

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

Tuesday, October 18, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 17—The Fatality Inquiries Amendment and Vital Statistics Amendment Act

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 17, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment and Vital Statistics Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes médico-légales et la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: These amendments are in response to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Carter v. Canada* and the subsequent amendments to the Criminal Code, but now permit Canadians who are at least 18 years of age and who are suffering with a grievous and irremediable medical condition to voluntarily obtain medical assistance in dying. These amendments clarify that a death that occurs as a result of medical assistance in dying in accordance with the Criminal Code is not a suicide or a homicide under the fatalities inquiries act and The Vital Statistics Act. This means that deaths that occur through medical assistance in dying that would otherwise be natural death do not need to be reported to a medical examiner. This will allow a physician the ability to complete the certificate of death and issue the burial certificate without the involvement of a medical examiner.

The amendments will also permit regulations to be developed to allow the Chief Medical Examiner to provide oversight of these deaths. We will be proposing to make a reporting requirement mandatory.

Finally, the amendments add a regulation power to The Fatality Inquiries Act to permit regulations to be developed regarding reporting requirements to the provincial and federal governments, allowing for national statistics to be gathered. Requirements have not yet been determined by the federal government, but we expect to be advised shortly.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 209—The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I move, seconded by the member for the Interlake, that Bill 209, The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ewasko: It gives me great pleasure to stand today and bring forward Bill 209, the childhood cancer awareness month, because I think the month of September is a month where many different forms of cancer are being recognized already, and we just feel that with more and more children being diagnosed this day and age with cancer I think it's very important to bring that awareness, that education not only into the House, but into the public.

So I look forward to support from the entire House bringing forward and passing Bill 209 in the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 210—The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 210, The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act.

Under current law, a person may file a small claim in the Court of Queen's Bench if the amount claimed is \$10,000 or less. This bill allows that amount to be increased by regulation, Madam Speaker. Alberta is at \$50,000 currently, Saskatchewan at \$30,000. We will bring our laws

into line with the rest of the provinces. Within the \$10,000 limit a person may include a claim for general damages of no more than \$2,000. This bill also allows that the amount to be increased by regulation.

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

Are there any further introduction of bills?

**Bill 211—The Labour Relations Amendment Act
(Applications for Certification)**

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from Fort Rouge, that Bill 211, the labour relations amendment act, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lindsey: Today, I have the great pleasure to introduce Bill 211, the labour relations amendment act. This bill, unlike the government's legislation, will introduce real protection for workers. It will make sure that workers are protected from intimidation and coercion. It will make sure that a certification vote is held in a fair location. It will give workers the ability to stop employers from interfering with the right to unionize.

In short, this bill will help repair some of the damage this government is doing to working people's rights in this province.

Madam Speaker, our party is committed to providing real protections for Manitobans and safeguarding their right to unionize.

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am pleased to table the annual report of Manitoba Justice, Criminal Law Division and Victim Services Complaints, as well as the annual report of Manitoba Justice, which includes the Justice initiatives.

Madam Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Manitoba Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection annual report for 2015-1016, the Manitoba Arts Council annual report

2015-2016 and the Manitoba Multiculturalism and Literacy annual report for 2015 and '16. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Société franco-manitobaine

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Madame la Présidente, je salue aujourd'hui le travail de la Société franco-manitobaine. Fondée en 1968, la SFM est toujours une ardente défenderesse de la communauté franco-manitobaine. Pendant plus de quarante ans, la SFM travaille main dans la main avec les francophones et les francophiles de la province, afin de promouvoir le fait français au Manitoba et célébrer les accomplissements de la communauté.

La SFM fait également des grands efforts pour agrandir la francophonie ici au Manitoba. Les initiatives, telles que l'Accueil francophone, ont pour but d'accueillir les nouveaux arrivants et les sensibiliser aux services et aux programmes français à leur disposition. Ceci n'est qu'un exemple du travail que l'organisation entreprend.

Cet été dernier, la SFM a lancé Infojustice Manitoba, un centre d'information qui fournit aux francophones de la province des renseignements sur les services juridiques français. Ce service est essentiel pour ceux et celles qui choisissent de se représenter en français devant les tribunaux.

Le Réseau communautaire de la SFM favorise le développement des communautés francophones rurales du Manitoba. Il encourage les partenariats locaux en vue de rendre possible et normale la vie en français dans tous les coins de la province.

Cette organisation continue de tisser les liens entre les communautés anglophones et francophones, et avec son centre d'information 233-1556, s'assure de promouvoir les événements et festivités francophones dans la province. Grâce à leurs efforts, le fait français ici au Manitoba va continuer de s'épanouir et de grandir dans les années à venir.

Merci, Madame la Présidente.

Translation

Madam Speaker, I wish today to acknowledge the work of the Société franco-manitobaine. Established in 1968, the SFM remains an ardent defender of the Franco-Manitoban community. The SFM has worked hand in hand with the province's Francophones and Francophiles for over 40 years to promote the

French fact in Manitoba and celebrate the community's achievements.

The SFM is also working hard to expand the Francophonie here in Manitoba. Initiatives such as the Accueil francophone provide settlement services for newcomers and ensure they are aware of services and programs available in French. This is only one example of the work carried out by the organization.

This past summer, the SFM launched Infojustice Manitoba, an information centre that provides information on legal services available in French for Francophones in the province. This service is essential for those who choose to represent themselves in court.

The SFM's Réseau communautaire promotes the development of Manitoba's rural Francophone communities. It encourages local partnerships to make living in French possible and normal in all areas of the province.

This organization continues to create ties between Anglophone and Francophone communities and, through its information centre at 233-1556, ensures that Francophone events and celebrations in the province are promoted. Thanks to the efforts of the SFM, the French fact here in Manitoba will continue to develop and grow in the years to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (13:40)

Men's Sheds

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Today I'd like to recognize one of my constituents, Doug Mackie. Doug Mackie is the founder of the Men's Sheds Manitoba, which happens to be the first Men's Shed in all of Canada. A Men's Shed is really a friendly, welcoming and safe meeting place for men to socialize, learn new skills and enhance old ones. The men at the Men's Sheds participate in activities such as crafts, woodworking and volunteering work in the community. Men's Sheds are completely inclusive, regardless of age, background, 'ethnicity' and ability for people of all opportunities to take advantage of programming.

While Men's Sheds are predominantly retired men, even women and middle-aged men participate in the Woodhaven chapter. In fact, there is a gentleman in the mid-40s who regularly attends Woodhaven's Men's Shed. He was a foreman in the construction company; however, he suffered an unexpected stroke. He now attends Woodhaven

Men's Shed for moral support as well as to participate in the woodworking and craft activities to strengthen his motor skills. Men's Sheds also play a significant part in both his physical and mental recovery.

The program is a great success, and I could not be more proud to have the first Men's Shed in Canada right here in the constituency of Kirkfield Park. I want to thank Doug Mackie again for all his hard work with— working with men to make Men's Sheds such a success and the first in Canada. Unfortunately, Doug couldn't be here today as he's attending a funeral of another Men's Sheds member. My thoughts and prayers are with Doug and his family at this very difficult time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Private members' statements?

Arvid Loewen

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to honour Arvid Loewen with us today, resident of Rossmere, husband to Ruth for 35 years, father of three, grandfather of nine. These qualities alone are praiseworthy, but they're not the reason I stand to honour Arvid today.

When Arvid retired from a successful 31-year career, he wanted somehow to make a difference but wasn't quite sure what he could do. All he knew is that he loved to ride his bike, and so that's what he gave himself to. Well, with the encouragement of his wife and family, Arvid decided to pursue distance and then super long- distance cycling. Since 1995, Arvid has cycled 400,000 kilometres, twice completing the Race Across America, considered to be the world's toughest bicycle race, and Arvid now holds the Guinness record for ultra-marathon cycling across Canada. He biked across the country in 13 days, six hours and 13 minutes.

But that's not all. With help from a team of family and friends, Arvid's rides have raised over \$4 million for orphaned children in Africa, and, consequently, hundreds of children from Mully Children's Family in Kenya benefit every day from Arvid's work. In fact, Arvid regularly visits, supports and maintains contact with this group of friends he feels so fortunate to help.

The name of Arvid's website captures his spirit: Grandpas Can. And he's the subject of a book that

equally reflects his determination: When Quitting is Not an Option.

This past July, Arvid attempted to break his own Guinness World Record across Canada. After 109 kilometres, he crashed at 64 kilometres an hour. He made it all the way across. I would like to say—I would like us to welcome Arvid Loewen and thank him for being an inspiration to many people in this province.

Swan Valley Lions Club

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Today I'd like to acknowledge the Swan Valley Lions Club, a group of dedicated volunteers who have made a tremendous difference to the lives of many people in my constituency. The Swan Valley Lions are comprised of three clubs located in Bowsman, Minitonas and Swan River. Today I'd like to recognize their activities raising money for medical equipment.

In 2003, when it started, this group completed the fundraising of \$325,000 to purchase surgical equipment to bring cataract surgery to the Swan Valley Health facility. They have purchased three dialysis chairs at a cost of \$1,800. Most recently, they wrote \$120,000 cheque to the Swan Valley Health facility for heart monitoring equipment, which would enable remote monitoring of eight patients at a time. Presently, they're working towards providing birthing equipment for the facility.

Individual clubs have also done their share. Bowsman Lions Club provided an electric wheelchair for the facility. Swan River Lions Club spent \$9,000 repairing the outdoor staking arena in Swan River and are committed to purchasing a mobile blood pressure unit for the primary health-care clinic at a cost of \$4,000.

The Swan Valley clubs have provided over \$200,000 in assistance to 246 individuals and families who travelled out of the area to receive medical care. Their main fundraisers are the popular Billy Beal fishing derby, a golf tournament, and Bowsman and District bull-a-rama. These events are always well supported by the community, and I'm proud to come from a place that has such an incredible group of volunteers.

Thank you to this group of outstanding individuals that make the Swan Valley a better place.

Winnipeg Nomads

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Over the summer and throughout this fall season, I've enjoyed

my time spent at the Nomads football club located in the North End of the city.

The Nomads club was established at the Northwood Community club in Burrows, in 1969, making it one of the largest and oldest clubs in western Canada. What started off as a single team of 15-year olds developed into what is now a club, providing children and youth from ages seven to 21 various programs to participate in. A member from our Liberal team even played.

The Nomads club is an essential part of the North End community. They are committed to providing youth a place to determine and achieve their athletic dreams. They ensure that every player who wants to play has an opportunity, and they provide a safe space for our youth and a space for families to foster positive relationships within the community.

What I believe makes the Nomads club so unique and astounding is the leadership and mentorship that takes place solely by volunteers. These incredible people, football players, North End community members, families of players, and so forth, continue to demonstrate the drive and the passion to ensure football in the North End thrives every weekend.

I know my friend from Kildonan has experienced the Nomads' passion as well, and I would like to encourage all members of this House to.

I also highly recommend trying their famous taco in a bag. It's brilliant and it's delicious.

I would like to thank Nathan Yamron, president of the Nomads, and Rick Henkewich, commissioner for the Winnipeg High School Football League for not only joining us here in the gallery today and for helping me feel part of the Nomads' family even with my lack of football lingo, but for your dedication, volunteerism and mentorship you continue to display for the North End of Winnipeg.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Labour Relations Act Request to Withdraw

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier wants to be all things to all people, but the reality is he has shown us where he stands. He says he's a businessman, but he has no plan to deal with some of the worst job losses in

years. He was a teacher, but he wants to raise tuition fees for students. He says he's a labour activist but brings forward the most regressive labour legislation in a generation. Even the Fraser Institute knows that removing automatic certification reduces unionization.

There's still time to pull Bill 7. Will the Premier do it?

* (13:50)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I thank the member for her references to aspects of my background that I bring to this job. I think we all bring different experiences to bear from our past work and community work and engagement with fellow Manitobans, fellow Canadians, people around the world, to our jobs. One of the things that I bring and I believe many members of this House bring, regardless of partisan stripe, is a fundamental belief in the rights that we must protect for citizens.

And one of those rights too often taken for granted is the right to vote. Six months ago tomorrow Manitobans exercised the right to vote. They made a decision. The decision was to reject the old way of doing things, as portrayed by the member's question, quite frankly, of divisiveness and of excessive partisanship.

So I encourage the member to participate in a new way of doing things, a way that involves listening to Manitobans and working together, as the members of the Liberal caucus and members of our team did last night in the first genuine open budget consultations in a long time.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier says he wants to represent the little guy, but he turns around and freezes the minimum wage and gives himself a huge salary increase. His tax measures will buy low-income earners a fast-food meal, but a minimum wage increase would pay the rent. And now he is attacking the ability of workers to organize for benefits and good wages.

Madam Speaker, perhaps the Premier is not aware workplaces aren't always fair. Putting road-blocks in the way of certification just makes joining a union harder. The Premier knows this, but masks his intentions. It's not good enough for Manitoba workers.

Will he pull Bill 7?

Mr. Pallister: Well, there are so many inaccuracies in the preamble, Madam Speaker, where to begin?

Let's begin here. Most workers across Canada enjoy the right to a secret ballot, but the NDP took that right away from Manitobans. We think that that's wrong, and we're going to restore the right of Manitoba workers to have the chance to vote the way they want.

The leader, interim leader opposite, is right in her assertion that sometimes workplaces are not fair. Therefore it is very important to protect workers from intimidation, bullying and harassment either by union bosses or by employer bosses. A secret ballot assists in doing that exact thing, and it's recognized as a protection of workers by noted national and local union leaders today. The members opposite fail to recognize that too.

So if they're against giving Manitoba workers the right to a secret ballot—and that is their position—they should explain why.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Manitoba has weathered global economic turbulence by investing in their province and partnering with workers. Yet, now, at a time when the province has lost thousands of jobs, the Premier picks a fight with labour. This is an ideological fight and it certainly shows where the Premier's priorities are. Manitobans don't want to see partisan political fights with labour and certainly not during a time of economic turbulence.

Will he pull Bill 7?

Mr. Pallister: The members are choosing to fight a battle, an old battle, a backward-looking battle, a battle that even NDP government in Alberta isn't fighting. They're wrong in their assertion that this is any way, shape or form a bill that will do anything but protect the rights of Manitoba workers to vote the way they want. That's the purpose of the bill.

As far as the member's assertion that—or implication that somehow she or her colleagues care about working people across the province, why did they jack up the PST to 8 per cent on the dues that these workers have to pay to protect their own families? Why would they have done that when they said they weren't going to raise it? Maybe they could explain that to the working people of Manitoba who they have raided repeatedly, again and again, and

taken money off their kitchen table and put it in front of them at the Cabinet table to no good end.

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

Front-Line Workers Employment Security

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): If the Premier truly cares for workers, he will raise the minimum wage.

Madam Speaker, New Democrats have a vision for the future of Manitoba, one that builds for the future and fights for fair wages and good jobs for Manitoba workers, and New Democrats believe in protecting front-line workers.

In contrast, the Premier has frozen the minimum wage and brought forward the regressive Bill 7, and now he is walking away from his commitment to protecting front-line workers, calling that commitment now a moving target.

Will the Premier commit today to protecting the jobs of every front-line worker?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Let's go back. Let's go back to, say, the 2011 provincial election when the members opposite or—and some of their colleagues who formerly worked in these occupations went to the doors of the people of the province, including working families. They knocked; they said, trust us and vote for the NDP. We won't raise your taxes. And then, a year later, they jacked up taxes on home insurance for every—even the homes of the doors they walked on and every other home as well, Madam Speaker, the ones they didn't knock on.

Now, they also jacked up the PST to include all your benefits at work. So you want to protect your family, we do, but they said, no, we care so much for you working people that we'll promise you to your face, at your door, look you in the eye, that we're not going to raise your taxes on your home insurance and your benefits and then go ahead and do it anyway.

And then the next year they raised the PST on top of that by taking away the right of these very workers not just to have a secret ballot, but to have a vote at all. That's the record of the NDP.

We have a vision for the future, and we will make it happen while respecting the working people of this province.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier also promised during the election that he will maintain the seniors' tax rebate.

On April 15th the Premier and his party promised to protect the jobs of the workers who deliver front-line services. The Premier said at the time that this has been their position for many years.

Once elected, the Premier not only walks away from that commitment, but he can't even tell us who a front-line worker is. His Finance Minister claims to know how to count one class of worker, but is unwilling to tell us who a front-line worker is.

Well, we are telling him the workers who help build our roads are front-line workers. The teachers who teach our children are front-line workers. The nurses who treat our illnesses are front-line workers.

Will the Premier commit to protecting them today, or will he hide behind studies, reviews and third parties?

Mr. Pallister: It sounds like a question written by the former member for Thompson, Madam Speaker, and I'll answer it in that way.

The members opposite, the real rump of the former NDP government that is here today, is here today because they refused to listen to Manitobans. In fact, they raided the kitchen tables of Manitobans regularly and without good effect.

Now, today, in opposition, they claim a caring that they never demonstrated when in government. This failure to live by principle and to get results so dissatisfied not just Manitobans, but the members of the NDP caucus, that they staged an historic rebellion. They tried to change their face. They tried to take out the former leader from St. Boniface. They staged a dysfunctional display for the people of Manitoba to watch to their disaffection.

And so the result was, Madam Speaker, six months ago the replacement of that former government with a new one, a new one with a vision that includes working with and listening to Manitobans and protecting front-line workers.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier is hiding behind reviews and studies or pushing off responsibility to

make hard choices, but he has a choice. He can tell Manitobans that he is a man of his word and that he will keep his promise to protect front-line workers.

Will he do it today?

* (14:00)

Mr. Pallister: The member, in her preamble, uses—makes reference to the phrase hard choices. The problem with the previous government is they refused to make the hard choices in government. They made the easy ones, and the easy one for them was to jack up the taxes on Manitobans, jack them up, jack them up again and again. They jacked them up.

Now, they claim they care about front-line workers. I'll tell you what a front-line worker is not, Madam Speaker. A front-line worker is not a half dozen staffers paid secret payments to leave. That's not front-line workers.

I'll tell you another thing, Madam Speaker, that I think is important to understand here. The member used the phrase keeping promises. Now, how is it that standing quietly by and watching their own colleague—their own colleague—make a series of contracts with a pal, without tendering it, to the tune of over \$10 million and then covering it up and not disclosing it to Manitobans—how is that making hard choices, and how is that keeping promises? And the answer is: It is neither.

Labour Relations Act Request to Withdraw

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): This Premier has initiated an unfortunate and unnecessary attack on labour in his first-year mandate. He refuses to grant labour the respect it deserves. Instead, he cloaks himself in the trappings of democracy in a clear attempt to undermine workers' rights to organize.

When will this Premier (Mr. Pallister) give workers some respect? When will he withdraw Bill 7?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. We do know where he stands on this particular bill, Bill 7, but unfortunately, we don't know where the rest of the NDP—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —team stands on Bill 7. Maybe we'll hear about it today.

Madam Speaker, we made a promise to Manitobans six months ago, and today, through Bill 7, we are making that commitment to Manitobans and Manitoba workers.

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

Mr. Lindsey: We know that intimidation and coercion look like in the real world. We know that the impact they have on workers. They involve attempts by the employer, the party with all the power, to suppress workers' attempts to unionize.

Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure of introducing a bill moments ago that will give real protection to workers.

Will this Premier stand with workers in this province and support that bill?

Mr. Cullen: Again, I appreciate the question, and I think we appreciate what Manitobans have asked us to do. Overwhelmingly, six months ago, they came and said this is the right thing to do for Manitobans and Manitoba workers.

We are going to restore workers' rights and their ability to vote before they join a union. It's the right thing to do. It's being respectful of workers.

Why is the opposition not prepared to support workers in Manitoba?

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

Mr. Lindsey: This Premier derisively refers to elected unions as being run by bosses and rails about intimidation on the part of so-called union thugs. But this is an ideological attack masquerading as fact.

Can this Premier produce one instance of a case of intimidation by unions in an organizing drive? We put on the record many instances of intimidation by employers. When will this Premier look at the facts and withdraw this misguided bill?

Mr. Cullen: I certainly appreciate and looking forward to the debate, actually, this afternoon on—relative to Bill 7.

We know we have six other provinces that believe in the same role—elections that we do. In fact, in terms of facts, we look at the Manitoba Federation of Labour and their constitution, and in there it says the president will be elected by secret ballot. So if the Manitoba—if it's good enough for union leaders to

have a secret ballot, why is it not good enough for workers to have secret ballots?

**Premier's Enterprise Team
Labour Representation**

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Recently, the Premier held a press conference in the basement of the Legislature, surrounded by tons and tons of boxes, which only had the effect of showing that the work is piling up and nothing, and I mean nothing, is getting done here in the province of Manitoba.

One of the things that the Premier has failed to do is to name anyone to his so-called Premier's enterprise team.

Can the Premier assure the House that organized labour will have a seat at that table?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I want to encourage the member to recognize that the reason the work is piling up is because it wasn't done for 16 years.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Allum: The reason no work is not getting done is because this Premier has no answers, no plan and no interest in governing on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

So I ask him again: When he gets around to it at some future date to name folks to his Premier's enterprise team, can he assure, can he guarantee this House, that organized labour will have a seat at that table?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): So the member rises in his place today to ask a question about the importance of consultation. I couldn't be more happy to answer this member and to indicate that just yesterday, this new government embarked on our brand new YourProvinceYourPlan consultation. It was a great effort, and when invited by this Premier weeks and weeks ago, that party over there took a very different view, would not be at the table with the other members, sat at the back of the room and sulked.

We invite them to get on board and support this overall effort to hear from Manitobans on the budget coming up.

Madam Speaker: The—order. The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Allum: I'm so enthused to answer that I just went ahead of you.

I was at that public consultation. I was with my friend from Flin Flon and my friend from Tyndall Park, and I was at that public consultation, Madam Speaker, but it wasn't a public consultation. It was a stakeholder meeting. In fact, members of the public were given all of five minutes to make—ask questions of the government. That wasn't a public consultation. That was a sham, and we know it to be a sham.

Now, Madam Speaker, we know that the former Premier's economic advisory committee committed—consisted of members from labour—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —from cultural community, from the environmental community, from the newcomer community, from the indigenous community.

Will the Premier now tell this House that he will have all those folks represented on the Premier's enterprise team?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the member was part and parcel of a process of making consultation a sham in the previous government. I guess I have no better way of illustrating that than to ask the member to just reflect for a moment. The member needs to reflect for a moment on who—who—was consulted on the government's decision to jack up the PST.

Was it front-line workers? Were they asked? Were they asked? Was it small business? Were they asked? Were members of the caucus opposite, were they asked? No, they weren't asked, and is that why they staged a rebellion and tried to replace their leader? Is that why?

Okay, so let's not pretend that the members opposite had any idea about how to do a genuine consultation with Manitobans. We do, and we are, and I invite them to be part of it.

**Minimum Wage
Increase Request**

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): The first job an immigrant or new arrival will often have is a minimum-wage job. Increasing the minimum wage is one of the best ways to help people build the supports they need: good jobs, families and community. That keeps people here for the long run, grows the economy and adds to Manitoba's beautiful cultural mosaic.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) support immigrants and new arrivals by raising the minimum wage?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I appreciate the question on minimum wage.

We have taken the approach that we're going to consult with Manitobans, and we're currently doing that. We've sent the issue over to the Labour Management Review Committee for their consideration.

*(14:10)

I'm sure we'll be hearing a report back from them in the very near future. Our Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) is out consulting with Manitobans during the budget process. Hopefully, we'll hear some words of wisdom on the minimum wage going forward through that process.

So we think it's a really good process, engaging Manitobans to hear what they have to say on minimum wage.

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

Mr. Saran: A low minimum wage is like a subsidy to big corporations. Many minimum wage workers can't get full-time jobs, receive minimal benefits and have to rely on social services to get by.

Will the Premier admit that keeping the minimum wage low only helps big businesses and hurts Manitoba families?

Mr. Cullen: Again, I appreciate the question, and we looking forward to consultation with Manitobans as we move forward. This government has taken almost 3,000 low-income wage earners off the tax roll altogether by our—with our first budget, Madam Speaker. We think that's a step in the right direction.

And I'm also going to quote what the Prime Minister said, and he's talking about minimum wage. He said, it's not just about putting a little money in people's pockets; it's about making sure that they have the conditions to be able to succeed.

It's not always that we agree with the Prime Minister. On this case, we do.

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

Mr. Saran: From coast to coast, the majority of provinces and territories have raised the minimum wage. Alberta's minimum wage will be \$15 by 2018.

If the Premier truly wants to make Manitoba the most improved province, why does not he support workers, families and immigrants with the most improved minimum wage?

Mr. Cullen: You know, obviously, this—the government has taken some very good steps in taking minimum and low-income wage earners right off the tax roll. We think it's important. Even the Prime Minister said there's no magic bullet. We have to work across many jurisdictions, many different challenges, in order to drop, one by one, all the various barriers that too many Canadians face to succeeding.

It's about getting the fundamentals right; it's about getting the foundation right. That's what this government is going to do.

Autism Treatment ABA Therapy Wait Times

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, a society which lives for today at the expense of tomorrow has no future. Saving dollars by insufficiently funding applied behavioural analysis, or ABA therapy for autism, has big, long-term costs, as these children need far more help later on. This fall, there was a long waiting list for children with autism to get ABA therapy, therapy which when delivered early can help a child be ready for life and make a difference which lasts a lifetime.

Why has the government failed to eliminate the long waiting lists for children with autism? Why is the government being penny-wise short term, but passing large costs on to the next generation?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I very much do appreciate the question.

As the member knows, autism and the prevalence of autism has grown substantially, not just here in Manitoba, worldwide. We need to find solutions that's going to meet the needs. This is—a wait time has been created, and it's something that was left by the NDP government. We want to find solutions to this, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Gerrard: If there was more children needing schools, the government would make sure there's more spaces. Why not with autism?

Madam Speaker, in just one session, in 2013, the Conservatives were so incensed about the delays in autism therapy that there were grievances, members' statements, resolutions and more than 22 questions in QP and Estimates, all on autism. The wait-lists were called disgraceful, deplorable, unacceptable, a betrayal. The former MLA for Riding Mountain said no child in Manitoba should be put on a wait-list and then denied services. And that was happening then when children were aging out, and it is still happening now.

Is the minister of family services going to end the long wait-lists, or—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Fielding: The wait time is something that was left by this previous government. We need to work with people like MFEAT, which we've met with. We 'need' to meet with all sorts of groups that are in place.

The member's absolutely right. There were some changes to the program the last session that are there. There's an evaluation component that's a part of that. We're going to see what the evaluation says and make decisions as we go forward on it.

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

Adults with Autism Employment Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, it's time for this government to get to work and act rather than just blaming others.

Mr. Speaker, in one form of autism, Asperger's syndrome, there is a lack of support for adults to get work and to keep work. So, for example, SCE LifeWorks can use government funding to help some adults with autism to get work and stay working, but cannot help adults with the Asperger form of autism.

Why does the government have such a discriminatory policy that some adults with autism are helped and others are not? When will the government institute changes so that all adults with autism can be helped to find and to keep a job?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Again, this is a worldwide phenomena. The prevalence of

autism has grown, as the member well knows, not just here in Manitoba but across the province.

We want to meet with different groups with different ideas. There's vastly different opinions in terms of autism that are there. There's been some changes that were made in the last session that there will be evaluation.

This government is all about evidence-based, and we want to see that evaluations going forward, and that's exactly what we will do in terms of autism.

Prebudget Meetings Community Consultations

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Madam Speaker, Manitoba's new government was elected to listen to Manitobans, and our new approach to prebudget consultations began yesterday. After a decade of debt, decay and decline, our government is focused on fixing our finances.

Can the Minister of Finance give an update on what he heard from Manitobans at the first in-person prebudget community consultation?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for Brandon West for that question. He, of course, was there yesterday with us as we rolled out our new budget consultation along with the Government House Leader (Mr. Micklefield), the Minister for Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox), the members for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) and Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski). Even the member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen) was there representing the Liberal Party, and she contributed greatly to those discussions.

These consultations continue this week as we go to Brandon and Swan River, Dauphin, to Thompson next week, back to Winnipeg. The message, of course, being that it's your province, it's your plan. We care about the opinion of Manitoba's—Manitobans on these important challenges that are facing the province.

Manitoba's new government is listening to Manitobans about their priorities. We will work with them, fix our finances, repair our services and rebuild our economy.

Poverty Reduction Government Record

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Yesterday, the Minister of Families boasted his PC government has

done more to reduce poverty than our NDP government. Allow me to correct him.

We built thousands of affordable housing units, helped more than 10,000 Manitobans leave social assistance, added 14,000 child-care spaces, and we raised the minimum wage 16 times.

In these last six months, this government refused to raise the minimum wage, lost over 10,000 jobs, continues to ignore a growing child-care wait-list, is allowing Manitoba Hydro and MPI rates to skyrocket, and, in the midst of an economic crisis, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) still has not been up North.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I didn't hear exactly the question. Can—but I can tell you—I can tell you—that poverty is something that we all need to work together on. That's something, whether you're in the business community, whether—in a whole bunch of different factions, we need to work together.

This government has done a number of things in terms of reducing the basic personal exemption where you're having over 3,000 people—close to 3,000 people off the payroll all together.

This is also looking at the track record of the NDP government. We saw an increase in the PST, which will probably take out in the neighbourhood of \$2,200 from the average Manitobans.

We need to do a better job in terms of poverty. We've got a strong plan going forward.

* (14:20)

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

Social Service Agencies Funding Support

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): In a publicity stunt, the Premier paraded boxes of funding applications while paternalistically noting how not all children get what they ask for at Christmas.

We should be very clear in this House those boxes of funding requests, which organizations took the time to produce and submit, are literally the means in ensuring a viable, productive, safe and healthy Manitoba. Those boxes, those funding requests, represent important programs and services

for children, for families and communities. They rightly all deserve government support.

Will the Premier commit to protecting these organizations and support our social service agencies?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I can tell you we are absolutely want to enhance social services. We know, looking at the NDP's track record in terms of social services, the amount of children in care has dramatically increased by over 87 per cent.

We've made dramatic improvements in terms of funding, in terms of things like health—or terms of things like housing, also in terms of the basic personal exemption, where you're having more money that's donated to people.

Also a part of this was The Protecting Children Act. We've introduced the first information-sharing piece that we think will make a true difference in terms of protecting children. That's something that I'm passionate about, and we're very proud of our record so far in the first six months of office.

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

Support for MMIWG Families Establishment of Liaison Unit

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Last week, I asked whether any government departments had begun the process of accessing federal dollars in the establishment of a family information liaison unit here in Manitoba for MMIWG families as we undertake what will be a very emotional, physical and spiritually difficult journey in the execution of a national inquiry.

We see today in the Winnipeg Free Press the—Manitoba had no answer in respect of what they were doing. While the criteria are somewhat flexible on what provinces and territories can do with the dollars, Justice Canada is encouraging them to, and I quote, explore options for partnering with indigenous community and advocacy organizations.

Has this government reached out to Ka Ni Kanichihk and its Medicine Bear program on partnership on said unit and dollars?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for the question. This is an important issue in our

national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

The federal government has made it very clear that they will fully fund Victim Services when it comes to this. We have submitted an application to the federal government to fund the family information liaison unit that currently exists provincially.

So we hope that members opposite will support us in this initiative, that we stand together, all Manitobans, in support of this because we need to get to the bottom of this inquiry and support the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Post-Secondary Tuition Affordability Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Minister of Education have been musing lately about raising tuition in our province. On top of that, we know that their changes to the scholarship and bursary program will mean universities and colleges spend more time fundraising and less time on delivering a quality education. Every hour schools spend hitting up donors is an hour they're not spending teaching students.

Will the minister admit their plan for scholarships and bursaries is the wrong priority and they should be focused on keeping tuition affordable for all students?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): We're certainly working very hard on this side of the House to make sure that tuition is affordable for all students. We have been consulting and working with the post-secondaries and, in fact, expanded the range of post-secondaries that are part of the program for bursaries and scholarships. They certainly are very excited about the prospects and are looking forward to working with us on this.

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

Indexed to Inflation

Mr. Kinew: The minister says he is committed to keeping tuition affordable for all students.

Will he put on the record today that tuition will be tied to inflation next year?

Mr. Wishart: As I said earlier, we're continuing to work with the different post-secondaries, and, in fact,

it's mostly their foundations and their volunteer groups that actually do the fundraising for them.

So if the member had taken the time to do a little bit of homework on this, I think he'd understand that we're making sure that there's a lot more dollars available to students for a more affordable education in the future.

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

Affordability Concerns

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the foundations may make preliminary inquiries, but it is the presidents, student leaders and faculty who often close the deal when it comes to fundraising. The money—that money will only reach students if schools are successful—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —in pitching donors, but there is a limited donor pool in the province. Even setting aside donor fatigue, this scholarship money will only reach select students; private donors can specify exactly which students would get this government money.

What will the minister do to make sure post-secondary education is affordable for all students in Manitoba, especially the most needy?

Mr. Wishart: I don't know where he's getting his information from, but many of us on this side of the House have sat on foundations at one time or another. We know who's doing the work, and it is usually foundation members that are helping with the fundraising, and, yes, the presidents do make the closing call in many cases. But it is not very often faculty involved in any way.

I can tell you that the previous government—of which this member wasn't a part, but is belonging to the party—actually cut the funding for this three years ago, I believe. They cut the funding.

PST Increase Claim Point of Clarification

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Just a point of clarification. Could the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) please repeat for the House his claim of the dollar figure that he said, I believe it was, the average family now has to pay in addition, due to the

PST increase that he was talking about earlier? Can he clarify the number he used?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I'm pleased for the question because the member seems to be inviting a clarification of how much more money the NDP was extracting from the pockets of Manitobans on an annual basis. So I appreciate the question and a chance to reinforce that when the NDP government widened the retail sales tax, they essentially applied tax in areas where it had never been contemplated before: haircuts, insurance policies. I almost forgot about a whole new vehicle registration fee that they slipped in the same way.

But when they raised the provincial sales tax they both enshrined the widening of that tax and then raised it up, bringing in more than \$400 million a year. That's a tax that has cost Manitobans about a billion and a half dollars so far.

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

ALL Aboard Strategy Budget Inquiry

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Well, I'm not a bit surprised that the Finance Minister jumped in. He certainly didn't want his colleague to repeat the number that I clearly heard earlier. I heard \$2,200. That's a—that's quite a remarkable increase.

Let's see, if we add two zeros to that, that means that the minister supposedly in charge of poverty reduction measures in this province believes the average family is earning \$220,000 per year. That's not that much different from the \$160,000 that multiple members of the government claimed earlier.

Could someone over there please step forward and say how many of the 20 criteria we kept track of under our ALL Aboard strategy they're going to cut in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, we'll succeed where the members opposite failed, Madam Speaker, except in respect of that pledge drive the member organized to try to get all his people purified after the dysfunctional leadership race.

Now, I encourage the member. He has questions on the PST; he's welcome to bring them to question period every single day. I look forward to hearing more of his—of his queries on the effect of the PST on working families in our province because I think we do need to discuss it. We do need to understand it

so we don't repeat the mistakes of the past administration.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

* (14:30)

PETITIONS

Bell's Purchase of MTS

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

The background of the 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 as compared to Winnipeg where MTS charges \$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 as follows:

To urge the provincial government 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.

This petition is signed by many fine Manitobans.

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

Union Certification

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

Manitobans have benefited greatly from a fair and balanced approach to labour relations that has led to a long period of labour peace in this province.

Under current legislation, if 65 per cent of workers in the workplace vote to join a union by signing a union card, then a union can qualify to become automatically certified as the official bargaining agent for the workers.

These signed union cards are submitted to the Labour Board and an independent review by the Labour Board is held to ensure the law has been followed.

The provincial threshold to achieve automatic certification of a union is the highest in the country at 65 per cent, the democratic will and decision of the workers to vote and join the union is absolutely clear.

During the recent provincial election, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party announced, without consultation, that it was his intention to change this fair and balanced legislation by requiring a second vote conducted on a matter where the democratic will of the workers has already been expressed.

This plan opens up the process to potential employer interference and takes the same misguided approach as the federal Conservatives under the Harper administration took in Bill C-525, which was nothing more than a solution looking for a problem.

The recent introduction of Bill 7 by the provincial government confirmed this possibility by removing automatic certification and the safeguards in The Labour Relations Act to protect workers from employer intimidation during certification process.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to maintain the current legislation for union certification which reflects balance and fairness, rather than adopting the intention to make it harder for workers to organize.

And this petition has been signed by many hard-working Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: We will now consider the Opposition Day motion of the honourable member for Flin Flon. *[interjection]*

House Business

Madam Speaker: The Official Government House Leader, on House Business?

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Yes, just on House business.

Madam Speaker, in light of this afternoon's plans, I'd like to ask for leave to have the committees planned for this evening run concurrently in the event that the House should go overtime.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to have—

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Oh, so I have to put the question to the House.

Is there leave to have the two committees running concurrently with the House sitting? *[Agreed]*

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Madam Speaker: We will now move to the Opposition Day motion by the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from Fort Rouge, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the provincial government's attack on workers' rights and reaffirm the current right to unionize using the well-established certification process.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank you for the opportunity to put a few more words on the record about this bill and what's wrong with it.

Madam Speaker, there's been many years of labour peace in this province. Clearly, the system that's in place today is working. There's been no hue and cry by anyone to bring in a change to the system, and yet this government chose to introduce their Bill 7. Again, it's a solution looking for a problem that didn't exist.

Workers have already clearly demonstrated their will, in a democratic fashion, to join a union when 65 per cent of them have signed a union card. There's already a process in place, Madam Speaker, whereby the Labour Board ensures that there has not been coercion, intimidation to force those workers to sign a union card.

The members opposite are somewhat confused and living in a bygone era when they think that union bosses, union thugs intimidate workers into signing a union card. I asked the question and never did get an answer if they could show me any instances of that happening in the recent future and, of course, they

haven't produced any. So I'm still left with the opinion that there probably isn't any.

The other question to ask ourselves, or for them to ask themselves more importantly, is: what exactly is it a union can threaten somebody with? Can they threaten to fire them? Well, no, that's the employers that threaten to fire people, Madam Speaker. Can they threaten to cut their wages? Well, no, again, that'd be the employer that would threaten that. Can they threaten to change their hours of work so that they can't be with their families? Well, again, no, that's the employer that would do that.

So, really, there is nothing of any substance that a union could threaten a worker with. The only thing that a union can do to a worker is offer them an opportunity to possibly better their lot in life. They cannot threaten to have them go with less than what they have now. All they can do is promise to make things better.

Now the Premier (Mr. Pallister), earlier today, said that they like to have things evidence based when they make decisions, and yet there has not been one shred of evidence ever introduced by the government that this bill was required for any reason. So no evidence.

So contrary to what they say for some things, that doesn't apply when it comes to working people. It doesn't apply when it comes to hardworking Manitobans that are trying to get ahead in this world, because then they don't need evidence to attack them. They don't need evidence to say, well, 65 per cent isn't a good enough majority. They don't need evidence to say that there are—is—well, let me back up. There is evidence to say that employers sometimes threaten, intimidate and fire workers when there's a union drive going on. There is evidence to say that.

So, if we're to believe what was said earlier today, that they need evidence, the evidence is clear that this bill is not required, because the evidence is already quite clear that when it becomes knowledge of the employer, that the employer does, in fact, threaten and intimidate and coerce workers into not voting for a union. So the only evidence that's been presented is contrary to the government's stated requirement for introducing this legislation.

So, by introducing our bill, it tries to put some protections back into the system for workers. I mean, ideally, the government would just pull Bill 7 off the paper and forget it and will accept that they perhaps

were misguided and will move on to actually building a better Manitoba for all Manitobans.

* (14:40)

But it doesn't appear that this government is willing to do that. It doesn't appear that this government is willing to actually make this province better for everybody. It's becoming increasingly clear, with things like the refusal to increase the minimum wage, because that would help a goodly portion of the population, particularly women, new Canadians, Aboriginal Canadians. It would help them to a better life if they increased the minimum wage. So we don't want to do that, because the government is not interested in helping all Manitobans have a better future.

The next thing they don't want to do is they don't want to see workers have the ability to organize, because that might allow workers to have a better future. And, really and truly, from what we've seen so far—and I hope this isn't going to be the trend that we see continuing—that they're only about making sure that a select few Manitobans have a better future. So what we need to recognize is that workers that are unionized do have a better future. They generally have higher wages. Women, in particular, that work in a unionized workplace have a better standard of living. People that come from other countries to be a part of Canada, to be a part of Manitoba shouldn't be taken advantage of. And yet, by the government making it harder and harder and harder for them to organize a union to protect their very rights, that's exactly what they're doing. They're taking advantage of those new Canadians.

People that go to work every day in a workplace that is not a pleasant place to be clearly have expressed their desire, clearly have voted when they signed that union card. When they signed that union card knowing full well that once the employer finds out or if the employer finds out, that they will be subject to intimidation, threats, coercion and perhaps they'll lose their jobs. Lose their jobs for no other reason, Madam Speaker, than trying to make their lives better, trying to organize to a union to protect themselves. And that's not right. It's not right in this province of ours that we've—and I shouldn't say we, because certainly we, on this side, do not support this way of attacking workers. It's not right in this province that the government decides that those less fortunate people in the province should be further disadvantaged, should be further not allowed to secure a better future for themselves.

And, really, that's what this bill that they've proposed is all about, Madam Speaker. It's limiting people's ability to get ahead so that the few can enjoy the benefits that this province has to offer, the benefits of the resources that this province has to offer, that fewer and fewer people get to enjoy the benefits of that.

Workers in this province deserve better. Workers in this province are the backbone of the province. They're the ones that actually grow the economy. They're the ones that buy products. They're the ones that keep their wages in circulation unlike some of the more well-to-do members of this province. They don't hide their money in offshore accounts, Madam Speaker. The more money they have, generally the more of it gets spent on goods and services which actually drives the economy to be better.

This government's driving the economy to actually be worse by limiting the number of people that have disposable income to spend. And they can wrap it in as much rhetoric as they want about democracy and all the buzzwords that they've used to try and whip the passions of people up, but that's not what this is about. It's not what it's about at all. This bill is, very simply, an attempt to make it more difficult for workers to organize.

We certainly, from this side, would appreciate a gesture from the other side to withdraw the bill, and then we would not have to introduce our own bill, and we would not have to spend so much time talking about this bill that's regressive. We could actually talk about moving the province forward. But, so far, the government has refused to do that, Madam Speaker. So we need to know full well that we, on the NDP side of the House, support working people. We support people that need help. We support people that are willing to try and help themselves, contrary to Bill 7—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): It's indeed a pleasure to speak on this resolution today, and I'm looking forward to the debate we're going to have. I know we've heard from one member opposite in terms of his perspective. I'm hoping we'll have an opportunity to hear the views of other members opposite as we go forward in the debate today.

Clearly, six months ago as of tomorrow, Manitobans made their feelings known in the provincial election. We made a commitment to

Manitobans, Madam Speaker, that we would bring back and we would restore the secret ballot to Manitoba workers. We think that's the right thing to do. We know a lot of Manitobans think that's the right thing to do. In fact, I would offer to you that a lot of Manitobans would expect that workers already had the ability to have a secret vote, but they don't. And this is the cornerstone of democracy in our view.

If we're going to have a secret ballot, which is proposed under Bill 7, this should take away any idea of coercion and intimidation, whether it be by the employer or whether it be by a union. And we think this is completely the right thing to do.

You know, if the members are looking for justification for Bill 7, I will offer a quote from Loren Remillard, who's currently the president and CEO of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. This was a quote appearing in the Winnipeg Free Press, June 20th, of this year. 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 asked whether I had any options. Yes, I was told: sign now or sign before lunch." Madam Speaker, this is the kind of coercion and intimidation that Bill 7 should eliminate. These are the sort of issues that Manitobans are telling us about, and we don't have to go any further.

Online Manitoba, Jodi Moskal was on Twitter and she indicated, "I felt forced to sign a union card to get the men to leave my home. Young, vulnerable and naive." Another person: I was forced to sign a card once. When I felt stronger and more educated, I asked to withdraw it. I was told no. Those are the kinds of intimidation and coercion that should not happen in Manitoba workplaces.

I go on: John Stephenson [*phonetic*], on Winnipeg Free Press, and he says, and I quote: I, for one, believe that there should be a secret ballot vote for certification. I say this as one who worked in a unionized environment as a member MGEU until I retired. Not only worked in such an environment but I was our local president and area council 'sectee' and component chair, as well as full-time labour relations coordinator for a time—that's, when it existed. I came from a background in a community that was made up of coal miners who were union members, and to this day still holds a parade on June 11th, to honour a union member killed many years. But democracy

demands, in my opinion, a secret ballot fair to both sides.

Madam Speaker, we note today, in looking at the constitution of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, that the president and treasurer are both elected by secret ballot. Now, Madam Speaker, we're proposing if union leaders are subject to a union, to a secret ballot, why do not the workers have the protection of having a secret ballot as well? We think this will restore the democracy—democratic right that voters should have to have a free and secret ballot.

We made that commitment to Manitobans during the election campaign; we believe this will allow the employees the right to determine, by secret ballot, whether or not they want their workplace to be unionized. We are not against the union movement. We are not against people's rights to organize. We're simply saying the workers should be offered a secret ballot at that point in time.

*(14:50)

As our new government, we will provide the basic democratic right to employees voting on union certification through this particular bill. Introducing secret ballot to Manitoba workplace is really about modernizing the certification process, bringing our province in line with the vast majority of other provinces.

If this legislation does pass, I believe there's—would only be a Quebec, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick that wouldn't not have the secret ballot. So we think it's the right thing to do on behalf of Manitoba workers, and I have an hard time imagining how the NDP will stand up and vote against free voting and the secret ballot. I can't understand it.

And I think if you went out to the street and asked Manitobans what they thought on this, they would have a reasoned discussion like we're trying to have in this regard, and it's just—it's really the right thing to do. In my mind it's what Manitobans expect and it's what Manitobans are asking for and we, obviously, want to stand up for Manitoba workers.

Clearly, the NDP are standing up for the union leaders. We believe we should be standing up for the workers of Manitoba. If they really understood what was going on here, the NDP would be standing up for Manitoba workers as well.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'm happy to get up and speak on the excellent motion that's been

brought forward from my friend, my brother, the MLA for Flin Flon, opposing Bill 7. And, of course, we had some time to hear what the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) had to say last week in the two short days that the government allowed for debate on Bill 7 at second reading. We know how everybody voted. I'm very proud that every single New Democrat voted against Bill 7. We know that every Conservative around voted in favour, and we know, of course, that the Liberals couldn't be bothered to be present for that important vote.

You know, there's an old song, an old labour song called Which Side Are You On? that's been written back in 1932 and covered many times by Billy Bragg, by—most recently by the Dropkick Murphys and, of course, it talks about the union movement and asks which side are you on? Well, I'm not ashamed, Madam Speaker, to stand in this House and to say that I stand in support of unions who do work—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order. Order.

I would just like to caution all members that it is not proper to make reference to whether somebody had been in this House or absent from this House in terms of voting. So I'd just caution all members to be careful about that.

Mr. Swan: All right. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I accept that, and members—and the general public will be able to read Hansard to see who voted and who didn't.

I just heard the minister for—well, he's not the minister for Labour, which is really the problem—get up and in a five-minute speech give what I really think was the weakest and worst defence to the motion of the member for Flin Flon that I could possibly imagine. He's attempted to mix metaphors. He's muddled the issue and he's been unable to explain any of the criticisms which he would have heard had he listened to the enthralling four hours that the member for Flin Flon was able to put facts on the record and put the rationale on the record for opposing Bill 7.

What is interesting, of course, is that in support of Bill 7—*[interjection]* Of course, we hear the members wrapping themselves in words like democracy and free vote, and what's very interesting is you see a real parallel. You see a real parallel, Madam Speaker, to the American Republican wrapping themselves up in the flag, talking about

voter fraud. And, you know, you could take some of the lines that the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) been using, that this minister's been using, that the rest of them—and their talking points have been using. This is truly a solution in search of a problem, much like the American system and the republican allegation of voter fraud.

As you may know, Madam Speaker, there's been a number of states, all of whom are controlled by Republicans, that've brought in a whole number of measures which, of course, are wrapped in the flag of making sure that the vote is the most important thing and it's all about democracy.

Well, these are laws that are intended to take away rights from those who have the least. And, if you analyze what's going on in the United States, which is now being exploited by one Donald Trump, but aided and abetted by Republicans going back years and years, of course, what you see is that people who are at the low end of the economic scale: black voters, Latino voters, other new Americans—are the most likely to be shut out from the voting process, because of the alleged democratic ideas being put forward by the Republican Party, their ideological cousins.

Those are the exact same people in Manitoba that'll be hurt by Bill 7. And we know some of the examples we've talked about just the other day. You know, this morning I was talking about the Tim Hortons down the street from where I live. That's the Tim Hortons that's now been unionized. The union made an organizing drive, signed up a number of employees, and the employer then stepped up and began a process of intimidating and coercing members not to vote in support. Thankfully, in that case, the Labour Board intervened and, by consent, there was automatic certification.

But there's many other workers who face the same kind of issue each and every day, and this minister and this government want every organizing drive to be subject to that same kind of intimidation. And that's just wrong. Just a couple of weeks ago, there was a Taco Bell and KFC out—within Transcona, that was automatically certified. The union did its work, and they were able to sell memberships to 68 per cent of workers.

The Labour Board did its investigation; they looked at it, and they said, yes, the 65 per cent threshold has been met. Over 65 per cent of workers have already voted in support of the union by signing

a union card, and they automatically certified that union to be the bargaining unit for those employees.

And who are those employees? Well, by and large, they're new Canadians. There may be indigenous people working there; there may be young people working there who are students; certainly people who don't have the most, who aren't the most empowered, who need and deserve and are entitled to have a union speak for them when they give their indication that that's what they want. And the member opposite would like to give in every single case, even where 100 per cent of workers express their democratic view by signing a union card, the member opposite and the Progressive Conservative government would like those workers to have to vote not once but twice. And that's just not fair.

And, if I go back to the voter fraud myths, of course, this is a—again, a solution in search of a problem. In reality, in-person voter fraud in the United States is extremely rare. And there was a study conducted, in 2014, by a Loyola university law professor, Justin Levitt, and he looked at the more than 1 billion votes cast in general, primary, special and municipal elections in the United States from 2000 through 2014. And he was able to find a grand total of 31 credible allegations of in-person voter fraud among those more than 1 billion votes.

Well, it's a smaller sample size here in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, but, you know, we've heard the undercurrents from the members opposite, saying well, there must be intimidation by unions and union members and this is terrible. Well, the difficulty is that just as the Republicans have had trouble getting anyone to believe that they're voter fraud myth exists, that is equally so.

In Manitoba, under section 45 of The Labour Relations Act—while the member for Kildonan (Mr. Curry) is chattering, I heard him talking about tires getting slashed. I'm sure he'll put some misinformation on the record, but he should listen to this. In Manitoba, if a worker believes that they have been intimidated, if they've been threatened into signing a union card, that worker has remedies. And that worker can go to the Manitoba Labour Board and say, you know, I was pressured into signing a card, or I didn't sign a card and I felt I was pressured, and I'm worried that this union's organizing drive is inappropriate. That exists for workers right now.

And I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, if that was indeed the case, if a worker went to their employer

and say, hey, you know what, I believe this union's harassing me, I'll tell you right now that that employer is going to line that worker up with a lawyer who's going to take their case forward. And how many times, in Manitoba, has there actually been a finding by the Manitoba Labour Board that this has happened to a worker?

An Honourable Member: How many?

Mr. Swan: Well, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) asked how many, and that's a really good question. I've had a chance to review the online decisions of the Manitoba Labour Board. What they do is they put digests online with a summary of what the case is all about. That—those summaries stretch to 297 pages. And they're easily searchable if you go to—well, not the department of Labour, whatever department it's now called, you can go to the Manitoba Labour Board page, and you can actually sift through 297 pages of decisions. And that is apparently updated to March 31st, 2014.

* (15:00)

I went through and had a look, and there is not a single case where the Manitoba Labour Board has found an example where a single worker has been intimidated or coerced into signing a union card.

So, just like the Republican American voter fraud myth, we have, in this Legislature, members of the Progressive Conservative Party spreading a myth about union organizing drives which they can't sustain, which have not been sustained by the Manitoba Labour Board, which, just like their Republican cousins to the States, is nothing more than a myth.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And it's disappointing that members are going to continue to do this, just as Republicans, even as we speak now, even as Donald Trump goes up and says this election is going to be stolen because of voter fraud. These members are going to stand here this afternoon and, presumably, when we debate this bill at third reading, and they are going to put on the record their version of events, which is completely unsupported by reality.

And, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) pointed out, they are very proud to stick their chests out and strut around and say, well, we're all about evidence-based decisions. Well, there is no evidence that Bill 7 is necessary. There's zero evidence that Bill 7 is required. And, quite honestly, Madam

Speaker, Bill 7 is nothing more than an attack on workers and not just workers who already belong to a union, workers who may find themselves just starting out in employment, who may be new Canadians, who may be indigenous people just joining the workforce for the first time. And this Progressive Conservative government wants to put obstacles in their way to being represented fairly by a union who will speak for them, and that's a shame.

I hope that members will think this over and support this excellent, excellent resolution.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You know, it's always a pleasure to rise in the House and talk about democracy, and that's what this—the bill that the Minister of Growth, Enterprise, Trade has brought before this House. And I want to thank him for bringing Bill 7 forward for debate in the House.

But I also want to take this opportunity to thank my friend, the member for Flin Flon, for bringing this Opposition Day motion forward today. I think this is a very important issue that we need to debate in this Legislature, because this goes to the very essence of why we all got elected in this Legislature: to represent our constituencies, to represent Manitobans, and, in particular, in this case, to represent the workers from our constituencies, the workers all across this great province of ours. And this gives us an opportunity, all of us, to stand up for workers and to talk about their rights.

And I know that we went through an election recently, in fact, just almost six months ago, Mr. Acting Speaker, in the province. And Manitobans made a choice at the time. They chose an open and transparent government, a government that is—that stands for all people, all Manitobans. They were tired of the exclusiveness of members opposite from the past. They were tired—tired of the past policies of the previous NDP government. And that's why they elected us to be here today, and so that's why I think it's very important, and I—again, I want to thank the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) for bringing this issue forward so we can debate this issue on the floor of the Chamber, which is the appropriate place for this to be done.

Now, I also want to thank the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who put some words on the record just prior to me here, Mr. Acting Speaker. You know, the member for Minto talked about ideology, and I just want to—you know, I know that the member opposite and I—we don't—and I have a lot of respect for him as

an MLA and as a person and as a father and so on. I have a lot of respect for him. But, you know, it—when it comes to the debate on the floor of the Legislature, we're going to have to agree to disagree on this one. When it comes to ideologically, there's nothing more ideological about this debate in the Chamber than what the motion is that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) brought forward. That is about ideology on one side.

What the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) has brought forward, in the way of Bill 7, for debate—again, on the floor of this Chamber, and it will be debated at committee coming up soon as well, where members from the public will have the opportunity to come and give their presentations at committee. I want to thank the member for Growth, Enterprise, Trade for bringing it forward, because this really, this bill is about giving workers the democratic right to a secret ballot vote. I—and we know that this is—this—and the—this is what the very essence of a democratic—a free and democratic society is all about. So I'm not sure why members opposite are so opposed to giving those workers the right to choose by way of a secret ballot.

And I think it goes to, certainly the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) mentioned intimidation. And I want to talk a little bit about intimidation, because it goes both ways. And what we're trying to do by way of a secret ballot is take away intimidation altogether, whether it be by the union bosses, the intimidation from the union bosses, or whether it be by the employers. We don't believe in intimidation at all. And so that's why this is so important, Bill 7, to be passed through this Manitoba Legislature, because it allows the workers a say on, in a secret ballot way, to stand up for their own rights and to elect the people that they want.

In fact, this brings me to another area that, again, the Minister of Growth, Enterprise, and Trade has brought up. Why is it okay for union bosses to be elected by way of a secret ballot, but it's not okay for the workers to have that right, you know, by way of a secret ballot? That makes no sense to me, and I would suggest that members opposite, this is all about 'denocracy.' And why is it that they hate democracy?

Well, let's go back to many years ago, or a few years ago, just prior to the last election. And we all recall what happened then. Just prior to the election, we went—members opposite went and knocked on those doors, they spoke to Manitobans, and they said,

oh, we're not going to raise your taxes, we're not going to raise the PST. And, of course, we know at the time, Mr. Acting Speaker, we know at the time that the legislation required that members opposite, when they were in government, it required that they go before the people by way of a referendum and ask them in any significant—in the event of any significant tax increase or decrease or change in Manitoba, that you had to go back to the people by way of a referendum. Well, what did members opposite do? Not only did they go door to door and they campaigned, that they said they would not raise taxes in Manitoba, but the moment they got in, not—they broadened the PST, so it included many more goods and services than it originally did, which is a tax increase of in and of itself, but also they increased the PST from 7 to 8 per cent. And they did so by way of, the only way they're allowed to do it, is by changing the legislation in order to take away Manitobans' right to vote on that very tax increase.

So that is the biggest difference between members opposite and ourselves. We believe in the democratic process. And members opposite don't believe in the democratic process. They have showed it and proved it—proven it time and time again to Manitobans. And Manitobans, they made the decision in the last election. They rejected that way. They rejected that approach by this NDP government. And I hope, you know, I would have hoped at that time that members opposite would have gotten it, they would have figured it out, that six months ago Manitobans voted them out because, and for many different reasons, but one of the main reasons was the arrogance in removing Manitobans' right to vote on that PST increase.

And, you know, many—I remember at the time going door to door and talking to Manitobans in the last election. And I remember talking to veterans, veterans across this very province and across this country of ours, those who have fought for our very democratic way of life, those who have put their lives on the line for democracy in our country, and yet members opposite had no respect for what those veterans did for us. And they were very upset by what members opposite did by stripping away their very right to vote.

And I want to go back to—the member for Minto also mentioned a shutout. Well, the only people that have been shut out in Manitoba are Manitobans by this—the former NDP government that stripped away their right to vote on that tax increase. And I say shame on them, Mr. Acting Speaker, because that is

not a democratic way of doing things. It's not a Manitoba way or a Manitoban way of doing things. And so I'm not sure why members opposite are so opposed to allowing workers in Manitoba—they are supposed to be the party, or they claim to be the party, that represents workers in Manitoba, but I don't believe that because I don't believe—you know, I believe that the only people that can stand up for workers in Manitoba are those that will stand up and respect the democratic way of life and the workers' right to vote in the way of a secret ballot.

* (15:10)

And so, Mr. Acting Speaker, that's what this debate is all about. And I encourage members opposite to support Bill 7. I know that they'll be—it'll be a heated debate on Bill 7. It already has been. I know that there's this motion before the Legislature today, and there'll be a heated debate on this. This is a difference between us and them. This is—goes to the very essence of who we are as Manitobans and who we represent. And we believe, and we will always believe, in the democratic way of life. We will always respect democracy in our province and in our country, and we will always respect those who have fought for our democratic way of life, including those workers as well, that, again, members opposite claim to represent in this province. But I will say to them, shame on them for taking away their right to vote.

You know, in fact, six other provinces already allow for a secret ballot. It's only three provinces that don't. And you know what? Manitobans, they elected us to do things differently. They elected us to do things for democracy. They elected us because we respect who they are; we respect their rights, and that's always who we will do, whether it's for workers or Manitobans or veterans or you name it. We on the PC—in the PC Party of Manitoba, we, as a new Progressive Conservative government, will always stand up for the democratic rights for all Manitobans, and that includes workers.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): We in the Liberal Party of Manitoba are supporting this motion, and allow me to explain why. As Liberals, we support growth and jobs for Manitoba. We believe that this can be best achieved by having the right balance between business and labour. We see that it is important for government to act in support of unions, which has contributed to so many positive aspects of our society.

With that said, we also see that it is important for government to act to support entrepreneurs and businesses, for it is the businesses that provide the majority of employment and the majority of jobs in our province.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unions should be very proud of their accomplishments. When I think about unions, I cannot help but think about the year 1919, the general strike. To this day, the general strike is still known as one of the most influential strikes in Canadian history. The goal was to mobilize workers of all groups, whether it be trades, ethnicities, skill levels and so forth.

Soldiers were returning home and actively seeking jobs. Unfortunately, when they arrived home, unemployment rates were soaring. Businesses and factories were closing down. Bankruptcies were occurring and new immigrants were taking over the veterans' former jobs. There were complaints about working conditions, such as overcrowdedness and sanitation. The cost of living continued to rise, and staying above the poverty line was becoming more and more difficult.

Fearing the strike would spread to other provinces, the federal government got involved. It was Senator Gideon Decker Robertson who ultimately took the time to listen to both sides and settled in favour of the strikers by encouraging council to accept the civic employees' proposal.

Now, to come back to 2016, this is what I would recommend that this government do. Take note from Senator Robertson and take time to hear all sides. The introduction of Bill 7, which changes the conditions under which a union can be certified is an example. While the change itself from a union being able to become established when 65 per cent of workers have signed up, to having a secret ballot requiring 50 per cent or more of support, is not likely to represent the huge shift that the NDP are positioning as a scary change. Nevertheless, when a fair procedure has been established, allowing a union to be formed when 65 per cent of workers are signed up, is a reasonable and a fair one, and one must ask why the Conservatives are moving to change a reasonable and fair procedure which has worked, at least to my understanding, 'satisfactorily'.

To date, in spite of much rhetoric, the Conservatives have not yet presented a convincing case that the change is essential. We as Liberals will be receptive if such a case is presented. I ask sincerely when I say, were people complaining

about the legislation—the labour legislation, or was the legislation brought forward with the wrong intentions? What I mean by this is, if there is going to be a change in the law, we should work together with all stakeholders. And we all need to have open minds on both sides of the House. We cannot continue to have these exaggerated sides.

We, as the Liberals, have not taken a stance on Bill 7, because we still want to hear from the public at committee.

What I will be able to—what I have been able to observe these past weeks are individuals, on both sides, who are pushing for legislation for what I can only argue as political gain.

You know, the Minister for Justice is correct when she says that we as elected officials need to come together, and I hope that her actions are displayed. I would say, we as elected officials need to be professional. I hope in committee this House can demonstrate the desire to help Manitobans a little more, rather than arguing party politics.

The union movement has been very strong and have a strong social advocate over the years, and I would like to congratulate them in celebrating almost 100 years since the General Strike. I am looking forward to the monument that is going to be placed in front of Pantages theatre, on Main Street, in commemoration of 100 years, and I hope that this government will get behind this and support it.

In closing, it all comes back to the importance of balance when changing legislation. Let's not have the two exaggerated sides; let's deal with the labour laws together and try to form a consensus the best way that we can.

Over the past 17 years, there has been major fights over the nature of teacher pension supports. Liberals have watched the NDP short change retired teachers year after year. Liberals have watched the large numbers of retired teachers—protested after year, after year. The Liberals have seen the situation where teachers' pensions have not kept with inflation.

The Liberals are concerned with how the Conservatives might handle teachers' pensions, and we want to send a signal to the Conservative government that we are watching closely, and, even as we support 'ultrapreneurs' and the growth of businesses and jobs in our province, we are also concerned about changes which would be a detriment to workers here in Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): The order was a bit perplexing for a second, but we'll get back on track here this morning—or this afternoon.

It's always a pleasure to rise in the Legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Obviously, the Legislature is symbolic of a great many things in our province, and, obviously, paramount of that is the issue of democracy. And, as we approach November 11th, the day of remembrance, I think it's very appropriate you take a moment to reflect on why those young men and women served our country and, indeed, a number of countries around the world to defend the very freedoms that we here in this Legislature often take for granted, and myself included.

My grandfather actually was a young man of about 24 years old, when he registered, in Vancouver, at a Canadian Forces recruitment office. He was sent across the country. For the first time, he'd found himself in eastern Canada, on a boat, and across the Atlantic without knowing whether or not one of the German U-boats would find his troop transport or not.

After some training in Great Britain, found themselves fighting in North Africa, and as well, eventually, in the Canadian push to liberate Italy where he was ultimately wounded as a result of some mortar fire. And then the wounds that he sustained, I believe, that the phrase that the Canadian military used at the time was that he was, quote, unable to meet the physical requirements, end quote.

And, of course, we were very fortunate that unlike a lot of families our—my grandfather and my father's father was able to return home to his family and continue to raise them and be of service in other aspects of the community, whether it was elected school trustee or—and a school teacher and a host of other occupations during those times.

*(15:20)

But, as we debate issues around democracy, I always think back to my grandfather, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and of the sacrifices he and those young men and women made during those times, and how it seems a bit wondrous that here we are, and the way the members opposite and the NDP would paint it that somehow this is the beginning of a reign of terror and some sort of attack on workers. What sheer nonsense that is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the men and women such as my grandfather that fought in those deserts and saw their friends and family—and

those individuals really became family. I remember my grandfather telling that. You know, I heard the member opposite from Minto reference the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) as his brother, and I don't disparage that comment, because it is a comment that, actually, my grandfather used when he was talking about his own comrades in arms when he was in North Africa and Italy on behalf of Canada.

But, if we really want to talk about a reign of terror, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think what we saw in World War II was a reign of terror, so it is somewhat interesting how perspectives change over 50 or 60 years, and suddenly that somehow bringing in democracy, bringing in the right of a secret ballot vote to workers here in Manitoba, by protecting them, by enshrining the ability of those individuals to belong to a union, to have a union represent their collective voice in a workplace and by enshrining that through a secret ballot to protect them from any intimidation, whether that's the employer—and I don't—again, I don't discredit what the member for Flin Flon has said. I have no doubt, even through a background of—with the CFIB that there are instances where employers will unfortunately intimidate employees for a whole host of purposes.

But, at the same instance, the members opposite, though, while they're willing to bring that out, will never acknowledge that the same issue occurs on the other side of the fence. In fact, you know, when this bill was first bringing—brought up in the Legislature—and I always found it interesting that the members opposite seem shocked that this legislation is somehow before us and, you know, not the fact that we actually brought this—that this bill was actually part of our election commitments to Manitobans, that Manitobans looked at those election commitments including restoring the right to a secret ballot vote, and they elected a Progressive Conservative government in historic numbers not seen in over 100 years because they obviously wanted to see that mandate fulfilled, Mr. Speaker—so, as—Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, as part of that, during when we first were bringing out the issue of the legislation, Bill 7, did the secret—returning the secret ballot vote to Manitobans, the former chair of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, on social media, had actually shared a number of posts where her own experiences when she was a young woman, she said probably around 19 or 20, and I'm quoting her. She said, and I quote: Union thugs came to my home when I was much younger. I was bullied into signing

a union card. They wouldn't leave my home until I did. I signed to get them to leave me alone. Then I tried to get my signed card back, was told I couldn't. End quote.

And that's the former chair of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, a young—who at the time was a young woman. She said she was naive at the time, that she was intimidated, that these individuals, these coworkers of hers actually came to her home, Mr. Deputy Speaker, came into her home to encourage her, I think it would be the phrase the members opposite would like to use. I think intimidate, and I think this individual would agree that intimidation would be a better description of what occurred in order to get that signing of the card.

You know what—and just the other day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview noted that, and I quote, that every member of this House has a right to be free from intimidation, and I don't understand why we won't want to extend that same right to individuals and to the workers of Manitoba.

But we need to look back, and when we take a look at comments past about the issue of secret ballots, it's always interesting that the—or the NDP opposite support secret ballot votes in some instances but not in other instances. You know, I'll borrow the member's opposite DeLorean, because they spent the last 17 years cruising around Manitoba in a DeLorean, but back in 1999, when we actually brought in the idea of a secret ballot to elect a Speaker, the then-Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Gary Doer, and on behalf of the NDP said, and I quote: I support the proposed rule change. We believe it is long overdue. End quote. He also went on to indicate that it's too bad that that wasn't moved earlier, that the idea of a speaker that has the support through secret ballot of the majority of members.

So, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's interesting that even back in April of 1999 the NDP were in favour of the concept of the secret ballot. They understood the concept of secret ballots, and the importance of that is to the institution of democracy here in the Manitoba Legislature, but they don't—again, they don't want to extend that same benefit to the workers of Manitoba.

We've seen within the NDP's more recent political coup that resulted in the disintegration of the NDP government, that political staff actually complained during that whole lead-up of the leadership campaigns that were going on to NDP

anti-harassment officers that they were being intimidated and, again, quoting the Canadian Press, quote: One or more council members went to the anti-harassment officers and said they felt intimidated that they couldn't vote the way they wanted to vote because they couldn't vote by secret ballot. End quote.

The Winnipeg Free Press reported, quote: The secret ballot was then held to allow political staff to vote freely and to remove worries if it was held through a show of hands that could be targeted by the MLA for St. Boniface and his allies. End quote.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again it's interesting that the very membership of the NDP party and the NDP executive recognized and were fearful of the intimidation tactics by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) and his allies within—within that—within that caucus, that they couldn't freely show their views.

And, again, that was just by the assurances by the then-Premier that anyone was free to participate in any campaign that they wanted, that their jobs would be protected, but of course, we found out subsequent to his razor-thin victory over Ms. Oswald that their jobs weren't safe, and those individuals were quickly kicked to the curb, but, of course, not without padding their severances to the tune of \$700,000, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So it's—it's—like I said, it's always passing strange, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a government or a part of the NDP party that proposes—that supports the secret ballot in some instances, refuses to support the secret ballot in all instances. This legislation brought forward by my colleague, the Minister of growth, economic—and trade, is something that needs to be supported.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): And I'd like to say I'm itching at the chance here to get up and speak and speak to this important bill, but before I do, I did want to just take this opportunity to give congratulations to my colleague the member from Flin Flon for bringing this motion here today, but also for speaking for so many hours. You're such a passionate speaker and you put so many amazing facts on the record.

And I have to say that I learned a lot from him. I thought that he was very articulate. As I said, his passion for this issue is certainly evident in the words that he spoke, but it's evident as well in his everyday—his actions and his continuous fight for working people in this province, and I think all of us should give him another round of applause for his amazing words.

But as I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am excited that I also get an opportunity to speak to issues relating to working people in this province and that we do have such a well-thought-out and important motion in front of us that we can now debate, and I look forward to hearing from members opposite and I know that members of my own caucus are very excited to speak to this as well.

I'm excited because it gives me an opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to talk about my own experience, and, quite frankly, I was hoping that we would hear that sort of experience from all members of this House because I think, for many of us, we've worked in a workplace, started, you know, working minimum wage hours, working, you know, starting at the very bottom, so to speak, and feeling that—that pressure from management and from, in some cases, a large corporation, and sometimes feeling quite powerless, actually, and it's only through the work of labour in standing up for workers' rights and for actually giving some voice to those who are in that situation that we have seen that things have gotten better here in Manitoba.

* (15:30)

So, in my own personal situation, I was working a job straight out of high school. I was working in the grocery business, and it was before I went to university, and I was supporting myself, living in an apartment and sort of just doing the—getting, scraping by, getting the absolute, you know, best I could, but certainly not living a lavish lifestyle. I was working for a company that many in this House may know. It's Penner Foods, and Penner Foods was an institution in Manitoba. It was a great company. And it was a great company for a lot of reasons. Prime—the primary reason for me at least in that situation was that they respected their workers. And, when I started working, I didn't start at minimum wage; I started a little bit higher than minimum wage. The management there understood how important it was to have good employees and happy employees and employees that were working well, so they gave us a little bit more money. They respected our seniority;

they respected our requests for time off. There was a whole bunch of different ways that they were able to work with employees to make sure that their rights were respected. And I give them full credit. They were a great Manitoba institution. I know other members in the House have worked there or have experience with Penner Foods. So I will speak very highly of the kind of business model that they conducted.

However, I was also there during the transition. Of course, the grocery business in Manitoba was changing. And at that time it was IGA that came in, and then later Sobeys, and bought Penner Foods, and we became part of a much larger machine, so to speak. And it was at that time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I—that we started to feel the pressures from the top, and we started to feel how things would change. It became very apparent who had the power in this situation and who had the ability make decisions. For instance, individuals who had been there a number of years all of a sudden weren't getting—and they were getting a good wage—all of a sudden they weren't getting the kind of hours that they needed to support their families. And others who had seniority and had been, again, working there for a long time all of a sudden weren't given the kind of respect that they needed in terms of time off either, you know, for family reasons, for other reasons.

So all of a sudden we started feeling the pressure. And what ended up happening in this—with this pressure is that the workers in this workplace started talking about unionizing. And I was a part of that process. I was one of the folks that people came to and wanted to talk about this with. And I was happy to do so. You know, again, I was a very young man, and at that time then I was in university and—but I was interested in this because I saw the kind of people that were being impacted. I mean, there was a number of people from all different walks of life, all different stations in life, all different socio-economic backgrounds, and they were feeling the pressure. So, for me, as a university kid, well, it wasn't great, but for those people this was the way that they put food on the table.

And so we talked about it. We talked about unionizing. We weren't—several different unions were in touch with us, and we began that conversation.

I tell this story because the narrative that has been put forward by the government is that there are some—this is, you know, some sort of union bosses,

and this kind of language, that the pressures or that the union is the one that's stepping on it—I can tell you, for a fact, in being a part of this process, that the workers ultimately decide their own fate, and it's through a series of conversations, a series of education and discussion amongst employees. And this is how a union comes to be in a workplace. It's from the workers themselves, and it's through the participation of the workers themselves.

When the government brings bills like Bill 7, which, I will add, was brought—was one of the few things that was discussed in the election campaign, came out of total right field, I would say—

An Honourable Member: Far right field.

Mr. Wiebe: —far right field, and when I'm speaking to constituents in my neighbourhood, they don't see the strife, the labour strife that the opposition—or that the government has talked about. They don't see—they see labour peace in this province for 20 years. They see an economy that has weathered economic storms and is doing well in terms of comparison to other places. They see a minister, when we were in government, who sat down with labour and sat down with business. The minister, currently, of—the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) has talked about, in this House, the importance of the ML—LMRC. And he's talked about having everybody sit around the table. And yet, he's not listening to labour on this very important issue.

So it's very concerning to me that we—the—one of the first things that we're doing in this House under a new government is is that we're attacking labour for no good reason. We have a system where employees, of their own volition, can organize. They can sign a card. When they sign that card, I don't know how much more clear it can be in terms of their interest in joining that union. They're signing the card. To then make them go backwards, to go backwards to have another vote with their employers breathing down their necks, for no reason other than an ideological one, that's the only thing I can see and the only way I can explain this, why this is coming before the House.

So I'm very proud to be part of a caucus that has stood up day after day. Every opportunity we've been given to debate this bill, we've stood up. We've stood up for the workers in this province, and we will continue to do that. I'm hoping that we have an opportunity to speak all afternoon.

I, you know, I don't know if I'd wish that I have unlimited time like my colleague from Flin Flon had because he really was stellar in the way that he presented himself to this House as a new member and able to so articulately spell out his position. But as I said, he's a very passionate person. He's passionate about these issues, as am I, as are—as is this entire official opposition. We will stand at absolutely every opportunity with workers, with working people in this province, and we will say that we stand with workers, we stand with business, we stand with everyone, and we want to hear from all voices. We don't want to step on one side or the other as the government has shown that they're willing to do with Bill 7. It's absolutely disgraceful that this bill is before this Legislature.

I look forward to the opportunity to hear from the public at large and to hear from working Manitobans. And I hope members opposite have their ears open. I hope they have their ears open during that process, and I hope they have their ears open during today's debate because I know members on this side have a lot to say, and I hope they have an opportunity to hear it.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise to speak to the Opposition Day motion. And I listened intently to the members speaking opposite, and there is one piece that I did agree with that the member stated, and that was about respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is a key component of this, and it is respect that we do seek to achieve again through this type of process where we have the private ballots, the secret ballots. That is the type of respect that we have not seen in the past from this—the previous government. Indeed, those of us that were around in the 2011 election saw the fear and intimidation that was propagated by the government of the day, the negative campaign that they ran, scaring Manitobans time and time again.

In fact, he talks about the American—or previous speakers talked about the Americanization of Canadian politics while it's the Canadianization of American politics that we've seen because we do know that the American parties came up to Saskatchewan to learn from the then-Saskatchewan NDP how to run those negative elections. And I know the members opposite found out how to do that as well because the evidence was all there in 2011 election, how to run a negative campaign. The previous government knew, and they did it again and

again. And then we saw in this most recent election, when they jumped the shark, when they tried to scare cancer patients, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that was, of course, the time where we knew that things were not going to turn out so well for that particular party and, indeed, we saw that during the time where they were fighting amongst each other.

And I think we can, you know, we can look back to that secret ballot for the Speaker, the previous Speaker of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the MLA for Transcona at that time, that he was elected, served the House very well, first Speaker that I have served under. He was a good guide for my first term as an MLA and cautioned me from time to time when I spoke out of turn or mentioned a member by name, perhaps. Those are mistakes we do tend to make as rookie MLAs. But that election was the private ballot. It was a secret ballot that elected that Speaker. It was not what the government of the day expected, and we started to see then the fracture in the ranks of the government, people that actually voted against the wishes of the leadership to elect the Speaker that was from the House by secret ballot, and those things work.

* (15:40)

The fear and intimidation the campaigns here recently that the opposition has run, we even saw it in the House where they tend—where they tried to intimidate some of our members; shameful that they tried to do so. And then we saw attempted intimidation where they brought in union members to the gallery to shout down the votes—or shout down the speakers, again, were asked to leave. Not something that we want to see.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a business person, I've seen the fear and intimidation that the previous government had on business. They try to pretend that they speak to business, that they talk to business, but as a business person, I can tell you that businesses in Manitoba tried not to get noticed by that previous government. Because, if you got noticed, it usually meant that you were going to be overrun with fear and intimidation. You were going to be overrun by regulation, and I saw it and the MLA for Minto says nonsense. I think I heard that quote somewhere in the 2011 election. Who said nonsense? Something about raising taxes someone said nonsense, a previous premier. Ridiculous.

Anyway, the MLA for Minto says nonsense that they intimidated business. Well, I can speak from

firsthand that, yes, indeed, the former government did intimidate business.

We tried not to be noticed by this government because then we would see time and time again regulations coming in into effect that would make it more difficult and harder to do business in Manitoba. But that's the type of intimidation that that government was used to, and so, bringing in a secret ballot so that there is none of that fear and intimidation in that process is all critical to how the process needs to work and restore that democracy in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, I've worked all over the world as a business person and I worked in union environments, I've worked in non-union environments; and all what I've seen in those environments is that communications are critical. How people communicate together, how business, how the leadership communicates with the workers, or workers with the leadership. If unions are involved, how that communication works, and, as the MLA for Concordia said, respect is critical. We see that respect in operations that run well.

And, you know, one of the things that we did in business is we made sure that our staff were all well-educated on financial aspects. Something I'd like to see more in Manitoba, that we teach people and we show people how they can have an impact on their work environment.

So we would take our financial statements and we would sit down with all of our staff on an annual basis, on an ongoing basis and show them how financial statements work: how you can read them, what kind of an impact you can have on it, what kind of return the company actually gets. We shared, as a private company, our statements with all of our staff.

And interestingly enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we started doing this well over 15, 20 years ago, most of the time, you know, people think that business is the fat cats, right? They've got it easy, and that's the myth that the former government liked to propagate, that business has it easy. Well, I'm here to tell you, as you well know, that is not the case.

And when we shared those financials with our staff and showed them how it works and showed them in their day-to-day operations how they could benefit themselves, because many of them were on profit sharing, how they could increase the profit of the company, increase their income. It all worked to a better end for everyone, Mr. Deputy Speaker,

because they saw how they could have a positive outcome on the company and on their income and, of course, we saw them as better partners in our operation. And at the end of the day, one of the things that came forward from our staff was, you know, that they would not expose their capital, their income to the amount of risk that I did as a business person for that little return.

They were happy for us to pay them the salary and benefits and they could go home at the day—at the end of the day and not worry about the business, and not worry about the staff, and not worry about how we were going to operate the next day, whether we were going to be able to bring more customers, how we were going to service those customers. Those worries weren't theirs.

So what they saw is that, you know what? It's not the be-all, end-out to be a business person; it's a challenge. It's a challenge that many of us take on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that you have as well, and now that you're in this venue, it's a little different world, but we still take those learnings that we had in the business sector and try to apply them here, the communications and the respect for each other.

And we saw that that communications and respect disappeared from some of the previous government. Indeed, we saw the intimidation that was out there, the negative campaigning and where they misled Manitobans and told them, hmm, you know what, we're not going to raise your taxes. And, indeed, they raised a few taxes. So they came in and they broadened the PST, even though they told Manitobans they wouldn't do that. Then they introduced a vehicle registration fee, increased that registration fee and told everybody that they were going to apply it to infrastructure where, in the case, of course, we saw that it didn't go there.

And then, let's see, what else did they do? They raised the PST. That's right. They raised the PST, and they had taken away the right of Manitobans to vote on that increase, even though they told Manitobans, trust us, we're not going to do any of that stuff.

So, obviously, we can't trust what the previous government said. You know, they brought in all those tax increases, took it away from Manitobans, hardworking Manitobans, and then they have the doom and gloom. You know, I used to listen to one of the former ministers of that government talk about, what was it, nattering nabobs of negativity. It's interesting how I hear that time and time again now

from the opposition benches. When you look at particular legislation we're talking about here, to them, it's as if the sky is falling and nothing positive can come out of this. Well, the positive things are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that people will feel more comfortable in voting for or against a union. It will be their choice as opposed to intimidation as we've seen the opposition try to do, in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, try to 'indimidate'-intimidate members of our caucus, and they don't see that that's a problem.

Obviously, if you try to do it here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are the types of things that we're trying to make sure don't happen in a union vote, so that democracy is real, it's open and that everybody has the opportunity to vote their conscience as opposed to someone telling them, summing—forcing them how to vote.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sure we're going to hear all about the doom and gloom here this afternoon from the opposition benches. That nattering nabob of negativity, I'm sure, will rear its ugly head, and, you know, it's just something that as opposition they're going to do. But, again, we saw them, even when they were in government, that they misled Manitobans just as they trying to mislead them here. I can't see that anything is going to be substantially different. Will be new opportunities for Manitoba labour, and I think that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I'm pleased to rise, in the House, this afternoon to speak to the motion put forward by my friend from Flin Flon. You know, he's proven to be an outstanding representative for the people of Flin Flon. He's proved to be an outstanding representative for organized labour in this province, and he's proved to be an outstanding advocate for men and were—women working in this province, and I'd like to—*[interjection]*—some respect for him from across the floor.

Now, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government got off to a bad start right from the beginning when it came to labour issues. For the first time in, I think it was 60 years, it may be longer, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), when establishing his Cabinet, didn't actually name a Cabinet minister for a Labour department.

Nothing was more shocking, nothing was more egregious than that simple act, because it sent a signal. It sent a signal to working people that the organizations that are established to represent them for fair wages, fair working conditions, for health and safety reasons didn't matter. They weren't important. It's a bad signal to send to working men and women across this province, to suggest for a moment that labour is not a central part of this province, of the economy of this province and that labour represents the men and women and their families and the well-being of men and women and their families. And it is a frank—a rank insult for there not to be a department of labour in this province. And this legislation, Bill 7, that's being put forward by the minister of growth, energy and growth, enterprise and—

An Honourable Member: Trade.

Mr. Allum: —trade, thank you, thank you. Well, at least the minister knows what it is, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker. The rest of us aren't too sure.

* (15:50)

But to put this kind of legislation on the table is another really poor signal to be sending to the men and women working in this province and to their families that suggests somehow that being part of a union is a bad thing; it ought not to happen, that unions are somehow in the way of free enterprise, that unions are somehow a roadblock to economic growth and development, that unions somehow pose a threat to the well-being of our society and our communities.

And, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing—nothing—could be further from the truth than that.

My friends across the way have talked about how our great veterans served in World War II to defend democracy; that's a fair point, for sure. They also served in World War II to ensure that there were unions in this country, and it's not a mistake to remember that during World War II, in February 1944, the PC 1003 was passed during the war to ensure that unions do have a place in our society, that do have a place in the provinces and do have a place in this country. That's what happened during the war. That's one of the reasons they went to war.

My friend from Emerson this morning says we should remember history. That's right; we should. We should remember the historical record as it actually existed. And the unions that were

established under PC 1003 ensured that there would be an organization representing women and men workers across—in the workplace, ensured that there was collective bargaining, ensured that workers were treated fairly in the workplace, ensured health and safety regulations, ensured that when someone went to work, they were treated fairly, the way that any Canadian, any Manitoban, would want it to be.

And then along comes—and so you think you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we've made great progress in this country on labour issues, and we have, over time. Another thing that came out of the war was the Rand formula, which ensured—ensured—that unions would have the resources and supports necessary to carry on their work on behalf of workers in this country. And, unfortunately, the members opposite choose to disregard that history, choose to regard—to disregard the very, very things that have made us stronger as a society, stronger as a community, stronger as an economy, all for ideological reasons. And that's what's happening here today.

The fact of the matter is Bill 7 is on the docket for this Legislature to consider because this government doesn't want anyone else to join a union. It's that simple. And the reason they don't want anyone to join a union is because they don't want workers to have the protections that have been hard fought for; in fact, that workers in this country have died for. They don't want that to happen. They want workers to go back to the pre-PC 1003 days when employers didn't have to recognize the workers, didn't have to recognize the employee organizations. They could just disregard it. They could ignore it and they could do what they wanted in the workplace, which is why we had the 44-hour work week. No one wants—would suggest on the other side that that's a good idea, I don't think. And so PC 1003 ensured in this country that unions have a place at the table to represent men and women who are working for their families.

And the only question left, then, was how do you go about certification? Different rules were developed, and in Manitoba, we came up with a procedure that ensured that if members—65 per cent of the members signed cards, in secret, privately, of their own free volition, that would constitute sufficient amount in order for the union to be established in the workplace and then to go on and represent the workers in the workplace.

To date, that system has proven to be very, very beneficial for employees, for employers and for the

economic foundation of Manitoba because, as my friend from Minto pointed out, there has been very, very few labour disputes during the last 17 years. There's been no evidence of voter fraud. There's been no evidence of intimidation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the record—Mr. Deputy Speaker, the record is crystal clear on this question, that the system currently in place is working. It's working for workers; it's working for employers, and it's working for the people of Manitoba and to ensure that we have labour peace in this province.

And, instead, we get a Harper-style government in the form of the new government of Manitoba, determined—determined—to go to battle with organized labour, and for what reason? Is it for the benefit of the economy? I don't think so. Is it a benefit for workers? I don't think so. It might be for the benefit of employers, I suppose, but then that would go with the narrative that we've been trying to establish: that, in fact, this government doesn't govern for all the people of Manitoba; they govern for a very elite few.

They're not interested in rank-and-file union members and their rights and their obligations and their duties. No, no. They want to ensure a race to the bottom back to the pre-war days when employers didn't have to recognize the union, didn't have to pay people accordingly, didn't have to ensure that working conditions were right, didn't have to ensure that labour and safety regulations were in place.

In short, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the new government of Manitoba is actually a very old government with a very old view of the way things ought to be, and they're picking a fight with labour, picking a fight for labour—with labour for no apparent reason.

So, on this side of the House, as my friend from Concordia stated earlier and so well, these 14 folks—these 14 folks—are going to stand up for working people, and we're going to go to the wall on this, and we're going to battle on behalf of organized labour, and we're going to battle on behalf of working men and women and their families because we want to ensure a better standing of living for every Manitoban, not just for some, but for everyone.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's be clear: On this side of the House we're for organized labour, and we stand with the men and women working in the union movement today.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): And I welcome this opportunity to put some words on the

record in respect of this opposition day motion, and I want to echo the words of the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) and say let's be clear that the members of the opposition are conflicted. They want one set of rules for them, and they want one set of rules for somebody else, but their position is not consistent.

I think back to this—even this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think about a rule change that came into place a number of years ago, and I believe it was then Speaker Hickes who moved changes that would see the election of the Speaker for the Manitoba Legislature done in such a way as to protect the right of each member to a secret ballot. And so there would've been a rationalization for that decision, and I would surmise that probably the rationale included things like the need for discretion, need for protection of members and, of course, the validity of a secret ballot in democracy.

*(16:00)

And I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are all well served by that decision undertaken by the then-Speaker. I can think back, even now, to just in the early days of this session of the Legislature when we elected our current Speaker.

I think back to my days when I was new in this Chamber in 2011 and how that was all new to me at the time, coming into this place and understanding that one of the very first actions we were to undertake as members of this Assembly was to elect a Speaker. And at that time, I can remember the discussion. I can remember those who put their name on that ballot, and we didn't get up in this House and signal through a vote that was undertaken by the table members, through the pages. It was not that kind of a process. It wasn't on division. It wasn't called according to the constituency you represented. No, it wasn't that kind of affair.

I remember this now, that it was that secret ballot, and I can recall that process whereby we would all circle around and we would have that name and we would put it into the ballot box and then, of course, having received the decision of each member privately, that ballot would have been counted. I wonder if Madam Clerk would have done that count. Somewhere there would have been a process in place because I know there's always rules and there's always decorum and there's always protocol. So whoever would have gone about doing that count, that decision would then have been disclosed and we

would have all known at the same time the result of that decision.

But there was merit and there was value in the undertaking of that exercise in a manner that did not disclose the identity of individuals in respect of the choice they were making. Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing could be more fundamental to our democracy.

Even earlier today when I heard the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) rise in his place and suggest somehow that workers would be less protected in this way, well, nothing could be further from the truth. The essence of the government's position is that we are seeking to enshrine and protect workers' rights more fully, rights that these members across the way give to themselves even with their own constitution. The NDP constitution calls for that secret ballot right. But when it comes to labour organization in the workplace, they say nope, we won't have it there.

And it is disingenuous for these members to suggest somehow that in no context, in no situation, in no single instance could pressure be brought to bear on an individual in respect of a vote to organize. That's ridiculous, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Of course, that pressure can be brought to bear on an individual, and all of us in this Chamber can think back to conversations we've had with individuals we know, individuals with—to whom we're related, individuals who are our neighbours and our friends and our colleagues, people we, you know, are in clubs with and are on boards with and go to church with. These are people who have related to us stories like this, pressure exerted on them. I cannot imagine how a non-discreet vote would augur to protect the privilege of individuals in this respect.

To the member of Flin Flon I would say this: This bill would then work to protect that worker from any pressure exerted on them: pressure of an employer, pressure of a labour group, pressure of a group within that labour force not wanting to organize.

It's interesting to me to hear them at the same time as they work hard to keep concealed the privileges they afford for themselves in respect of the secret ballot when it serves their purposes to hear them say, oh, we stand on the side of labour. Well, I say to them, jurisdictions across this country who stand on the side of labour have sought to preserve or enact measures that would afford workers' privileges in respect of a secret ballot.

So what does this member have to say to all those other provinces in Canada, coming back to the comments that were made by the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum)? What do those members have to say to all those jurisdictions, to individuals in those provinces whose own organizations have sought to preserve a secret ballot? Does he think that they are somehow less evolved? Does he think they are less protected? If so, where are his efforts in respect of those places? Why is he not on the road right now going to take that message to these other jurisdictions, because I'm sure he has an important message to deliver? Well, the fact is that that's the part of the debate they'd like to keep quiet. Fact of the matter is that this is a debate that is ideological for them, driven by, you know, a deeply held understanding of, you know, that this could create some kind of opportunity for them.

I think the opportunity that this House should consider is the opportunity to workers, the opportunity that we have in this place to make sure that people in a workplace can undertake to understand for themselves what's in their best interest, that we would trust them to take in all the information that's presented to them in respect of an offer to organize labour in a workplace. They can hear the arguments for and against. They can hear about the opportunities and can hear about the weaknesses of those—of the presentations. They can discuss it with colleagues. They can sit in the lunchroom and think about it. They can phone people they know, contact others and say, what's been your experience. But, whatever the deliberation process that's in place, when it comes down to the decision, nothing is more fundamental than to preserve their right to make their decision—unprejudiced, unbiased, not influenced by outside forces.

So the members opposite don't share this belief, or they say they don't. But, when it comes to statements they've made on the record in the past, when it suits their purposes, they talk about the importance of a secret ballot. As a matter of fact, Rosann Wowchuk said: A secret ballot and the principle of one vote per person are the hallmarks of any fair democratic voting process. And we have, over the past, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), members, Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade and others have all shared quotes of members opposite or former members of the NDP, former labour organizers, individuals in those organizations or current ones, who have all shared statements saying that this is a fundamental value that they hold.

So it's important that we do this. We're bringing this bill. We're proud to be bringing this bill. We look forward to the committee stage. We look forward to the process, to hear from Manitobans. We're not afraid of the opinion of Manitobans on this matter. We've done our homework. We've sought to understand the situation and the issue. We've worked hard to develop a position that is intelligent, is defensible and that we believe a vast majority of Manitobans will welcome. If it's not the case, they'll tell us at the committee stage.

And I leave it for others to put other comments on the record.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So, first and foremost, I just want to acknowledge my colleague from Flin Flon for his dedication and his passion and also, obviously, his knowledge in respect of labour and the labour movement and labour history. And I just want to say miigwech for everything that you've taught me thus far.

So we know that with Bill 7 the Premier is choosing an ideological path or attack specifically on unions and labours here in Manitoba. We know that this bill undermines the process of union certification, which will lead to more vulnerable workforces and spaces and disrupts close to 20 years of labour peace in Manitoba.

The government wants to undermine Manitobans' constitutional right to join a union. And Bill 7 is a disingenuous tactic to rob them of their right to organize. There's no reason for the Premier to make it harder for Manitoba's most vulnerable workers to unionize. Union jobs are stable. They're good-paying jobs that fuel Manitoba's economy.

* (16:10)

You know, I wanted to just share that, for years of working in the community and doing my academic experience, more often than not I spoke about indigenous peoples just need to get a job. And, you know, I think that we should be very cognizant that in Manitoba and across Canada that there are people that are born—indigenous people that are born and will die without ever having had a job because of some of the economic disparities, really, that go all across Canada, and in Manitoba in respect, particularly some of the economically disadvantaged communities, First Nation communities, and particularly in the far North that are fly-in

communities, and there's maybe not as many potential jobs available for people.

And I remember when I was working at Southern Chiefs Organization, we were doing—I was the director of justice and we had a restorative justice program. And, at one point, I had 11 staff, and I remember that I had hired all of them; they were going to be community justice workers. They were all indigenous. They were going to flying into some of the communities and doing restorative justice work in the communities, helping to establish justice circles, doing healing circles, sharing circles, and having those—putting in place those processes for reconciliation for those that harmed and those that were harmed. And I remember that, at our first staff meeting, I made it explicitly clear and I really tried to impart on my staff what a blessing it is to actually have a job; it is an absolute blessing and it is an absolute privilege that not everybody in Canada or not everybody in Manitoba gets the opportunity to have.

And I know that, in all of the myriad of jobs that I've had, they have helped, you know, rightly or wrongly, in some respects helped to form my identity, and they've helped to give me a sense of purpose, and they've helped to give me a sense of independence as an indigenous woman. I've been able to have my own home, have my own car. I've been able to raise my sons and to give my sons food every day, which is something that I didn't grow up with. I've been able to give my sons the necessities of life, and I've been able to do that because of my jobs, because I've been able to work and I've had that privilege and that blessing.

And I really wanted my staff to understand how blessed they were, and I really tried to impart, again, that there are some of our people that will never have those opportunities to have that self-worth and that self-awareness that you get from having a job.

So, you know, I don't—I think it's very disrespectful, in many respects, that there is really this kind of methodical and strategic attack on labour and on people being able to actually organize to unionize themselves. And I notice that, in this House, members opposite, you know, when they refer to us they always talk about oh, our labour friends, and their labour bosses, and their labour thugs—as if labour and the people that are involved in the union are somehow, like, almost criminal. And yet here are these individuals, people that I'm just getting to know, who fight for women's rights, who fight for

children's rights, who fight for the environment to protect the environment, who fight for First Nations children to be able to have the right to stay in their community to go to school. You know, unions that fight for access to equitable and fair justice, unions that fight for and honour the TRC's calls to action and have made a commitment to reconciliation.

These are actually the people that members opposite are talking about and are wholly constructing in such a negative way, and I'm not sure why we're doing that.

I'm not sure why members opposite also, which I find particularly egregious and personally so disrespectful when members opposite keep saying that our members here don't care about democracy.

As I've shared in this House many times, my grandfather fought in World War II. He lied; he said he was 17—or I mean, he said he was 18. He was actually 17. My grandfather left residential schools and enlisted in the army. So he went from one institution not of his own making to another institution, and he did that because he believed in this country. And shortly thereafter he was on the second and third waves of D-Day and was caught by the Nazis. And so, for members opposite to direct their comments to all of us, but in particular to myself, that I don't believe in democracy, I wonder if members opposite realize that they are intrinsically disrespecting my grandfather, and they are intrinsically disrespecting all of our grandfathers and all of our grandmothers that fought in every single war here across the world for our benefit to be able to stand in this House and to stand for what we believe in.

And, in this particular regard, this side of the House stands and believes in the rights of people who are trying to do the best for their families and trying to give their children the best opportunities that Canada supposedly gives everyone. And we stand with those individuals, and we stand, rightly so, with the right to unionize.

And so I just respectfully, and from the deepest parts of my heart and my spirit, I ask members opposite that when they're attempting to negatively construct members here, that we don't believe in democracy, or when they're attempting to negatively construct people who are involved in unions who live and breathe the right for equity in its myriad of different forms, that they're cognizant of how disrespectful that is, and that hopefully we can be—we can understand that people have that right. And

you may not agree with it, but it is particularly egregious to pretend that us on this side don't believe in democracy, and somehow we're part of a gang of a bunch of thugs. I think it is—I'm hoping that it's something that we can move away from in respect of members opposite.

Miigwech.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to—I look forward to the opportunity to speak on this for a long time, actually. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) filibustered for about five hours, and he had more meanders in his argument than the Red River and was about as clear in his logic. It does not make any sense not to support democracy.

Now, I, not too—well, actually, it was a long time ago now. I was the minister of state for democratic reform, federally. And perhaps I'll just take a moment to go through what that process is when we vote federally.

* (16:20)

First, Elections Canada gets the voters list ready. They go and enumerate and find out who's out there, who's eligible to vote in various constituencies. And then—and that's akin to what you guys are talking about, about signing cards. The next step, of course, is on election day or in advanced polling, people can go and secretly cast their vote. And this is very important. If people do not have that ability, then you end up with—well, you end up like in the American primaries. The member from Flin Flon raised the American system. Well, in fact, a primary caucus, which is used in many states, is, in fact, an open ballot or open process, full of intimidation. You look at what happened in Iowa—well, one of those I states, the—where Ted Cruz and Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump got into a big 'hoo-hoora' over the results. I can't believe the NDP have taken Donald Trump's position on caucus meetings or the Republican Party. I'm shocked. I thank myself every day that I'm not American and that I'm a monarchist; therefore, not republican, by definition.

Ladies and gentlemen, the issue of secret ballot is fundamental. The NDP have secret ballot votes in their own party. Even in their last convention, there was a big fight within the NDP for a secret ballot because people didn't want to be intimidated. Now, this is a—secret ballot is a fundamental right. You can go from coast to coast to coast, and the vast majority of provinces and the vast majority of elections have it. In fact, it's one of the few ways a union member

has to express themselves. In Canada, you—a union member can't sue the union. There's very little recourse. And when I was minister of State for Transport, I had the interesting experience of being the minister responsible for Canada Post during a work stoppage issue. And what became apparent is that the union does not necessarily represent the members. And the union resisted change. That is an example of an industry that needed to be more flexible, and the union is still in the 1960s. The members understand that; big union bosses don't.

And, by the way, I remember when the union used union money to go to an anti-Semitic conference in Brazil, and that offended a lot of people, including members who pay dues. And this is why we need secret ballots: so that the voices can be heard.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was the president of the largest union in Manitoba for—and elected twice—wow. Who would have thought? University of Manitoba Students' Union. I don't know; it's about 20 to 25 thousand at the time, undergrads, grads, Ph.D. students. And that was a secret ballot. Now, a fun Fletcher fact: How could a right-of-centre person get elected in an activist, left-of-centre environment? Well, the answer's quite simple. The mainstream students looked at the platform and supported what I and my—at the time, my brother, were proposing. The other trick, if you like, was we had orange on our posters. So all the sort of loony left voted for the colour of the poster. Mainstream students voted for the content. And it was all done with a secret ballot. Would that have happened otherwise?

Mr. Speaker, the empirical evidence—and I could table the various studies—the empirical evidence, the anecdotal evidence and just plain common sense says that a secret ballot just brings more integrity to the process. That's why the NDP changed their process in the last convention. That's why every democracy in the western world at the federal level and at the subnational level uses secret ballots. The only group that I'm aware of that doesn't are the Republicans, which the NDP seems to like to follow their model.

Donald Trump is bad news, guys. Do not support him. Do not support that process. I don't—I can't believe that you would allow that kind of intimidation and bias occur as such as what we see in the Republican primary process in the caucuses.

Now, Trumpism aside, we need to think about what is fair for the people who want to unionize or the people who do not want to unionize. There—a secret ballot protects an individual from a predator

industrialist, for example, and from some—the big union bosses who really only have their interests at heart and not that of their membership.

Mr. Speaker, democracy requires integrity. A wise man once said: Bill 7 is good for Manitoba, it's good for workers, it brings integrity back to the formation of unions. Do you know who said that? The member from Assiniboia, about a second ago.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): First of all, I would like to thank—and be gracious and grateful for this honour to be standing here in the House in regards to Bill 7. It was an absolute pleasure and an educating opportunity to listen to my brother, my member from Flin Flon. Thank you for your marathon of education in educating the House in the importance of how we are not supporting Bill 7, The Labour Relations Amendment Act.

I just wanted to just go back a little bit of background. I started learning about the union movement when I was in university taking a course with the Canadian history. In fact, my professor was Mr. Gerald Friesen, the husband of Jean Friesen. And so that's how I started learning about the union movement, and shortly after graduation from University of Manitoba, I started working for the federal government and became a PSAC union member and paying my dues as well and also attending some meetings as well on behalf of indigenous employees.

And from there, I went on to working for Employment Manitoba, became chief steward for our MGEU union as well and had an opportunity to learn the process there and attend meetings as well. And I also became an MGEU member as well when I worked for the University College of the North. So that's my gradual education into learning about our unions. And so I wouldn't expect to be here today within the Manitoba Legislature specifically talking about unions here within Manitoba.

*(16:30)

So, with that, I just wanted to put some words on record about our position here on this side of the House. My concern is if this bill were to pass, the only path to unionization in Manitoba would be drawn—would be the drawn-out process of a formal vote, leaving workers exposed to potential harassment and threats from their bosses and a lead-up to a vote.

I, in my past, had to use my union representative when I was a government employee when causes for

concern regarding my employment came up, and I learned a lot about the process and learned a lot about the strength and the importance of having that union representative to represent you when you feel unsafe in your workplace.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Also, too, this government's changes to the union certification rules are fixing a problem that just doesn't exist, and it only makes it harder for Manitobans to join a union. In fact, as a MLA I've had various indigenous organizations who have called me into meetings because, with indigenous organizations, they dream about organization of a union within their departments. So with that as well, they see the importance of union movements as well as we do on this side of the House.

Just other issues that I want to put on record is that the government bill presently makes several changes to The Labour Relations Act, such as which concerns me that it eliminates the possibility of an interim certification when there's no dispute about the likelihood of certification, but only regarding the composition of the bargaining unit.

Second, it eliminates the possibility of automatic certification 65 per cent.

Third, it eliminates the following: That employees were not subject to intimidation, fraud, coercion or threat and that their wishes for union representation were expressed freely as required by section 45 from the bill.

Now, just a couple of more words to put on record on our position regarding this bill, is that the current legislation is fair and balanced and it is highly respected and seen as a crucial part of a strong and stable relations in Manitoba.

And we are truly disappointed that this government is attacking workers' rights to organize and to be protected from 'intimidation.' The Premier (Mr. Pallister) has removed protections against 'intimidation' which we cannot accept. He has shown Manitobans that he's in the big pocket of big businesses and will not stand up for working families' right to safe workplaces, fair wages and a voice at the table, and this is demonstrated by refusing to raise the 'minimin'—minimum wage, another example of his unwillingness to stand up for workers, which includes my family. My family members are many minimum wage earners as well, and this will cost poorest workers over \$400 this year in lost wages.

Also, too, for the record, the labour movement is an essential part of the fabric of our province. Manitobans believe in collaboration and the right to a safe and fair work environment. Workers have the right to be heard.

Now, I just want to share with the House that I'm extremely honoured and looking forward to next Thursday on October 27th when the Manitoba Federation of Labour will be hosting their Health & Safety Conference in The Pas. I was invited to bring greetings, and I'm looking forward to that event.

Now, the importance about unions coming together is specifically what our workshops' agenda are going to be. This is the—these are very important reasons as to why we come together. Healthy workplaces, healthy minds: Our workplaces play an important role in maintaining positive mental health, but they can also be a source of stress, irritation and contributing to mental health problems and illness. No workplace is immune from these risks, and unions have led the change to expand the definition of occupational health and safety beyond just the physical.

This year's MFL Health & Safety Conference will highlight the importance of psychological health and overall occupational health and safety strategies and feature special guest speakers from the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Now, I just wanted to share the importance of this gathering that's going to be taking place in my hometown. We're going to be discussing very, very important issues such as workplace health and safety; Intro to workers compensation and advocacy for injured workers; Dealing with stress, harassment and violence in the workplace; Preventing violence, psychological bullying and harassment in federally regulated workplaces; Intro to the new National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace and also using ergonomics to prevent workplace issues.

So, with this, Madam Speaker, these are specifically why we come together and organize union movements to discuss these very important issues. I believe in unions because union movements means fair wages, safe working conditions and compensation for injury and equitable labour relations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): It's my pleasure to speak to this matter we're discussing today. And the important matter that we're of course discussing is

the value of union labour, something that is shared across this entire Chamber. Of course, sometimes that idea is split, but I myself have been in a union. I have many family members who've been in unions, many friends who've been in unions. And this is not a bill that is designed, as perhaps some members have alluded to, to break unions. This is a bill designed to give freedoms to union members who have asked us for this. This is not happening in a vacuum as if sprung from the ground, this idea came from nowhere. This has been a law already in Manitoba. This is a law across our great nation. It's a law across many countries in the world that share ample and wonderful laws that fight for unions, that protect union work.

This is a law that, again, is not without its detractors, its detractors who say this is somehow some tool to break unions, asking, of course, the question, if there are already provisions when a workplace is proven to have influenced negatively a unionization certification, that that certification is automatic when that is proven. This is examples that we've shared already in this Chamber and I will not bring up again.

This is a matter where it's giving labour a right that many felt was taken away from them with undue cause a few years ago. Before I myself was able to even vote, that right was taken away. So, before I was able to join a workplace, when I joined my union, I was not able to have had not only a vote to remove my right to a vote on secret ballot, but of course did not have that if there was, say, a union drive. Of course, the workplace I joined was already unionized. And, of course, we had wonderful pay, wonderful benefits from this. I've experienced many other jobs in similar matters where I've enjoyed the pay, I've enjoyed certain benefits. And this is something where I think there are complementary approaches, both unionized workplaces and non-unionized workplaces can learn from each other.

One thing I'm very happy too—is my family's history in the labour movements. In the 1920s, my great-grandfather, William Robson [*phonetic*] came from Glasgow, Scotland, settled in the member from St. John's's backyard of her riding in—on Atlantic street, very close to Main, still a wonderful neighbourhood that I get to drive past every day. These are neighbourhoods in the North End that sometimes we definitely get a bad rap, people from the North End. I don't know why. They're wonderful. There are always families occupying our parks. There are always students on their way to school as

we make our commutes across 'slab rawchuk' bridge or through Arlington or McPhillips. And these are wonderful communities that are built on the labour movement.

And these were communities that, like my great-grandfather when he came to Canada, he drove trains for CP. Canadian Pacific rail was the recruiting agent that brought him to Canada. And they, of course, already had their union there. It's not like my grandfather was brought to break any unions. He was brought to join the union, drive trains. He drove trains throughout the Great Depression, and that provided for my grandfather and his four older brothers. All five of them served in the Second World War against tyranny against choice.

* (16:40)

Of course, the many countries in Europe who chose fascist ideas which, devoid from any rational thought, neither socialist nor capitalist, but simply hate. The fascist regimes drove themselves on hate, and they certainly had no choices for people to vote. As soon as they were able to secure power, the fascists in Germany took away people's right to vote, and they decided that they would just choose things by decree. This is something that, of course, my grandfather fought against, both my grandfathers, and many other members' lineage. My neighbour, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), her own family's heritage fighting on the beaches of Normandy, not too far away, I'm sure, from my own great uncles who fought on the beaches of Normandy.

And they were not there because of some people who were giving people the rights to vote. They were fighting against an ideology that took away freedoms from people. Freedoms to—things like privacy, privacy of your own convictions behind a closed-ballot voting area, something that we hold sacred in many facets of our society and something that is an unfortunate measure that has changed in Manitoba more than once, that there is enough people that we have been told to not mention their names. So many times, I'd be campaigning and with many former retired union members in the wonderful riding of Kildonan; many people who, like myself, were part of a union and no longer part of a union, and so many times I'd see an orange sign on their lawn and say, well, let's go say hi to them, of course.

And I'd ask them, oh, you know, can we count on your support in this, and they said, oh, of course, Nic, no problem. Yeah, yeah, voting for you. And

unfortunately, though, I asked them, well, would you like a new sign. Maybe we can switch things out. They said oh, no, better not switch that out. You know, my union boss put that down. Now, these are not heinous people that are made out to be, but they—
[interjection]

Certainly, no pressure. And they told me, Nic, don't tell anyone—don't tell anyone—that, you know—don't put my name on any list or anything but yeah, you'll get my vote. And that's why many people were kind of surprised. How did this new member for Kildonan take care of this place where it was thought impossible, a Conservative could never win in North End Winnipeg? Well, in fact, there were many people who were engaged in the ideas that we brought from the campaign. An idea like Bill 7, I was at the press conference when we did it. This was not buried under any kind of policy brief. We had press conference, where at the time, the leader of our party, now the Premier (Mr. Pallister) of Manitoba, looked all Manitobans through the camera and said, we are returning the right for workers for secret ballot for certification.

This is not hidden or some kind of agenda that is often hurled at us. This is something we told all Manitobans was going to be working for us. Many people I've spoken to since, they'll get their newsletters and be told that—they go to me and, apparently, I'm now against you, Nic. I can't understand. I'm with you. Like, why am I getting all these newsletters from my various unions? Well, I explained—them the intent of our legislation, of Bill 7, providing people the right to a secret ballot when certification happens, and after we have a one-on-one, individual conversation, without fail, every time, they say, oh, I thought I already had that ability. Well, you did, but there was the other option where it could be run through on a quick card-check system, which many have been surprised at this.

This is something where many of my neighbours have—you know, when I see them at the grocery stores, the wonderful, you know, parks we have in Kildonan, and they're, again, supportive of the work we're doing as a new government, a new government that's dedicated to working with all Manitobans. This is not an us-versus-them situation. If the opposition wants to continue with the politics of division, inciting the hateful words of American politicians in the South, disparaging all Canadians by insinuating that this could be part of it—I don't know why that they support a measure from someone like Donald Trump, against trade. Donald Trump is against the

Trans-Pacific Partnership, and so are the members opposite. I don't know why the members opposite agree so much with Donald Trump about restricting trade, as we know trade is generally good.

During the Great Depression, when families were struggling, countries shut down trade, and this hurt all people. This hurt private businesses, this hurt unionized businesses, and shutting down trade will hurt all Canadians, generally. And this is something I can't understand, why the members opposite support Donald Trump in such a way of supporting his antagonism towards trade. This anti-trade person, I don't know why they'd ever want to take care of that.

But, on a happier note, in many ways, I'm very happy to hear the stories of my colleague from Concordia. Him and I share very important similarities. Although my wife's family is from the Garden City area, the beautiful, you know, walkways of Kildonan where now it's fall and it's just wonderful there, and people—the doom and gloom we're hearing inside here, I'm glad when I go home and I'll see the families that that doom and gloom is not outside on those streets. But the member from Concordia and I, we both, ourselves, had a job at a grocery store. Mine was at a different one from his and did not go through a certification process. But we also worked through the same neighbourhoods, neighbourhoods that were built on working-class families, families that understood the importance of working together, working as a team, but understanding also that their rights are not to be taken for granted.

And, unfortunately, we have terrifying people: an example of the fascist states of Europe in the 1930s and 40s and the terrible people nowadays like Donald Trump and his message of hate and division. And this is something where people are always afforded the rights here in Canada for their secret ballot when they vote, and this is a wonderful thing that we have. I'm very happy that we've been able to participate in this very recently. Not too long ago, of course, we received a historic mandate from people, for our party to lead Manitoba in a new direction, a direction that included what we have here in Bill 7's legislation, something where I'm very happy that the working families of Concordia, the working families of Kildonan, understand that we're bringing new ideas, new vision for them. And I couldn't be more happy that our government is working with all Manitobans as we, you know, work towards making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I would like to put a few words on the record this afternoon.

The first thing that I would like to say clearly, unequivocally, is that me and all of my NDP caucus colleagues completely reject Donald Trump, completely reject—some people are having fun with the idea that, you know, that they can paint us as Trump supporters. But really, the vile nature of this American presidential candidate, the sexual assault and misconduct that he's been accused of, the comments that he's made in public repeatedly over the course of this election season south of the border must be repudiated. They have to be rejected. And to me and my colleagues, they are no laughing matter. So just allow me to say clearly, unequivocally: We are against misogyny; we are against misogyny in politics; and, yes, we're against Donald Trump.

That said—it's a real brain buster of a speech I'm going to give you guys here this afternoon. I am very much in favour of my colleague from Flin Flon. This is a politician that I can get behind. The reason why I support my colleague from Flin Flon—obviously, regardless of how we feel about Bill 7, everyone in the House has been impressed by his perspicacity, his sagacity, his verisimilitude of vocabulary, his grammatical contortions and elucidations on all manners of things collective bargaining related. *[interjection]* The member from Flin Flon remarks he's not sure whether I'm complimenting him or insulting him, but it's a compliment all the way around.

The reason why I support my colleague, though, particularly on this day, is because he's brought forward a very serious motion, an opposition motion, to reject the government's proposed approach under Bill 7. And I do support it for the simple fact that cutting through all the record—rhetoric—cutting through all the rhetoric that the government has presented on Bill 7, it is clear that what Bill 7 is about is about reducing the rates of unionization in Manitoba. You can set aside every other point that has been raised, every other campaign-style bullet point that has been imported from the PC caucus room and read by a member on the government side of the House. At the end of the day, Bill 7 is about reducing the rates of unionization in Manitoba. And I disagree fundamentally that that is something that we would want to see happen in our great province.

* (16:50)

We know that when there are unions present in a country, in a province, wages are higher, income inequality is lower, and engagement with democratic institutions, civil society organizations, is greater. And those are all positive goals. Those are all positive ends that each and every one of us should support.

You know, Madam Speaker, I remember the first time that I received a paycheque after joining a unionized workplace, and, quite honestly I was surprised at how much I was getting paid the first time I saw my paycheque. I had gone to university, and even at—after, you know, getting that first degree I was still earning minimum wage for the first few years after graduation. And at the time I believe the minimum wage was somewhere in the area of \$7 an hour. Come to find out that after entering this unionized workplace that I was now earning about four times that much, as a result of the fact that my colleagues who were in that work environment were able to bargain collectively.

After spending a few years there, being strung along in a precarious work situation—I was a precarious worker, meaning that I was somebody who didn't know week to week whether or not I would be invited back until, on some occasions, the Friday before the following week. After about two years, the union rep in my local sat me down. He said you've now been here long enough that the employer has to offer you full-time employment. And so I took that to the boss and, you know, talked with him about it, and I said, listen, I'm not trying to hold the company hostage. I'm not trying to, you know, be a, you know, some sort of obstruction here. I simply want what I'm entitled to, and that is if somebody's going to be working somewhere full time for a number of years that they should be treated with the respect and also afforded the benefits that a full-time employer—employee rather, should get. And, again, that was a result of the strength of collective bargaining.

But, again, I would hope that my colleagues in the House today recognize that solidarity, it goes deeper than that, you know. It's—solidarity is deeper than just money. That may be difficult for some people to understand, but it's true. Solidarity is about more than just money.

But the evidence shows that where unions are 'president,' wages are higher, even for non-unionized workplaces. The mere presence of a union in an area forces other employers to raise their wages to match,

and that affords higher standards of living and a better quality of life for everyone in that area.

The International Labour Organization has also studied the rates of income inequality around the world, and they found that income inequality was lowest in the areas with the highest union concentration, meaning that where unions are present there is less likely to be a huge gap between the richest and the poorest members of that society. And that is a noble societal goal because in areas with less income inequality there is more stability: more stability, less infighting, less propensity to have large-scale civic disruptions.

And, finally, there's increased participation in civil society organizations in areas with unionization. I saw this. I was privileged to watch the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, you know, endorse the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Calls to Action shortly after they were tabled in 2015, and many other labour organizations have since followed suit.

But it reminds me of my own family's experience with getting our basic democratic rights and freedoms. My father wasn't able to vote until well into his adult life in 1960. And for my father and for my uncles, their other civil liberties didn't follow until the mid-1960s, in some cases the late 1960s. And who was there in 1965 when they staged a silent march in Kenora? Four hundred indigenous men and women dressed in suits and in business attire, marching silently through the streets of Kenora, demanding that they be treated with the same dignity as any other man or woman; it was the labour movement.

Carpenters Union in Ontario gave one of their staffers over to my uncle. They walked on bush trails into communities like Grassy Narrows before there was road access, side by side, the indigenous activist and the labour organizer walking through the bush for a full day 'til they reached the reserve and talking to the people there and saying we are going to stand up for our rights to eat in the same restaurants as everyone else, to stay in the same hotels as everyone else, to be able to assemble in public just like everyone else. And so, yes, we know that participation in civil society increases where labour brothers and sisters are able to operate.

And so at the end of the day, if better rates of unionization lead to higher wages, less income and equality and greater participation in civil society, I see no reason to try and work against that, and that's

why we reject this government prerogative to try and decrease the rates of unionization in our province.

Madam Speaker: To clarify for the House, according to rule 30(15) the House shall not adjourn until all members wishing to speak on the motion have done so.

Are there members still wishing to speak.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Debate will continue until all members wishing to speak have done so.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I appreciate the opportunity to put some words on the record in regards to support of Bill 7 that we are discussing today.

My comments in regards to this bill are probably somewhat different than what we've been hearing over the past weeks in regards to this bill. I have never been a union employee and—or an employer; however, I was an employer of a small business for 33 years, and over those years, I had many employees, and we had good relationships and there were some not-so-good relationships.

However, in the discussions that I've heard from opposite members in regards to having to protect employees from—have to be protected from employers that are not there to do the best for their employees. I find it somewhat disturbing because I know there are many good employers out there; be they unionized or non-unionized, there's a lot of good people on all sides. And it—you know, I can talk more from the personality and from the people perspectives of this bill; as I indicated, I don't have that union background but I know a lot of people. I have a lot of friends that have been in those type of work relationships, and again, they're positive, they're negative.

The most recent experience I have had with that is after following or during the amalgamations that took place in Manitoba in 2014 where municipalities that had unionized employees and non-unionized employees, and they had to try and find common ground. The ones that were non-unionized definitely had—were not wanting to be and, of course, those that were wanted to continue and they wanted their coworkers to come on with them.

It caused a lot of hardship. It was probably one of the issues that caused the biggest divide in new municipalities for sure. A lot of hardships, a lot of hurt feelings and a lot of anger, to say the least.

Which is really a serious issue, considering they were already suffering a lot from being forced into these amalgamations. There was employees losing their jobs because the workforce had to be downsized and, of course, it was not the unionized ones that were having to leave their jobs, and others just quit because the pressures of being somewhat forced into becoming a union member was more than they can handle.

* (17:00)

It was frustrating to say the least, and, going forward, those issues still exist. I think throughout that process, it was very unfortunate, but there was a lot of bullying. There was physical contact, altercations, many hurt feelings and, as I indicated, many people actually left their jobs.

Had that vote been a ballot—a secret ballot—I think the outcomes could have been different. I think some of these issues could have been resolved in a better manner, especially in small communities. In large corporations where you employ hundreds of people, maybe these things are shuffled out the door and not a lot of attention is paid to them.

When you're talking a workforce of perhaps 20, 30 people in a small community and people are going home feeling totally bullied, others have quit their job, others have ended up in the hospital with stress-related illness, and others are actually off work because of stress because of it, it's hard on the community. It pits communities against each other that have had to amalgamate. It also pitted families against each other and, for sure, families that were involved, that stress from a family member carries down into the family, into the children, and these issues were actually ending up on the playground at schools because of one parent over another.

It's a really sad situation and it's an isolated situation, but that's the situation I know. It's a situation I've had to deal with, and it's really damaging, I think, to be bullied, and it has happened; we've indicated—you know, we've heard here that it doesn't. I know first-hand that it does. I've seen it; I've been a part of, you know, having to deal with it, and I think that's really unfortunate.

But going forward, I think that, as a new government, I think giving unionized employees the opportunity for everyone to feel like they can make a conscious decision, one that is good for them, one that they feel that they can live with and have the opportunity to make that decision and not have to be

living with consequences from it, is really important. There's enough stresses in everybody's life without individuals having to, in their workplace, make that decision and then have to pay the consequences in the days to come, and it can often carry on for a long, long time. It's a terrible way to have to work and I don't think anybody should have to do it.

Given a secret ballot, I don't know what the big concern is. If these issues don't exist in the workplace and that, there should be no fear of a secret ballot. It actually should be encouraged, and I'm very proud of our government for taking this stand.

There's no doubt that Bill 7 will not—not be a bad thing going forward. I can see where, in larger corporations where there's many, many unionized employees, it's the way that it should be done, without a doubt, but it will be interesting, I think, in the smaller communities, where there's a smaller number of people, and I think it'll bring great peace of mind to them. I think that they'll be able to be more relaxed.

I know that there's so many other stresses in our world that people have to live with, and I know, going forward, that there will be, I think, better relationships between employees, between employee-employer. I don't think employers are out there to intimidate employees. In some cases there are things that should not take place but they do, but we have heard in the last weeks, as well, many reports from different areas, that also feel that union secret ballots is definitely the right decision, and I'll just quote a few of them here: It's crucial that union representation be approved by a secret ballot because certification may otherwise not reflect the true desire of the majority of the voting workers.

Without the 'anonymity' of secret ballots, union organizers can pressure workers into signing up for unions, and it does happen. Any dissention or disagreement can become confrontational, and as I indicated, I have seen it, and I'm very well aware of it, especially where unionization is controversial, and we have seen that.

Even without outside pressure, some workers may not be comfortable publicly voicing their opinions in the absence of secret ballot voting. We live in a world of very different personalities. We have people that are very educated and feel very confident in themselves going forward, and they have no problem standing up for themselves. But we also have people that are not—they live more

internally and they are not able to express their views. They very often lack self-confidence, and for them to stand up for themselves is really, really difficult, and this, obviously, makes them feel very inferior. So, even with outside—without outside pressure, some workers may not—may be uncomfortable publicly voicing their opinions in the absence of a secret ballot.

A mandatory secret ballot vote also provides an opportunity for more debate and discussion about the benefits and drawbacks of union representation, helping workers make a more informed decision. And this comes from the Fraser Institute. And another one from the Manning Centre, and this is just in May of 2016: In a majority of cases, the percentage of employees supporting a union increased from the time cards were signed until the certification vote was held. This suggests a secret ballot vote would support those who felt intimidated to sign certification cards, but at the same time, such a process would not negatively impact those who wish to vote in favour of the union.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): I would like to put a few words that I believe will be informative and helpful in the discussions on bill 211. I would like to thank my colleague, the member from Flin Flon, for tabling this bill. As well, I salute him for sharing his insights, wisdom and experiences in the labour movement.

When the government introduced Bill 7, I believe the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government caucus is choosing an ideological path that attacks and undermines the process of union certification which will lead to a more vulnerable workforce and disrupt close to 20 years of labour peace in Manitoba. Madam Speaker, I am here today, healed physically, thanks to NDP's first leader, Tommy Douglas, and his long, hard and unrelenting fight to have universal health care realized in Canada.

In addition, I'm also here, whole and strong emotionally and physically, because of my membership with MGEU and the caring, thoughtful and timely action of a union shop steward. Unbeknownst to me, the symptoms that I have been—that have been exhibiting itself for months in 2002 were that of a brain tumour. One such symptom, along with impaired sight, hearing and memory loss, was impaired judgment. One afternoon

in October, 2002, after feeling I needed to rest from work and prepare myself for a scheduled MRI happening in two weeks, I have decided to resign from work. So, right away, I typed a letter of resignation which was accepted by my supervisor. The following days during my lunch breaks, I started going around to obtain signatures of several staff persons from various company departments to fulfill the clearance requirements for all staff who were leaving the company's employ.

* (17:10)

By noontime on the following Friday, my last day of work, I went to see the shop steward to obtain his signature. The shop steward was surprised to see my letter of resignation. He asked for my reason in quitting work, and I told him that I have some health problems and I need to have some time to rest. I remembered the shop steward clearly stated: If you are sick, you need to file a sick leave, not a letter of resignation. That day was my last day of work. Right away, he forego his lunchtime to help me type a letter rescinding my letter of resignation. He even went with me to the HR manager who understood the rationale behind the letter I just submitted. And with the HR manager in tow, the shop steward explained that I should be filing a sick leave and not a resignation letter. So, after that meeting, I prepared an application for sick leave instead. By end of October, I underwent an eight-hour brain operation and had to be on leave for close to a year.

Madam Speaker, without the intervention of the union steward, I would be without income for that long period of time that I needed to heal. Furthermore, had the resignation proceeded, then I would not be able to return to the job after my sick leave was exhausted. It would be a financial disaster for my struggling family that we will probably be unable to recover from. Without my membership in the union, I will have no need to have a union steward sign my clearance form.

So I owe a great deal to the union. Prior to this personal experience, I already knew the value of union in the workplace. I have learned of several instances where unions have provided emotional and legal support to its members who were unfairly treated in the workplace. Workers need to be treated justly and respectfully. Above all, an active union advocates for safe working conditions and fair wages for its members.

Exactly what does labour do to the economy? What does labour do to employers, businesses and

corporations? I went online to seek some answers to the labour theory of value. I learned that the labour theory of value was an early attempt by economists to explain why goods were exchanged for certain prices on the market. It suggested the value of a commodity could be measured objectively by the average number of labour necessary to produce it. In further online searches on the value of labour, I have learned that when speaking in terms of the labour theory of value, value without any qualifying objective should theoretically refer to the amount of labour necessary to produce a marketable commodity, including the labour necessary to develop capital used in the production.

The above statements validly justify a fair wage for labour. If, as a result of labour's presence and productivity, goods and services produced allowed a business to realize sufficient profits after capital investments and other expenditures like taxes, huge salaries for workers and management staff, then labour should receive a fair wage. This is what unions attempt to do for its member workers: obtain a fair wage for services it contributes to the company's profits through productivity. And, if the workers are able to do their job in a safe, respectful environment and they're afforded rights such as freedom to voluntarily join unions without fear and intimidation, then higher productivity can be expected.

In Manitoba, for the last decade, we have experienced relative calm and peace on the labour front. That was not so during the early '90s. The long, bitter nurses' strike at that time comes to mind. I thought that was one instance when the government of the day wantonly disregarded the rights and welfare of these vital front-line workers, the nurses.

The labour movement is an essential part of the fabric of our province. Manitobans believe in collaboration and the right to a safe and fair work environment. Workers have the right to be heard. We have all heard the saying if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

An Honourable Member: You stole my speech.

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, 65 per cent automatic certification is not broken—I didn't consult you. Bill 7 undermines the process of union certification which will lead to a more vulnerable workforce and disrupt close to 20 years of labour peace in Manitoba.

Why introduce Bill 7 when the current legislation is fair and balanced? It is highly respected

and seen as a crucial part of the strong and stable labour relations in Manitoba. A study by the federal government shows that in the absence of majority card sign-ups, rates of unionization, lower employment—rates of unionization lower.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) has removed protections against intimidation which we cannot accept. He has shown Manitobans that he is favouring the interests of big businesses and will not stand up for working families' rights to safe workplaces, fair wages, and a voice at the table. Refusing to raise the minimum wage is another example of his unwillingness to stand up for workers. This will cost the poorest workers over 400 this year in lost wages.

Many of my constituents in Logan are new immigrants and new Canadians who have started their working life in Manitoba as minimum wage earners, but their stories are continuing. I know of many constituents who have purchased homes and moved to better-paying jobs; they are doing well. And, for many of them, their union membership have served them well.

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

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): It gives me great pleasure to rise and put some words on the record on this particular subject. Madam Speaker, the previous government, now the opposition, would like us all to think that they have a monopoly on representing the rights of working people. That is not the case.

Madam Speaker, I, my family has a history of very proud union members, and I've loved those union members very, very much. My mom's brothers, three brothers, grew up in Fort Rouge, and they were CNR men right from the beginning. And I respected them a great deal and I believe that they were always objective people, and I believe that most union people are objective people. Also too, my immediate family; I have— both my children are in unions, as well as my wife.

So, when I look at an issue like this, I look at it with a great deal of due diligence, and, quite frankly, I have a very clear conscience in the support that we had for Bill 7 and indicating and supporting our party's position.

Madam Speaker, the former government removed fairness and democracy in the workplace by 'eliminating'—eliminating mandatory secret ballot voting 16 years ago. In my view, there's a

fundamental question here, and that question is do you believe that the signing of a union card offers the same right as a secret ballot. That's really what it comes down to, in my view anyway. And the answer, in my view, my friend, my honourable friend from Flin Flon doesn't agree with me, but in my view the secret ballot has to take precedence. When you sign a union card, there is, you're putting your name forward and taking a position, and the secret ballot doesn't necessarily mean that you have to do that and that's the value of the secret ballot.

* (17:20)

Mr. Chair—or Madam Chairman, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business president noted: When the NDP made the changes over 16 years ago, it sent needless 'shock wades' through the Manitoba business community. He went on to say: We had no issues with workers' rights to unionize but we've got to do it in a fair and transparent manner. And the best way that we found in Canada, any democracy, is to have secret ballot votes.

There's a great deal of—I've heard many speakers indicate that, well, why address this now? There's no issue. Well, quite frankly, there was no issue back then when the previous government took the secret ballot away. So, quite frankly, what our government is elected to do was to follow through on its election promises. And one of the promises that we made to the people of Manitoba is that we were going to follow through and we were going to implement the secret ballot. We were going to correct a wrong that was made 16 years ago.

Madam Speaker, to ensure democracy in the workplace and to protect the rights of employees, our Manitoba government is making important changes to all—to a number of different initiatives in this province, and that's exactly what we were elected to do.

One of the early motivations of the labour movement was to empower workers, but the harsh reality is, without Bill 7, the laws work against that goal. It makes the process of unionization less democratic and weakens the financial accountability of unions.

The amendments to Manitoba's Labour Relations Act will make workplace union certification by secret ballot votes mandatory. The changes will help restore open and respectful environments to the Manitoba workplaces.

Madam Speaker, with the reinstatement of mandatory secret ballot votes, workers across Manitoba will be able to participate in decisions on union certification without fear of intimidation by colleagues, unions or employers.

To be clear, no part of the NDP record did anything to improve trust, enhance safety or foster a fair environment for working people. In fact, the NDP record shows quite the opposite.

I am happy to put on the record that we need no lessons from the members opposite on enhancing transparency and fairness for doing the right thing. Studies have shown that amendments will bring Manitoba in line with most Canadian provinces that require secret ballot votes for union certification. And, Madam Speaker, can all the other provinces be wrong?

Surveys have shown that the secret-ballot voting is supported by most people in our province. Automatic union certification may not reflect the true desire of a majority of voting workers. Without the privacy of a secret ballot, union organizers may pressure workers into supporting certification. Any dissension or disagreement can become confrontational, especially in cases where unionization is controversial. Even without outside pressure, some workers may be uncomfortable publicly voicing their opinion for unionization.

Madam Speaker, a mandatory secret ballot certification vote provides the same basic protection of privacy that all Canadians enjoy when electing their political officials. Allowing unions to represent workers without approval via secret ballot runs contrary to the goal of empowering workers.

In absence of Bill 7 it is more difficult for dues-paying workers to hold unions accountable once a union is certified. Like secret ballot voting, financial disclosure rules promote principles of privacy, democracy and accountability. Indeed, research shows that increasing financial transparency contributes to improved governance. As a matter of fact, secret-ballot union votes are fair. It isn't a union-busting witch hunt as members opposite would have us believe.

Madam Speaker, I learned at a young age that the only real chance to have your say is at the polls with a secret ballot. And that holds true in so many ways.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I want to join many of my colleagues in beginning my remarks by thanking our hard-working colleague from Flin Flon for bringing forward this important motion for the House's consideration. You certainly do get a wide range of views on this topic. I'm going to have to, with all my copious spare time—which I have none of—some day go back and read the speech I just had to listen to because there was some things in there that don't really add up, don't fit with my world view and don't fit with my understanding of the facts of the matter. But that's the beauty of what we're able to do here, Madam Speaker. We can disagree on these matters and put our views out there.

The plain truth of the matter is that this is an attempt to weaken the strength of the labour movement and the thing that the Conservatives fear even more, and that is the future potential strength of the labour movement. By making it more difficult for a workplace to unionize, they are making sure that the profits stay with the 1 per cent and that labour does not have the ability to protect the workforce, to take strong and appropriate stances against discrimination in the workplace, whatever form it may take, to address issues of unfair wages, to address issues of just basic safety.

For anyone such as my honourable colleague who just spoke—mentioned that his kids are lucky enough to be in a union right now in their workplace—for anyone to believe that weakening labour provisions is a smart thing for our own children, just ask yourself: Do you want your kid to come home safe and sound from work? The answer's probably going to be yes every single day. And it is because of the union movement, first and foremost, that the vast majority of workers do manage to come home safe and sound. And that did not used to be the case, Madam Speaker. Workplace safety and environmental laws are two of the main reasons why international corporations now try to export as many jobs as they possibly can to countries which do not have the same level of protection, basic, decent human rights protection that Canadians have fought for time and time again and have to continue to fight for when initiatives such as this are brought forward.

This is very similar to the anti-union legislation in tone and in substance that was brought forward by the Harper government. You can draw a lot of connections between the two of those. Completely obvious attempt to shift even further the power imbalance to the owners of workplaces rather than to the people who work there. And if you're looking for

a local example of the type of intimidation that can take place, the type of inappropriate behaviour that anyone's children or anyone's friend or family member could be subjected to, I direct you to none other than the Tim Hortons on Portage Avenue in my constituency, first one to unionize in Manitoba's history. But it was not the straightforward process that it should have been. An individual who was interested in unionizing the workplace was harassed in the workplace by the owner. The owner admitted this at the Labour Board. They were fired for their efforts to form a union at the restaurant. The owner admitted this.

And it was only because the Labour Board was there—a creation, if I'm not mistaken, of a previous NDP government—imagine if these disputes just happened and there was no Labour Board for them to be heard. It was only because the Labour Board was able to call for a hearing, bring the parties together, hear the evidence and make a very clear and resounding decision that this had been inappropriate behaviour, and I'm very pleased to report that that worker was reinstated in their job and that all of the allegations against them were dropped and that that group of workers has now successfully signed their first collective agreement with their employer.

* (17:30)

And I want to single out their heroic efforts—this is Workers United that made this possible—because they haven't just changed their own lives and improved their own circumstances. They've now set up a new operating system in that workplace which will benefit every single worker who comes to work in that Tim Hortons location. So anyone who is looking to provide support to a unionized workplace, that would certainly be yet another one that we can go to when we're looking for a cup of coffee, and hopefully, there will be more examples like that in the days ahead.

These are very immediate and easy to understand examples, Madam Speaker, of how unions have and are and will be playing a very positive role in our society. The advocacy and the leadership that they have shown on issues that extend beyond the immediate workplace is also to be commended.

I wouldn't wish this experience on very many people. I don't know how many other folks in the Chamber have ever been tear-gassed in their life. It's happened to me twice. Both times I was surrounded by tens of thousands of unionized workers who, at their own time and their own expense, travelled to

locations to stand in strong, vocal and peaceful opposition to international trade deals which are designed fundamentally to further shift the power towards corporate rule. I was in Seattle for the World Trade Organization demonstrations, and then two years later, in Quebec City. And if anyone wants to see, I still have tear-gas canisters on my desk in my office as a reminder of what we all went through and the importance of coming to work every day to do the very best job that I possibly can for the people who do not have the rights and who do not have the opportunity and who do not have the choice to do the things that they should be able to do in their own workplaces.

And, if you are trying to believe, Madam Speaker, listening to this debate, that the legislation brought forward by the government is in any way friendly to the unionization of the workplace, why on earth then does it eliminate the following language: that the director is satisfied that the employees were not subject to intimidation, fraud, coercion or threat and that their wishes for union representation were expressed freely as required by section 45 from the bill. All of that has been struck from the legislated proposal that the government has brought forward.

If they are actually trying to claim that this legislation is not even pro-labour but neutral to labour, then it should make no difference whether there's a vote or an automatic certification. How on earth can you claim that when you have struck this fundamental clause from the protections that our government had in place? I will close my remarks there, and I thank you for the opportunity to share.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I'm pleased to be able to rise in the House today and put a few words on the record regarding the opposition's refusal to support workers as outlined in Bill 7.

I first want to, though, put out a big thank you to the PC caucus for stepping forward and supporting a bill that does protect the workers' rights. History does not have to repeat itself. We all know that only a few short years ago, the former NDP administration took away the right from Manitobans to vote on major tax increases. Now they're doing everything they possibly can to ensure Manitoba workers don't get the fundamental right when union certification is under consideration. Protecting and strengthening basic democratic rights is the responsibility of every member of this Legislature and it puzzles me that there are some here, who I won't name, who wish to do the exact opposite.

We've heard today, though, Madam Speaker, lots of reference to employers intimidating and abusing employees in the workplace, and I even heard from one of the members earlier that there is no evidence that it happens the other way around. Well, I just want to read a couple of quotes if I may. One's from Forbes magazine on February 21st, 2014, and I quote: The arrest of ten members of the Ironworkers Local 401 from Philadelphia and the surrounding areas reported here as a reminder that violence and illegal tactics used by unions are not just remnants of the past. More often than we can prove, unions or their rogue representatives intimidate, threaten and resort to violence when organizing employees.

One a little bit closer to home and more recent—this one from a Toronto paper, the Toronto Star, on February 17th of this year, and I quote: Standing up for workers' rights is what the OPSEU, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, does every day for its \$130,000–130,000 'umers'—pardon—union members, defending them against intimidation or retaliation by employees. But these days, one of Ontario's biggest unions stands accused of harassment and retaliation by its own unionized employees amid terminations, suspension, investigations and mutual recriminations at its head office.

I don't think that this vote that we're talking about on Bill 7 is geared towards violence. It happens, unfortunately. It happens in all sectors. It happens on both sides. This Bill 7 gives the rights of employees to be able to voice their opinion privately and in secret.

And I do want to say, Madam Speaker, that there are many opinions of the secret ballot, 'including' those from Elections Canada, and I do want to read another quote here, because it is from a member from St. Boniface in 2015 when he said: I read into the record earlier when he pursued this question that members make their own decisions. The secret ballot is the best protection of that.

So we look at that, Madam Speaker, that the secret ballot is something that is necessary. It protects workers from both the employer and the union's intimidation.

On this side of the House, we are committed to making Canada's—one of Canada's most improved provinces and making Manitoba families safer and stronger. Bill 7 does just that, while the opposition opens the doors to ridicule, intimidation and downright disrespect for Manitoba workers and their families.

Madam Speaker, we all know that secret ballots are used in general elections, and every MLA in this House are here today because of the rights of Manitobans to freely express their choice without fear of repercussion, without fear of intimidation and without prejudice from others. With this in mind, we must ask why the opposition is trying so hard to take away that basic right for Manitobans.

Again, Bill 7 is about the worker having the ability to make decisions without being coerced or intimidated. Madam Speaker, I've been on both sides of the spectrum. When I came into organized labour when I was younger, I was hired by a company in Brandon where the employees were already certified. I didn't get to vote on it; it was already done and I knew that when I accepted the position. I have no animosity towards the union and I still don't to this day. Unions have their place in today's society and many of my friends are union workers; some even sit on executives, representing their fellow workers. I even have close family members who are in executive positions within unions. Bill 7 is not about denying the right to establish organized labour; it's about ensuring the rights of the workers are upheld.

Madam Speaker, I had the experience twice in my career to work in an establishment that went through the certification 'process' after I was employed. I can certainly tell you that a lot of my co-workers were not happy with the process used, as everyone was well aware of their support or non-support of the union. We are not alone. We believe that Manitobans should have the same opportunities other provinces in Canada, where the employee can make decisions in a fair and democratic way. This bill will bring Manitoba back in line with most Canadian provinces which also requires a secret ballot for all union certifications.

Workers who wish to certify a union in their workplace will continue to be able to do so. Now they'll be able to do so without fear of intimidation because of the secret ballot. Madam Speaker, let us not alienate Manitobans against democratic process, but rather enhance and respect their personal decision-making ability in all areas. I'm extremely proud to be a Manitoban, and I will continue to fight for—to protect all rights of Manitoban workers and families.

Our new Progressive Conservative government will always put public interest first by committing ourselves to fixing our finances, repairing our services and rebuilding our economy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): If I mispronounce any words or phrases, I have to big-beg your forgiveness because I'm still drooling; I just came from the dentist. I didn't realize that I could speak without using my upper lip. It's still numb. But through the pain of the dentist's office, I chose to come back at this time and put in a few words.

* (17:40)

And I don't want to hurt your feelings, my friends from the opposite side. I just want to explain how this Bill 7 is supposed to have started a provocation of how industrial peace is being celebrated in our province.

We have not had any long strikes or lockouts, for that matter. Industrial peace is an ideal that we ought to aim for. Industrial peace is something that's enshrined in the hearts of so many union members. To believe otherwise, that unions try to propagate the notion that strikes are good or even lockouts are good is taking it all wrong.

The bill, as it currently stands, seeks to eliminate the possibility of interim certification when there is no dispute about the likelihood of certification. There's only an issue as to what is comprising or who comprised the bargaining unit; and, secondly, it eliminates the possibility of automatic certifications—it is 65 per cent, quite stiff, quite high; and, thirdly, it eliminates the condition that there should be a satisfaction that the employees were not subject to intimidation, fraud, coercion, or threat, and that their wishes for union representation were expressed freely as required by section 45.

Current legislation is good, and it does not have to be amended. What's happening now is that the Conservative government, headed by the Premier (Mr. Pallister), is seeking to take the cudgels and the argument from employers, who happens to be somewhat more friendly to the Conservative Party than to us. They're trying to tell the employers that we're on your side. That's the Conservative mantra, and we believe that it's their right. The Conservatives can always side with business. That's what they're here for, and the economic weapon, which is the strike, is something that's always there in The Labour Relations Act in much the same way that a lockout sometimes is used by employers.

When I first came here in January of 1980, the first thing that struck me as odd was the picket line that was right on Notre Dame by the corner of

Harriet. It was a telecommunications company, and there's about 40 labourers who had placards and they were milling around like you would on a picket line. And I was asked to join, and it was cold. And I said: Why are you on strike? They said: The minimum wage has risen, and some of the workers of that company have not had a raise over 15 years. Some of them were still making six bucks when the minimum wage was \$5. And it was odd that the picket line itself was being violated by scabs, and I was surprised that the striking workers could not do anything about it. And it's part of the surprise that I had that the strikers could not do anything about scabs, because my experience tells me that, you know, when I was a labour lawyer, and there were quite a few strikes that occurred in 1974.

I was only on my second year practice that's why I was stupid. I joined the picket line and a riot squad was used against us, and there were also some members of private security firms armed to the teeth with truncheons—truncheons, as in, you know, those sticks that are about an inch and a half thick, roundish and about five feet in length, and they struck us. They broke the picket line and we resisted. We resisted with 7-Up bottles and Pepsi bottles and Coca-Cola bottles, and that's all that we could do. We would shake up the contents of the soft drink bottles and throw it at them. We got hit and we got arrested.

I was released right away. I don't know why, maybe because I was the lawyer for the strikers. But I was sporting a huge lump on my forehead because I was struck once by a riot police, and I didn't mind it but some of us, some of my friends were taken into custody and guns were planted. They were charged with illegal possession of firearms, and it's part of the inequality when it comes to management versus labour. Now that's too far extreme.

Here in our province, there is no such thing yet. There is no such thing as in, violence in the picket lines. Are we pretending that this will not incite some folks? Because this is very extreme. This is an attack on the labour unions per se. It is a problem that's non-existent and this bill was a proposal to solve that non-problem. We have industrial peace, relative industrial peace as it is, and I don't know the motive behind the Conservative Party's attempt to attack and put this as an issue against the unions.

Some of the—some of my friends from the opposite side, Madam Speaker, are saying that they are from the unions, they were trade unionists, and I

guess I must confess that I will have to say, yes, so you should understand and maybe you should just withdraw this proposal. Bill 7 should not be here.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak on this very important issue with regard to Bill 7, and to put some facts on the record.

Every member in this House has been elected by manner of secret ballots, and thank you so much.

* (17:50)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I have to say that's one of the best speeches I've heard in 30 years in this Legislature.

I'm—will be the last, I guess, the last speaker on this Opposition Day motion, and I want to once again congratulate the member for Flin Flon for introducing this Opposition Day motion, and I'll read it: the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the provincial government's attack on workers' rights and reaffirm the current right to unionize using the well-established certification process. And, as some of the previous members on my side have pointed out, the fact of the matter is that we have had, essentially, 17 years of labour peace in this province. The question is, then, if it isn't broke, then what—why fix it? Like, what exactly are we trying to fix? What is the government trying to fix by doing this?

I only have to look back—only have to look back to premiers like, for example, Duff Roblin as an example of a premier who made some decisions that were so good that they are seen as the gold standard even today. For example, there are provinces, I think, in this country that to this day still divide up the electoral boundaries in a way that borders on gerrymandering. But Duff Roblin, I believe, was the first premier in Canada to set up an independent boundaries commission, and that has been the gold standard, certainly, I think, in Canada, but certainly in Manitoba, ever since. It was an idea that was the right idea at the time, and it still is today.

We had a situation in—when Gary Doer become the premier in 1999. He really stepped out, and every government, I think, since the beginning of the province, had a history of firing hundreds of people. And Gary Doer broke with that tradition. He didn't fire anybody. And, you know, that established a pattern on that issue. And this government has so far—hasn't really got around to—well, certainly not the

way it used to be. You know, when Sterling Lyon came in, it was like mass housecleaning. So, you know, even boards and commissions, Gary Doer didn't eliminate people from those jobs. He waited 'til the three years—the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) knows that well. We patiently waited until they sat through their remaining year or two of their terms. And so there's just certain patterns have taken effect that have just made sense. And so it is a mystery to me as to why you would have—why you would want to change something that has been working relatively well.

And, I mean, you know, in terms of creating enemies, governments certainly know—should know by now that your days in office start to get numbered when you start creating enemies. Well, isn't this great, eh? Six months in, they're out there poking the bear, you know? Like, that's not very—you know, not very good advice, I don't think, to be taking—doing that. I mean, what have they got to gain out of causing difficulties with labour at this point?

And I also wanted to mention—I would mention again, in terms of the project labour agreements, I mean, once again, Duff Roblin, when he built the floodway, he did it with project labour agreements. I think in Quebec, those hydro projects in those days in 1960s were all done that way. But that was not ideological decisions. They were just practical decisions. They wanted to construct these projects, whether it was the, I think, James Bay, whether it was the floodway here in Manitoba. The government wanted these things done without having any labour disruptions. And that's why project labour agreements are established by all parties of different stripes of—Conservatives, Liberals, NDP do these because they make sense. You don't need a multi-billion-dollar project being shut down because of strikes.

So, obviously, Gary Doer was on the right track when he took the approach that resulted in almost no strikes for 17 years. Anybody—have we ever lived through a period like that?

And now this new government comes in, and what is their big priority here, is to change the laws that are actually working, that have had 20 years of labour peace, at a time, Madam Speaker, when we have the second lowest unemployment rate, I mean close to, for months and months—actually, years. We have the second best economic performance in the country. Like, you would think—talk about sore winners. Whoever coined that phrase I think really

hit it right. I had never, and I've been through a few governments here, and I've never seen—usually governments that win are happy. They're happy to be there, like the, you know, things worked out for them. But I have never seen such a grouchy bunch of people who racked up 40 seats. I mean, if we could do that, I'd be thrilled. I'd be smiling from ear to ear. I would be—it'd be like Christmastime every day, be handing out presents.

But no, they—40 seats is still not enough. They're still grouchy. There's just something wrong, just something wrong with this picture.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, I have a lot more to say on this subject. And I think we'll have time at third reading, we'll have time in committees. And in the interests of getting the vote proceeded with here and the committees started, I think it—I will stop here. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is the Opposition Day motion in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey).

Do members wish to have the motion read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

An Honourable Member: A recorded vote.

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

Just for clarification for the record, I would like to indicate that it was the official—the honourable Official Opposition House Leader that called for the recorded vote.

The question before the House is the Opposition Day motion by the honourable member for Flin Flon, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the provincial government's attack on workers' rights and reaffirm the current right to unionize using the well-established certification process.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Friesen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagimodiere, Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith, Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 16, Nays 35.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The hour being past five, the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 18, 2016

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>