what have they done since they came into power.

An Honourable Member: Ten thousand eight hundred jobs lost.

Mr. Lindsey: Ten thousand eight hundred jobs lost, somebody says; minimum wage that they've refused to raise; and Bill 7. Direct attacks on working people, direct attacks on people's ability to defend themselves and get ahead, while making sure that those at the top 1 per cent are going to come out all right. That's what this government is about.

There was nothing—this bill is a solution looking for a problem because there was no problem. There was no great hue and cry from workers saying, my democratic rights have been suppressed by the 65 per cent threshold. Workers didn't say that. Who said it? Well, I think perhaps maybe the government got their direction from the business owners.

Now, why would business owners be so concerned? Well, I'm going to guess because as people became unionized, as they were able to negotiate fair and decent wages and fair and decent working conditions, some employers didn't like that, because then they had to share more of the profits that working people put their blood, sweat and tears into earning. That's what this bill is about.

By Mark Hudson for CBC News, posted June 23rd, 2016: On June 15th, the new Manitoba government introduced Bill 7, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, which aims to eliminate the so-called card-check system for union certification. Most people, whether they're union members or people in the public, have no idea what card-check system is, nor does this government attempt to explain it. Again they use the buzzword: democracy.

The card-check system for union certification currently used in Manitoba, Bill 7 would 'mandate'

secret ballot votes as the only means of union certification. Now, this Mr. Hudson asked the question, well, that sounds fair doesn't it? And the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is banking on Manitobans thinking so. The bill has been pitched as a means to make union certification more democratic, a clearer reflection of the will of the workers. It is, in fact, anything but. It is an assault on unions, plain and simple, and will negatively affect all working Manitobans.

* (15:50)

Now, these aren't words that are coming from the New Democratic Party. These aren't words that are coming from a union organizer. These aren't words that are coming from the member from Flin Flon. These are words that are freely coming from the press, from the press that—I have to say, in my experience as a union person, as a New Democrat—the press has not always been on our side. And yet they recognize what many of the members opposite seem incapable of realizing: that this bill is not about democracy; this bill is about limiting workers' ability to defend themselves. It's about limiting workers' ability to better themselves. It's not about democracy.

The article goes on to say not everyone knows what card check is nor how union certification takes place under the existing Labour Relations Act. And I'm sure if I went around to members opposite and asked them how many of them had participated either as an organizer or as a worker in an organizing drive, I've got a funny feeling I wouldn't find any. I could be wrong, and I'm certainly willing to admit it if I am, but I don't believe that any of them have that experience. Some of them, clearly, at some point at time did belong to a union.

So no one knows what card check is nor how union certification takes place under the existing Labour Relations Act. So under the current act, if 65 per cent of workers sign a union membership card, the Manitoba Labour Board—and this is critical—after ensuring that all other aspects of the law have been upheld will certify the union as a bargaining agent. If 40 to 65 per cent sign, then a secret ballot vote is needed to certify.

So, really, under the existing legislation when it becomes so abundantly clear that the majority, the vast majority of workers have expressed their interest in joining a union, 65 per cent is the key, is the magic number. When 65 per cent of workers in a workplace have expressed their desire to join a union, then it's automatic. And I've heard comments,

well, that's pretty reasonable, or that's too much. And I would suggest from my experience that 65 per cent is way too high; 50 per cent plus one should be enough because that's a majority. But previous governments determined that they had to pick a number and 65 was the number.

So what happens if you don't have 65 per cent certification or 65 per cent of cards signed under the current legislation? Well, the current legislation says anything from 40 per cent to 65 per cent requires a secret ballot vote, and it's during those 40 to 65 per cent that union certifications are lost. And why is that? Why is that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I'll tell you why. Because that's the period of time when employers have the opportunity to intimidate workers, when they have the opportunity to tell workers: if you join a union, I'm going to have to lay some of you off. If you join a union, I'll shut the place down.

Well, that's a very extreme statement to make. Has that ever taken place? Absolutely, it has. Workers have been thrown out of their jobs because a major multinational corporation decides, we'll shut down rather than join—have our workers join a union, and we'll move our store to the next town. And that's shameful behaviour. Sixty-five per cent have freely and clearly expressed their intent, their democratic right to join a union. There should be no further question on that.

The current legislation that says 40 to 65 per cent, then we have to have a vote. And those are the ones that always become problematic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And there's lots of chirping going on.

An Honourable Member: He's talking about intimidation by employers.

Mr. Lindsey: Intimidation by employers. And perhaps the member opposite that seems to have a wealth of knowledge about this, probably has never been in a workplace that needed a union.

An Honourable Member: False.

Mr. Lindsey: Oh, he says false then. I'd like to point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's clearly a difference between having been in a unionized workplace and having the intestinal fortitude to want to organize a workplace because the workplace is so bad that you're willing to risk everything to join a workplace that is unionized.

The member opposite talks about—he worked for a workplace that was unionized. And I'm glad to hear that because then he enjoyed the benefits that somebody fought for him to enjoy. And every Manitoban—in fact, every Canadian—enjoys the benefits that unions have fought for. Silly little things like the eight-hour workday, foolish ideas like the weekend, crazy ideas like long weekends, complete off-the-wall ideas like holidays, holiday pay.

How about pensions? Members here have pensions. Members in unionized workplaces have pensions, and those pensions are under attack constantly by corporations, by companies that don't fund them, that want to see them go bankrupt so that they can claim that, well, we can't support it any more. Those are the kind of workplaces that clearly need strong unions, that clearly need strong voices to represent workers, to represent Canadians, to represent Manitobans. This government—I'd like to thank my one-man support crew; it's good—this government continues its attack on working people.

There was an article that appeared in the Free Press on October 3rd, 2016. Democracy, the word carries a deep meaning for citizens of nations rooted in western democratic traditions. The full measure of the word far exceeds the individual rights it implies. For Canadians, it is vicariously connected to the foundations of our history. The word embodies the weight of sacrifices made by the many who defended democracy against grave dangers in the past. And their memory occupies the deepest recesses of our collective consciousness, imploring us to forever stand vigilant against future dangers. As Canadians, we will never lack the inspiration to defend our rights. We are bound by these principles not only as Canadians, but across borders with citizens of other nations near and far. When democratic principles are summoned in support of public policy, our first instinct is often a supportive response. In Manitoba, democratic rights have been invoked to support legislative changes proposed under Bill 7, introduced by the Pallister government—sorry, introduced by the present government.

* (16:00)

The suggestion that union workers are entitled to cast secret ballots resonates easily and broadly across socio-economic strata. Democracy conjures a powerful instinct, one that is difficult to contest. Soon, Bill 7 will be debated in the Manitoba Legislature as it winds through the legislative

process. Those opposed will raise questions of fairness and public necessity. These arguments, although reasoned, may do little to overcome our emotional connection to the democratic principles invoked by supporters. Lynton Crosby, a conservative Australian political mastermind, has said, reason stands no chance when competing with emotion.

The suggested rationale for Bill 7 is simple. It's about democracy. In our system, it is compelling. It is a compelling argument that the franchise whether to elect governments or to unionize is an individual right best exercised in secret. But is that the full extent of our democracy? Democracy is more than the right to cast a secret ballot.

A healthy democracy needs an informed, economically secure electorate. Being informed requires that we are able to reason through hollow arguments that, if accepted at face value, would only serve to undermine our enduring interests. Economic security depends on a foundation that offers a reasonable degree of equality to all citizens.

Democracy is not solely a function of the single moment when citizens vote. Democracy is corrupted by economic and social inequality. It seldom takes hold in societies that are struggling under the weight of economic or social unfairness. Even secure societies can be undermined by economic and social stressors. In the ongoing US presidential election, our American neighbours are irreconcilably divided. The inexplicable rise of Donald Trump is a symptom of social and economic duress. Keep in mind, if Mr. Trump is elected, it'll be by secret ballot.

As Manitobans debate Bill 7, we cannot be distracted by the invocation of democratic principles and overlook fundamental socio-economic factors that must also be taken into account. But what are these factors? International Monetary Fund, that great left-leaning institution, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—pretty sure that's another left-leaning institution—and Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz have recently highlighted bread-and-butter reasons to proceed with extreme caution. The IMF and OECD have released convincing economic data that directly links wealth concentration and slower growth with declining unionization in western democracy. Both organizations say that when unions decline, so does the middle class. At the same time, more wealth concentrates into fewer hands.

This is not the position of left-leaning union organizations. Neither the IMF nor the OECD can be accused of occupying a position on the left of the political economic spectra. These organizations have consistently promoted pro-business, small-government economic policies. Hard economic data has forced them to admit Thatcherism and Reaganism were very bad for our economies. They now acknowledge that a 30-year assault on the right of workers to unionize has tipped the balance far too far. Ironically, while Mr. Pallister's government is seeking to enact Bill 7, the Trudeau government is repealing Bill 377 and Bill C-525, enacted under by the—enacted by the Harper Conservatives.

Prime Minister Harper also invoked democracy to enact legislation that was roundly criticized as an American-style attack on the rights to unionize. What was seen as bad legislation for Canada is now being presented as good policy for Manitoba. Past experience, in British Columbia, tells that Bill 7 will make it harder for Manitoba workers to unionize.

Will Manitobans be better off if Bill 7 becomes law and the province has fewer unionized worker?—the evidence clearly suggests not. Based on recent evidence, Bill 7 should never become law. Sometimes we need to check our instincts and let emotions take a second place to reason.

Bill 7 professes to restore democracy in the workplace; it is, in fact, an instrument of its slow demise. Manitoba deserves better. We deserve thoughtful government that places a premium on hard evidence and discounts raw ideology with extreme prejudice. The defence of our democratic traditions demands nothing less, and that's by Sudor Senor [*phonetic*], the CEO of the Manitoba Building Trades & Allied Hydro Council.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a lot of people that put a lot of words in writing and in the media that question the need to bring this legislation forward, because, as has been clearly pointed out today by myself and previous speakers in this Legislative Assembly, throughout the province there has been no need for this. The only need is for the present government to suppress workers, to allow the concentration of wealth in fewer hands. Make no mistake, and I cannot ever say this often enough, this bill is not about democracy. That is merely a word that the government has chosen to use to get the attention of people that don't understand the dynamics of why workers want to unionize in the first place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as was pointed out in the article I just read, sometimes we have to calm our emotion and think about the realities and let a calm mind rule our actions. This bill tries to whip up a frenzy around the word democracy; it plays on emotions. People that only read headlines think they understand what democracy is and, by golly, we should all support democracy. People that don't try and understand what's being proposed, why it's being proposed, and what it will do will base their opinion on a headline, will base their opinion on a word. And that's what this government is banking on. In order for this government, for this Premier (Mr. Pallister), to pay back the business friends that helped elect him, he's promised to enact this legislation. This legislation that's uncalled for. This legislation that's unnecessary. It's legislation that does nothing to foster the Premier and the government's desire for a better Manitoba.

*(16:10)

In fact, what this legislation—or this proposed legislation does is the—exactly the opposite. It will not—it will not—lead to a better Manitoba. It will lead to a Manitoba where less workers have less rights. It will lead to a Manitoba where power is in the hands of so few, and they will dictate to so many how their lives will be led. That's why we in the NDP caucus are so vehemently opposed to this legislation.

By already having one of the most restrictive certification processes, by already having safeguards in place to ensure that intimidation, coercion, threats and all the rest of it don't take place, we've already ensured that working people can express their democratic right. And they've done that when they sign a union card. They've done that freely and in secret when they sign a union card.

This legislation, again, and I will not, I cannot reiterate this enough, is actually antidemocratic, because it forces working people to have to vote twice. That's not right. That's not what democracy should be about. That's not what democracy is about, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Workers have clearly expressed their desire to join a union when 65 per cent of them have signed a union card. Nothing could be more clear, nothing could be more democratic and nothing could be more secret, because unions ensure that they don't tell people who signed a union card or how many people may have signed a union card, because as soon as they do, as soon as they do, that's when the intimidation, the coercion, the threats start to take place. Union organizers work very hard to

make sure that union cards are not shared with the employer.

There has been instances where individual workers have expressed a desire to join a union and it's been known in the workplace that that's the worker who's leading the charge, that that's the worker who stood up and said, we've got to do something, brothers and sisters, this isn't right. And there's so many instances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where that worker got fired, not because he was a bad employee, not because he didn't do his job, but because he wanted workers to join a union. He wanted workers to have a right to support themselves.

That is clearly not democracy. That would be akin to workers being put in jail or citizens being put in jail for expressing their free will. There are countries that do that. I don't believe we call those countries democracies. And yet, and yet, we're willing to accept that in a workplace and cloak it in the flag of democracy.

People are very confused. People that haven't lived it, people that haven't been there fall into the trap of, well, that's democracy, it's a secret vote. They need to delve deeper into the issues and find out what happens to workers when they try to organize and it's [*inaudible*].

Have there been instances of workers being fired for attempting to do that? Well, of course there has. And, again, one can look to the Manitoba Labour Board and see instances of that taking place. Let's have a look here and see if I've pulled up the right reference. Yes, as a matter of fact, I have.

United Food & Commercial Workers local union 832 and Triple Seal Northwest Glass Products, and this was an application before the Manitoba Labour Board, February 11th, 2009. And, without boring you with a lot of details—it's getting late in the day—the substantive matter before the board was: Was this employee fired for trying to form a union? And, after going through the evidence presented, after listening to people that made presentations, the board is satisfied that DS's participation in union activities and the fact that he was involved in organizing a union was one of the reasons for his termination on January 19th, 2009. Accordingly, the board finds that the employer discharged DS contrary to section 7 of the act and, in so doing, committed an unfair labour practice.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Madam Speaker, there's so many instances across Canada of this very thing that we're talking about, where workers have been intimidated, workers have been fired for attempting to join a union. The period of time between when the employer becomes aware that a union drive is taking place and the time when the secret ballot vote takes place is the time when the intimidation reaches a crescendo. The member—the minister talked about today, well, employers aren't allowed to intimidate according to what's left in the act on the day of the vote. What about the period leading up to the day of the vote? That's why what's in place today, as restrictive as it is at 65 per cent, has to remain as a very minimum. For me, that number should go down to 50 plus one for automatic certification. It cannot, however, disappear altogether so that every instance workers must be subjected to intimidation, coercion, threats, workers such as this gentleman who worked for this company gets fired simply because he wanted to help form a union to protect his brothers and sisters and their rights in the workplace.

This bill allows that to happen, allows that to happen every time there's an attempt to organize a workplace. There will never be an instance under this legislation when the secret ballot vote is not mandatory. Imagine—imagine—what if you signed—100 per cent of the workers had signed a union card. Well, they still have to vote again. There's democracy in action. If that's the version of the democracy that this government supports, this province is in a world of trouble, because that, very clearly, is not democracy.

* (16:20)

Workers have already expressed their desire through a democratic process of signing a card—the most restrictive basis, 65 per cent. Sixty-five per cent of those workers must have signed a card. *[interjection]* And I hear one of the members say they were coerced into signing. I'd certainly welcome the member showing some evidence of that, simply because, Madam Speaker, that evidence doesn't exist.

If it did exist, I'm sure, through repeated questions in this Legislative Assembly to the minister, to the Premier (Mr. Pallister), I'm sure one of them would have trotted that evidence out and used it as an excuse to introduce this legislation.

But, clearly, they haven't done that. Clearly, they haven't trotted out any excuse to introduce this legislation. Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, they haven't trotted out any evidence because there

isn't any. There's been no reason to introduce this legislation, other than a former Harper Conservative wanting to fulfill his ideological dream of breaking unions. And that's all it's about.

It's too bad that the members opposite—I'm sure most of them are pretty decent folks—not all, but most.

An Honourable Member: List them.

Mr. Lindsey: I'm not allowed to list names, but if they fully understood the concepts that we're talking about, they would clearly come to the realization that what's been proposed is not right. It's not right for working people in this province; it's not right for this province.

While this government has suggested early on in its mandate that they were on the side of working Manitobans, that they in fact wanted to create employment, unanimously passed a bill very early on about aerospace jobs. I wonder if there's any thought been put into whether those jobs will be unionized jobs or perhaps those jobs will be, I don't know, temporary foreign workers perhaps, the worst kind of advantage taken of workers, that brings them to a country, dumps them here with absolutely no rights. Except some temporary farm workers have been successful in organizing.

Some temporary foreign workers in the province of British Columbia have been successful in organizing. Now imagine, if you will, Madam Speaker, how bad their working conditions must have been for them to risk everything to join a union. How bad were those workplaces? What kind of rights didn't they have that prompted them and encouraged them that they had to take on that fight with those employers, knowing full well that they could be put on a plane, put on a boat, and sent back home tomorrow?

And yet, this government wants to make it more difficult for workers such as them to have rights. I'm not sure—I can't grasp why a government is so against working people. I'm left to wonder what sort of trauma must have taken place in some of their early lives to leave them with such disdain for working people, that somehow they feel that working people are less than them, that they're entitled to less than them. And really, that's what this is all about.

And some members opposite tout out the words secret ballot, secret ballot, secret ballot—just like a parrot—secret ballot, secret ballot, secret ballot. So, clearly, they don't understand the concepts at play.

The concept at play is what really is democracy. And we've talked about that, and we'll continue to talk about it, and both continue to try and convince this government that the democratic rights of working people has already been clearly expressed under the rules presently in place, in fact, more than clearly expressed by the rules presently in place. One of the most stringent democratic votes—65 per cent—and yet this government wants to take that right away from workers, and that's really terrible, Madam Speaker.

So why? We're left to wonder why. The only answer that we can come up with is simply ideological, not factual, just a belief: union bad, therefore, we have to limit people's ability to join the unions.

We've talked a little bit about what it means for a worker when they decide to join a union. We've talked about workers putting their lives on the line. We've talked about workers putting their livelihoods on the line. We need to focus on workers, working people, working Manitobans wanting to make a better life for themselves, wanting to make a better life for their families, wanting to make a better life for their children.

This government says they want to build a better Manitoba, but they want to do it while crushing workers' abilities to make a better life for themselves. Someone will have to explain to us, Madam Speaker, how those two very, very differing views go together. How does holding the majority of your population back make for a better province? How does limiting workers' ability to enter the middle class make for a better province?

Let's stop and think for a minute. Who pays taxes? Well, most of the people in the top 1 per cent, they pay some taxes. They also hide a lot so they don't have to pay taxes. They've also been very instrumental in drafting the tax laws that allow them to not pay taxes. People at the bottom, the poor people, people earning minimum wage or less, they don't pay much in taxes simply because they don't have much to begin with. So who's left picking up the majority of the bill paying taxes? Madam Speaker, it's the middle class. It's the unionized workers in this province in this country that shoulder the majority of the load for paying taxes.

* (16:30)

Madam Speaker, it's the middle class, it's the unionized workers in this province and this country, that shoulder the majority of the load for paying

taxes. So, as this government decides to limit workers' ability to enter the middle class, who's going to pay taxes? Who's going to support the universities that a lot of the people we represent—they already can't afford it. But soon, when there's less people paying—even some of the members opposite's children won't be able to afford go to university, won't be able to afford health care because this government's limiting people's ability to enter the middle class, and limiting their ability to become tax-paying supporters of this province. That will not—will not—build a better Manitoba. It will do exactly the opposite. It will build a Manitoba that's devastating for working people.

I suppose the members opposite would like to think that all their children, or maybe their grandchildren, will become doctors and lawyers—maybe politicians—and not have to worry about where their next meal comes from. I got a funny feeling that may not be the case.

An Honourable Member: Doctors are unionized.

Mr. Lindsey: Yes, that's pretty loose.

That will not be the case. Some of their children are going to enter the workforce, and they're going to stay in jobs that many of the members opposite would classify as less desirable. They're going to have to stay in jobs that, thanks to this government, they don't have rights. They're going to have to stay in jobs where they're unable to better themselves. And they're going to be stuck in those jobs, Madam Speaker, because this government today wants to introduce a bill that limits their ability to join a union, limits their ability to actually lead a better life. This bill limits the ability for Manitoba to actually get better going forward.

So we've covered a lot of ground here today, and we've got lots more to cover. We've got lots more. Maybe a week's worth. *[interjection]* No, it's going to be a lot of the same because I don't believe that the members opposite have understood it yet.

So—[interjection] Well, the member opposite says: Wait 'til we respond, wait 'til we respond. Repeatedly in this Chamber we've asked them to respond. And what have we got? Nothing. No answers, no response, just a bunch of mindless rhetoric that says nothing, that doesn't answer any of the questions we've asked to date. And yet: Let us talk. They've had opportunity to talk and they will get opportunity to talk. They will get opportunity to explain what have they got against working

Manitobans. I hope that they'll be able to explain that why they're so against workers being able to unionize. They'll have that opportunity, Madam Speaker.

And, you know, they talk about, well, give us the opportunity to speak. Madam Speaker, the government opposite—the minister, the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—had ample opportunity to call this bill days and days ago, which would have left you ample time to speak as long as you wanted. However, this government, this Premier chose not to call this bill until the last possible minute, because he didn't want to have an open and honest debate about the pros and cons of the bill, because he knows full well, as do the members on this side, that there is no reason for this bill. There is no reason to introduce a change in legislation that is working just fine.

There is no reason to introduce legislation that will lead to labour unrest, labour unrest that we've already seen in this province with strikes, labour unrest that we've already seen with the lack of support for workers as they lose their jobs and nothing is said, nothing is done, except to introduce an ideological piece of legislation that solves a problem that doesn't exist, that attempts to do something when there's no need for it. There's no requirement for it.

The government, clearly, wants to undermine workers', Manitobans' constitutional rights to join a union. They've seen other jurisdictions attempt to introduce legislation, like Saskatchewan, only those bills got ruled unconstitutional. They've seen their federal counterparts introduce legislation that's in the process of being repealed by the current federal government.

Now, this Premier sees it as his duty somehow, I suppose; it's his turn to take a crack at breaking unions. And that's what this bill is about. It's about breaking unions. It's about limiting workers' ability to join a union. He's seen his counterparts, in other jurisdictions, fail and fail miserably in their attempts to break unions. And it is my strong desire, Madam Speaker, to see this Premier and this government fail in their attempts to do the same thing.

We can only hope that as this bill works its way through the process that there's strong presence of working Manitobans that stand up and say, this is not right. Their voices need to be heard. But—but—Madam Speaker, I don't believe that this government is prepared to listen to those voices.

While they often tout the fact that they want to be open and honest, they want to be transparent, they want to work together with all the parties to make Manitoba the best province ever, that's clearly not the experience that we've seen. They've done everything in their power to not work, to not listen to the members opposite, to make legislation that works for all Manitobans. In fact, with this bill, they've refused to introduce it almost as long as possible to limit debate, to limit the members opposite from having the opportunity to voice their concerns.

In fact, perhaps maybe the only reason that the bill got introduced today was because there's been so much effort behind the scenes and in this Chamber to put pressure on the government to finally call the bill, to finally face the public with this bill. They've tried to put it off as long as possible. And I'm sure if they thought they could get away with putting it off till 4 o'clock tomorrow that they would.

* (16:40)

But, clearly, the public was going to see through the ruse of an open and transparent government that spent a lot of time offering words on their own other bills that nobody was really opposing anyway. They burned up the clock, talked and talked. Now, they've limited the amount of time that their own members have clearly expressed a desire to speak on this bill, but they've left it too late for that now, haven't they, Madam Speaker? Their ability to speak on this bill has been limited the same as ours, which is too bad—which is too bad.

The endgame of this NDP caucus is to make sure that regressive legislation such as this does not pass. The endgame of this NDP caucus has to be to make sure that the voices of Manitobans are heard and heard loud and clear. The endgame of this NDP caucus has to be to make sure that working Manitobans have the right to join a union and have the ability to join a union. It's kind of a shame that the day is coming to an end because I'm just starting to get warmed up on this.

So where are we at, Madam Speaker? This government, when questioned during question period, doesn't believe that strong unions lead to a strong economy, don't believe that strong unions lead to a better Manitoba when clearly—clearly—there's been enough studies done, and not by left-leaning think tanks, that clearly point out that the rate of unionization actually leads to a better economic outcome, but actually lead to a better Manitoba.

So, while this government claims to want a better Manitoba, apparently they only want a better Manitoba for those at the top. They clearly don't want a better Manitoba for people in the North, because they've sat on their hands and said nothing while workers have been laid off, while industries are threatened with closure: 10,800 workers, full-time workers, in this province since this government came to power. That's not a better Manitoba, Madam Speaker. Certainly not a better Manitoba for those 10,800 workers. Certainly not a better Manitoba for their families and not a better Manitoba for anybody.

Now, this government wants to make sure that another vast majority of Manitobans won't have a better Manitoba either. So, while they try to limit workers' ability, while they try and sell it to the public using Trump-style catchphrases, that will not lead to a better Manitoba. That will not lead to a better life for anybody in Manitoba. Well, I shouldn't say not for anybody. It may lead to a better life for some people at the top. But, in reality, it won't do that either, because as the economy of Manitoba stagnates, as the number of good-paying jobs disappear, it won't even make a better Manitoba for those at the top.

So, once again, Madam Speaker, well, this government spends a lot of time using catchy phrases, sticking to the song sheet that they've been provided in the House every day, in the Legislative Assembly every day. But sometimes they change it up; sometimes they don't use the three Ds—that's their latest catchphrases. Their catchphrase for this is democracy, and that's all it is. That's all it is for them. That's all it is for anybody that actually pays attention to what this bill is about. It's merely a catchphrase. It does not—this bill does not lead to a more democratic society. It does not lead to workers having more democratic rights. It, in fact, does just the opposite, as I've said. It limits workers' ability to freely express their democratic right to join a union and to better their lives and to have a better Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: It limits the ability of union leaders.

Mr. Lindsey: You'll get your opportunity, at some point in time, I'm sure, to express your opinions.

It's unfortunate, as I've said—*[interjection]*—as I've said, you know, if your government wouldn't have waited until pretty much the last day before they called the bill, everybody in here probably could

have had a crack at having something to say. But a better Manitoba for this government apparently isn't a free and open debate. A better Manitoba for this government is limiting the ability to succeed to a very few—to a very few—Manitobans. That's their vision of a better Manitoba.

While they've attacked seniors, while they've attacked minimum-wage earners, while they're attempting to attack unionized workers or—let me clarify that, they're attempting to attack workers who want to become unionized, I'm left to wonder what's next? What's next for workers in this province? Next session, what attack will they foist on the working people in this province? One can only imagine. One can only fear.

You know, way—long time ago when I first came to the legislator, one of the things that I'd said is, when it came to some of these debates, we'd been accused of fear mongering in the past. And it was such a shame to have to stand here and say that, well, yes, we did bring up things that we were fearful of when legislation was brought in. And that's what I'm going to do today.

I'm going to bring up what we're fearful of, what this legislation will do, and we'll be accused of fear mongering. And what I said before, is it was such a shame that the things that we brought up, that we were fearful of came to pass. And this will be the same. We've talked about working people having their abilities to have their rights. We've talked about working people not being able to freely express themselves, and that's what will come to pass if this legislation passes.

Contrary to everything that the members opposite have to say, this bill is not about democracy. This bill is about the exact opposite of that, Madam Speaker. This bill is about taking rights away from working people, because, as it stands today—I'll reiterate yet again—working people have freely expressed their desire to join a union when they secretly voted by signing a union card.

When the most restrictive law in place—65 per cent is very clearly a majority in any jurisdiction, Madam Speaker, and yet this government refuses to accept that, refuses to accept that workers will be faced with intimidation, workers will be faced with coercion. Workers will be faced with losing their jobs once the employer becomes aware that there's a union drive going on.

* (16:50)

And I'll reiterate, yet again: I certainly do not want to be accused of tarring all Manitoban workplaces with the same brush, because there are good employers. There are employers who actually care about their employees. There are employers that pay a decent rate of pay.

Well, in fact, one of the benefits of unionization is workplaces that aren't unionized sometimes offer their employees the benefits that the competition down the street, that is unionized, had been forced to give their employees because they're so fearful of giving up their power. And that's what it's about; it's about power. They're so fearful about giving up their power that they'll give their employees the same as what the union place down the street gives, just because they don't want to have a union, because their minds are so wrapped up in the power game that having someone come in to their workplace and suggest that there's a different way, that there's a better way of doing things, they can't grasp that concept.

So, while unions clearly have a duty to represent the members that pay their wage—pay their dues, unions also have the added benefit of improving the lives of a vast majority of non-unionized Manitobans as well. And it's kind of a shame that this government is against all those—all those hard-working Manitobans—because as the rate of unionization goes down, so does the rate of workers enjoying a decent standard of living. As the rate of unionization goes down, so do the number of taxpayers supporting the system.

And I guess that'll be one more excuse why this government then will want to cut services. That'll be one more excuse why this government wants to make sure that the very people that have lost their jobs won't have access to health care, won't have access to affordable hydro, won't have access to retraining, won't have access to unemployment insurance, maybe one day won't have access to welfare, because their right-wing ideology is so against working Manitobans that I can see where there's no end in sight to this.

As New Democrats, as individuals who fully support democratic principles, who fully support rights freely expressed in a democratic system, we will continue to fight against this piece of legislation, because, Madam Speaker, this legislation is wrong. This legislation is antidemocratic.

You know, I don't like to—well, no, I do like to talk. I don't like to give too much credit to previous

Conservative governments, but when we look at previous Conservative governments—well, let's go back to 1992. Get ready. Get your hands warmed up. Conservative government under the minister of Labour, Darren Praznik, said yes—but, apparently, you're not listening—said his amendments to The Labour Relations Act that he accepted from the LMRC, the argument made by labour representatives that, where a significant number of people signed cards, that that is sufficient enough representation of the will of the majority of the bargaining unit to certify. Sixty-five per cent, Madam Speaker, is a significant number of workers. It is a significant number. That Conservative government was willing to accept it. Why is this government not willing to accept it? Why have they taken another giant step to the right, another giant step against working people in this province?

I hope that their desire to match other provinces, as I've heard one of the members opposite say, they trot out Saskatchewan. Let's think a minute about Saskatchewan and the labour legislation that they introduced that I'm sure had many of the members opposite quite excited, because their legislation was going to limit unions' ability. It was going to break unions in that province. Well, that is, until it was found to be unconstitutional. Now this government wants to step up to the plate and take their swing at bat to see if they can break unions in this province. Because the other provinces have not been successful, now this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government somehow thinks it's their turn. And that's just plain wrong, Madam Speaker. No, it's wrong.

Madam Speaker, we've spent a lot of time today and we're going to spend more time tomorrow talking about this bill. Somewhere, in the pages I've got in front of me, I've missed a couple of points. So we're going to go through it, and the point of this, for me, is to attempt to convince members opposite to go back to their caucus room. Well, in fact, to go home tonight. While they're having supper with their families, to go home tonight and think about what we've talked about here today. To think about what really is democracy. To think about what is a freely expressed will of people, freely expressed in a democratic process, that they signed cards, that they voted. They voted 65 per cent of them have to accept before a union gets certified. I want them to think about that tonight.

Madam Speaker, tomorrow we'll spend more time talking about what's wrong with this bill. We'll spend more time talking about why the ideologically

driven mentality of this government that brings in this bill for no reason—no reason whatsoever other than to attack working people. And now—the parrots are throwing out the words democracy again because that's what they've been trained to say. It's kind of a shame that they don't understand, really, what democracy is. They don't understand how workers in a workplace have clearly, by 65 per cent, expressed their democratic will to join a union, to have a better life for themselves. That's what these people—that's what this government doesn't understand.

So I wanted to make sure you could hear me. Madam Speaker, automatic certification has been a

right in this province for at least 25 years. It's been a right that's worked well. It's worked well for workers in the province of Manitoba. It hasn't been a problem for employers in this province. And yet here we are standing here today debating whether workers—

Madam Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) will have unlimited time.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 12, 2016

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