

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs

Second Report

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on October 18, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 2)** – *The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative*
- **Bill (No. 4)** – *The Elections Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi électorale*

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Ms. CLARKE*
- *Ms. FONTAINE*

- *Mrs. GUILLEMARD*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Ms. LAMOUREUX*
- *Mr. LINDSEY*
- *Mr. MARTIN*
- *Mr. PIWNIUK*
- *Mr. SMITH*
- *Hon. Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Mr. SWAN*

Your Committee elected Mr. MARTIN as the Vice-Chairperson

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 2)** – *The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill with the following amendment.

THAT Clause 2 of the Bill be replaced with the following:

2 Section 27 is replaced with the following:

By election to fill vacancy

27(1) A by election must be held if a vacancy in the representation of an electoral division occurs.

Election day within 180 days of vacancy

27(2) The election day for the by election must be within 180 days after the vacancy occurs.

Exception

27(3) Despite subsection (1), no by election is required if the vacancy occurs less than one year before the election day for a general election held on a fixed date under section 49.1 of The Elections Act.

- **Bill (No. 4)** – *The Elections Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi électorale*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mrs. Guillemard: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development

First Report

Mr. Reg Helwer (Vice-Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on October 18, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 6)** – *The Financial Administration Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la gestion des finances publiques*
- **Bill (No. 10)** – *The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act/Loi abrogeant la Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, la gestion financière et l'obligation de rendre compte aux contribuables et modifications corrélatives*

Committee Membership

- Mr. ALLUM
- Mr. CURRY
- Hon. Mr. FLETCHER
- Hon. Mr. FRIESEN
- Mr. HELWER
- Mr. ISLEIFSON
- Mr. JOHNSON
- Ms. KLASSEN
- Ms. LATHLIN
- Mr. SMOOK
- Mr. WIEBE

Your Committee elected Mr. SMOOK as the Chairperson

Your Committee elected Mr. HELWER as the Vice-Chairperson

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on Bill (No. 10) – The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act/Loi abrogeant la Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, la gestion financière et l'obligation de rendre compte aux contribuables et modifications corrélatives:

Josh Brandon, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 6)** – *The Financial Administration Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la gestion des finances publiques*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 10)** – *The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act/Loi abrogeant la Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, la gestion financière et l'obligation de rendre compte aux contribuables et modifications corrélatives*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Helwer: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I wish to table the following reports: University of Manitoba annual report; University of Winnipeg annual report; university de St. Boniface annual report; UCN annual report, Brandon University annual report, and the Apprenticeship and Certification Board Annual Report.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further tabling of reports?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I am pleased to table the 2015-16 Annual Report with Respect to The Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I am pleased to table the 2015-2016 annual report for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ralph Brown Community Centre

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Community and social service agencies play a fundamental role in advancing the rights of individuals and supporting families and communities.

I am beyond proud to acknowledge and honour the Ralph Brown Community Centre, a recreation and leisure centre in St. Johns.

Ralph Brown is a gathering space for community members while providing a myriad of programs for youth, adults and seniors. People use the gym, attend cooking classes, seniors struggling are provided meals, and they enjoy a variety of recreational activities.

Today we are joined in the gallery by Crystal Courtland and Nathan Wild who are so committed to providing equitable and welcoming services to St. Johns' community members. Every day Crystal and Nathan pursue an accessible environment for youth by highlighting how important they are and how they are valued members of the community. Crystal and Nathan present them with opportunities to engage in activities for themselves and for their community.

Ralph Brown is an irreplaceable source of support, education and connection for youth in our community, youth just like Dylan Olson, who grew up hanging out at the centre with his friends and is now a valued employee of Ralph Brown and a great mentor for youth; as well as Ty Shore, who also grew up spending time with his friends at the centre and has done great work at Ralph Brown's Urban Green Team.

I trust this government understands and recognizes the critical importance of these type of community organizations and commits to increase the supports needed to keep them running.

Ralph Brown fundamentally contributes to the viability, security, health and well-being of St. Johns, and, on behalf of our NDP caucus, I say miigwech to Crystal and Nathan for the incredible work that they do each and every day. And Crystal and Nathan best represent everything that is good in Manitoba.

Miigwech.

Tom Miller

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): First let me thank or—thank—let me thank, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to wear my St. James Canucks jersey in the House today.

I rise to recognize the lifetime achievements of a St. James resident whose contributions to hockey spans 40 years.

Madam Speaker, Tom Miller, also known as Mr. Hockey in St. James, is a true visionary and an asset to our community. Tom started his volunteering 40 years ago as a hockey director at St. Charles Community Club. As a strong supporter of minor hockey in St. James, Tom recognized the need for our young men to continue with hockey after the juvenile level. Tom fulfilled this need by co-founding the St. James Junior Canucks in 1978 with the team joining the Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League. With the number of players of junior age in St. James, he felt that this junior team would help keep young men playing hockey.

In addition to his duties with the Canucks, Tom also volunteers his time as the vice-president of scheduling for the Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League. In 2008, the St. James Minor Hockey Association created the Tom Miller Outstanding Volunteer Award presented annually at the St. James Canucks dinner.

*(13:40)

In 2013, Tom was inducted into the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame as a builder. This season, after 37 years with the St. James Canucks organization, Tom stepped down as president to make way for a new generation. However, he still remains involved on the Canucks' board.

Tom has made a significant contribution to youth, both male and female, in our community. He inspired many, including myself, my son and also the honourable member from Kirkfield Park, who also played junior hockey in St. James.

Tom is joined today by his loving wife, Terry, as well as the west—the rest of his proud family.

Tom has donated his time and energy for the benefit of his community and, Madam Speaker, I ask the names to be included in Hansard, and I ask honourable members to join me in recognizing the accomplishment of Tom Miller.

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

Tom Miller; Terry Miller.

Heritage Classic

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Madam Speaker, at Investors Group Field this October weekend, over 33,000 fans will pack the stadium to witness the first ever outdoor NHL hockey game in Winnipeg.

The NHL Heritage Classic will bring feelings of nostalgia for some as the alumni game gets under way this Saturday, and a display of some of the best young talent in the NHL when Heritage Classic begins on Sunday. Our province will welcome legends of the game in Teemu Selanne and Wayne Gretzky and budding young stars in Mark Scheifele and Connor McDavid.

The two-day festival will celebrate the great hockey history we have in our province and the tense rivalry we have had with Edmonton through the years. There will be a hockey-themed pre-game fan festival featuring hockey attractions, special appearances and live music. Manitoba's own Doc Walker will be one of the headliners.

However, this unique event is more than just a game, Madam Speaker. It's a showcase of the passion the people of Manitoba have for the game of hockey. Our city has always and always will be a great hockey city.

This weekend, the whole hockey world will be focused on our city and its proud hockey history. It will be a great event for the province, and I know my constituents in Fort Richmond will embrace the Heritage Classic this weekend.

A thanks is in order for Mark Chipman and True North Sports & Entertainment group for bringing this event to the province. And even though I'd like to see the Jets play the Penguins, having legends like Gretzky and Selanne honoured in our province will be a truly amazing experience.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Women's History Month

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): This month is Women's History Month, and yesterday we celebrated Persons Day to commemorate the historic Persons Case on October 18, 1929. Before 1929, women in Canada were not persons under the law and could not be appointed to the Canadian Senate.

The Famous Five challenged the law, took their case all the way to the judicial council—Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and won.

Thanks to the perseverance and determination of Nellie McClung and the rest of the famous five, women could legally become senators. Together, they inspired other Canadian women, like Mary Two-Axe Earley, who fought for the suffrage of indigenous women and other suffragists to make their voices heard.

We have come a long way since the Persons Case. Even though women in Manitoba were granted the right to vote in 1916, indigenous and many immigrant women were still excluded. Today I'm very proud to speak as the first female Manitoban MLA of Filipino descent. I'm even more proud to stand here alongside an honourable member from The Pas, the very first indigenous woman to be elected to the Manitoba Legislature, and my colleague from St. Johns who followed soon after.

However, we must not be complacent. It's still important to strive to have more women from First Nations, Aboriginals and diverse backgrounds represented at all levels of elected office. We must continue the vision for the Famous Five and other women activists to ensure fair and equal opportunities for all women.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Gilbert Vust

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment to remember a well-respected member of the Portage la Prairie community and a man that I had the privilege of calling a friend who passed away on September 3rd of this year. Mr. Gilbert Vust was born in Iowa in 1937, the seventh of 12 children, and moved with his parents and siblings to rural Portage la Prairie in 1947.

The family farm was always important to him and he worked with his father and brothers on that farm. In 1958, they became—he became a partner in Vust Brothers Allis-Chalmers Dealership and became a shareholder when the—Vust Limited was incorporated in 1966. He was an integral part of that successful business until his retirement in 1996.

Upon his retirement Mr. Vust spent more time on his beloved hobby of restoring farm equipment. He focused most of his attention on Allis-Chalmers products and attended many shows around the world.

This hobby led him to donate funds to develop the Allis Chalmers museum at Portage la Prairie's Fort La Reine Museum. Such was his dedication to restoring Allis-Chalmers equipment. It was unusual to see him without orange paint on his hands. He became curator of that museum and filled its buildings with restored equipment and memorabilia, even going so far as to purchase the original factory sign and have it installed on the museum. He was instrumental in co-ordinating the Gathering of the Orange at Fort La Reine, an annual international event for Allis-Chalmers collectors. In December of 2002, he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II medal for his community service to the Fort La Reine Museum.

Mr. Vust was an active member of the community. He was active in agricultural conservation efforts and served on the Delta Ag Conservation Co-op. He also served on the boards of the Community Foundation of Portage la Prairie and District, the Fort La Reine Museum and Manitoba Pool Elevators.

He is greatly missed in the community.

Introduction of Guests

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

We have seated in the public gallery from Steinbach Christian high School 20 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Curt Plett, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health.

On behalf of all honourable members, we'd like to welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Economy and Services Manitobans' Priorities

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): New Democrats have an inclusive vision for the future of the province. We are concerned that this government has no plan and is not listening to Manitobans.

Just last night at committee there were no presenters to three of the government bills. It seems clear that the government is not speaking to Manitobans' priorities.

Will the government get to work on Manitobans' priorities, like creating good jobs and delivering a plan for the future?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to wish all members well on this half birthday. It was exactly six months ago today that Manitobans decided on the government of their choice. They rejected a political organization that had stopped listening, and they elected one that has only begun to listen and will continue to.

As an example, Madam Speaker, we're working with all Manitobans on our prebudget consultations. We have, of course, a panel of members of the Legislature. I've invited the members opposite to indicate to Manitobans their wish to listen. They decided under the NDP—I'm not sure which leader of the NDP has made this decision—but they've decided not to include themselves in the committee.

But I congratulate the members of the Liberal caucus for joining with government members and listening to Manitobans in an open and honest way.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Our caucus members attended the so-called community budget consultation on Monday, but members of the public were given all of five minutes to present.

We are deeply concerned that this government has no plan and they're not listening to Manitobans.

Will this government put away their partisan rhetoric and start listening to Manitobans who want the environment, health care and Crowns protected?

*(13:50)

Mr. Pallister: Again, Madam Speaker, I welcome the comments of the member in respect to listening.

Let's examine it in just a brief history here. Six months ago, Manitobans rejected the agenda of the previous government just as they themselves had rejected their own leader through a dysfunctional leadership rebellion that they conducted, the major accusation being that the previous premier had not been listening, though, of course, it appears a number of other members don't listen to one another over there even now. They haven't learned the lesson that we have.

So the presenters at the first meeting included representatives from Brandon University, the Manitoba 4-H Council, a number of other groups. We have Swan River chamber of commerce coming up this Friday, Association for Community Living, Focus on Employment and a number of other groups coming to present at that meeting as well.

Members opposite could be part of that. I've extended an open hand to them. They must understand it's very hard to shake hands with a clenched fist. They need to unclench; they need to start to work with the other members of this House. Together we can listen to Manitobans and not ignore them.

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

Manitoba Hydro Rate Affordability

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Minister for Crown Services says that it was his decision to call community consultations regarding the future of Manitoba Hydro, and he is responsible for what is presented.

Last night, their presenter said that Manitoba didn't need a new hydro dam for 25 to 50 years. That isn't true. Even their reports show energy will be needed much sooner.

Will the Premier take action to ensure rates are low through our hydro advantage?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the member's preamble indicates that she has just accused the board and president of Manitoba Hydro of lying. This carries on the shameful political manipulation of Manitoba Hydro that was undertaken by the previous administration when they forced hydro experts to—when they ignored hydro experts and forced Manitoba Hydro to engage in a billion-dollar boondoggle, building a bipole line halfway around the province. Against all expert advice, they decided that political manipulation of our hydro utility was in their best interests, but it wasn't in the best interests of Manitobans.

I would encourage all members to participate in the first, for a long, long time, open Manitoba Hydro meetings, public information session, held last night, another in Winkler next week, another in Thompson, another in Brandon. Manitoba Hydro in entering a new age of not political manipulation, but openness

and transparency, something to be encouraged, I think.

Manitoba Hydro Future Development Needs

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Last night, the new chair for Manitoba Hydro was quoted as saying that hydro development wasn't needed for another 25 to 50 years.

That, Madam Speaker, is in direct contradiction to what the Public Utilities Board has said and also in direct contradiction what the government's own American consultants have said.

Will the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Schuler) pick up the phone and set his new Hydro chairman straight?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, again, I would encourage the member and all members to read the testimony that was presented before the Public Utilities Board in reference to the Keeyask project, at which the exact preamble the member quotes in respect of not needing additional hydro production for 25 years was part of the testimony of the expert hired by the NDP-appointed Public Utilities Board.

I would encourage the member to do his homework prior to asking questions, Madam Speaker. I would encourage him also to take advantage of the new openness that is here in this province by being part of the committees in his role as a member of the Legislative Assembly in both the prebudget consultation process and also in terms of the Hydro open houses. This is his opportunity to avail himself of his responsibilities, those which he was elected to six months ago.

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

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, it was quoted in the newspaper of record in our province that the new board chair said, and it was quoted as saying that hydro development wasn't needed for another 25 to 50 years. This is in direct contradiction to what the PUB has said. It's in direct contradiction to what the American consultants said.

Will the Premier—I guess, since the minister's not going to answer the question—will the Premier pick up the phone, call the new Hydro chair, set him straight about the 'realigy' of necessary energy security for all Manitobans?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): I'd like to thank the member for the question, because that same newspaper of record also said that it was NDP mismanagement and political direction that set Manitoba Hydro on a path that doubled their debt from 12 to 25 billion dollars.

We were elected to fix the finances of this province, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

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

Mr. Allum: It's interesting to us that the minister always gets up and talks about Hydro debt, never talks about Hydro assets, which are the equal of the debt that the Hydro takes on.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Allum: But, Madam Speaker, it's simply wrong.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: It's simply wrong to say that Manitoba's Hydro doesn't need—Manitobans don't need more hydroelectricity now. Every expert that has spoken on this subject has said, repeatedly, that we need to construct hydro dams to ensure Manitoba's energy security and reliability for generations to come.

So I'll ask one more time: Will anyone on the other side get up and set the new Hydro board straight once and for all?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, we understand why members opposite are sensitive about Hydro debt: because they doubled it from \$12 billion to \$25 billion during that decade of decay.

And I'd like to also point out to members opposite, our government was hired, was elected, to fix the finances of Manitoba, and we will do that, and we're also going to undo the Americanization of Manitoba Hydro, which happened under this individual while he was in Cabinet.

Tolko Industries Pension Concerns

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, we are pleased to see that there's been some initial progress made on the Tolko file. We hope that similar efforts are being made for workers in Churchill. But there's still more work that needs to be done.

This government has allowed plan members to vote on a three-year pension moratorium.

Has the government received any assurances that the Tolko plant will remain open for at least those three years?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I do appreciate the member's comments and question on this in regard to Tolko and, certainly, northern Manitoba.

It's been pretty clear to us and, I think, very clear to northern Manitobans, the cheque writing and short-term bailouts of companies in the past under the previous government were not successful. There's a new government in town, and we're here for the long-term of all Manitobans, especially those in northern Manitoba.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Many of the workers affected by the potential closer-closure at the Tolko plant are retirees and pensioners.

Can this government indicate what guarantees they can provide to those pensioners and retirees that their pensions will be there for them now and in the future?

Mr. Cullen: I appreciate the member's questions, and I appreciate their concern for jobs in northern Manitoba. We obviously have concerns about jobs in northern Manitoba.

We've offered a—what we hope is going to be a long-term solution for this particular situation. I will advise members of the House, this deal is not done, and I would ask for some time. We're hoping in the next three weeks we'll have the results of those asks and we'll know where we're at in terms of that particular asset going forward.

So we're just asking the members to be aware that this is a long-term commitment and, hopefully, things will be resolved over the course in the next few weeks.

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

Northern Manitoba Economic Plan

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The workers of The Pas and, in fact, all over the North, are counting on this government's support when they need it most. The government needs to step up.

Will it commit to real supports for communities in the North so that people can know that there will actually be jobs there now and in the future?

* (14:00)

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Again, I appreciate the member's question and his concern for northern Manitoba.

We, too, share those concerns for northern Manitoba. That's why we've been working with the communities over the last several months. We've been working with—and all of the companies over the last few months as well. We think we've got some options we think will be in the best interests of the northern Manitoba for the long term.

Obviously, we're facing challenges in other communities. I know I'll—a great conversation with the mayor of Thompson just last night. And, obviously, we're working through some issues there.

So this government is prepared to have those discussions with northern Manitobans and those communities, and we are going to be here for the long term with them.

Scholarships and Bursaries Distribution Based on Need

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Sixty per cent of the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative is supposed to go towards need-based bursaries. If the Minister of Education and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) have their way and raise tuition on all students in the province, that 60 per cent figure is going to have to be the floor. The neediest students are going to need more financial help.

Will the minister commit to ensuring that more than 60 per cent of public scholarship and bursary money will go to the neediest of students?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): We're certainly working very closely with the post-secondary institutions regarding MSBI, the bursary initiative. We are having discussions. And we are certainly looking forward to expanding their access to more dollars and making it more affordable for students.

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

Public Money—Public Institutions

Mr. Kinew: These changes to the scholarship and bursaries are evidence of creeping private influence

in public education. More and more, under the Conservative agenda, our public institutions will be chasing private dollars and dancing to someone else's agenda.

Will the minister commit to keeping public money for scholarships and bursaries in public institutions?

Mr. Wishart: I'm actually surprised that the member would question foundations and other private philanthropists on their desire to donate to post-secondary institutions for the benefit of students. I thought he was in favour of helping students out.

All we're doing is making this work better. And, you know, 'post-secondy' institutions repeatedly tell us they really want to have better connections to the business community so their students can get jobs.

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

Tuition Rebate Government Intention

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I've seen many recent grad students getting jobs, in the minister's lingo, through knocking on doors in the condos in Fort Rouge.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the inducement that they are applauding for is the tuition rebate program brought in by the former NDP government; so go ahead, share your round of applause once more. I'd like to know whether this catalyst for keeping grads right here at home in the province will continue.

Will the minister commit to maintaining the tuition rebate for students who stay in Manitoba?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): We certainly are committed to keeping costs low and affordable for students at universities. And we will work towards doing that up front on bursaries, rather than after the fact; it is probably the best way to reach out to those students and get them into the student system.

Minimum Wage Increase Request

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): According to a report released by Oxfam, entitled Make Women Count, in rich and poor countries alike, the responsibility of unpaid work falls disproportionately to women, including cleaning, cooking and caring

for children, sick family members and aging parents. The result is that in Canada, women of working age are subsidizing the economy to the tune of \$192 billion a year. The report affirms, and I quote: Addressing the unequal economics of women's work is essential to closing the gap in earnings and opportunities between women and men.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) immediately raise the minimum wage and end this wage inequality?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Well, Madam Speaker, I'm happy to take the question from the member opposite.

And speaking from my perspective as a former single mother, I know that when the Province works hand in hand with women to improve the economy, as we improve the province's economy, we're going to be improving the economy in each and every household. When the women are having their—when they're empowered to find better jobs because of what we're doing to fix the economy, we do believe that we're going to make life more affordable for all women in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Fontaine: As with unpaid work, women are 'overrepresented' as minimum wage workers. In Canada, nearly 60 per cent of minimum wage workers are women and women with children. A full-time employed woman makes 72 cents for every dollar that a man makes, despite historic levels of education and access to the workforce. According to this report, at the current rate, the gender wage gap won't close for another 117 years.

Will the Premier stand with Manitoba women and immediately raise the minimum wage?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, our government is very proud to stand with women and making life more affordable in the province of Manitoba.

And when we talk about enhancing life for women, and when we talk about equality for women, it's more than just words. It's backed up by action that our government is taking, unlike the former administration that scrapped gender-based analysis in 2014, that they scrapped \$100,000 out of working—Training for Tomorrow programs for women, unlike some of the—taking \$1,600 off the table of all women

in the province of Manitoba. We're going to make life more affordable. We're going to restore equality, and where they failed for women, we're going to stand up and protect *[inaudible]*

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

Ms. Fontaine: So this government's plan, compared to ours we were planning, and for the last 16 years of minimum wage to \$11.50, which will add, after taxes, \$709.95 per year to women's income, compared to this government's plan of raising the current Manitoba basic personal income—or amount by the cost of inflation, which today is 1.1 per cent, which after tax would leave a benefit of \$10.85.

Will this government reverse this decision to freeze the minimum wage for the first time in 16 years and take real action and pull women out of poverty?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, six months ago, Manitoba women had voted for a government that will take real action at pulling women out of poverty, fixing the finances and repairing the economy for all of women.

Unlike members opposite, we're not going to go and take \$1,600 out of the pockets out of all hard-working women in the province. Unlike members opposite, we're not going to pull away programs for—essential programs for women. Unlike members opposite, we're going to be standing up for women, and where they failed women of the province of Manitoba, we're going to stand up for them.

Thank you.

Aboriginal Men and Boys Call to Address Missing and Murdered

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): The equitable treatment of First Nations in this year of reconciliation must be at the forefront of our thoughts. The indigenous nation is at a standstill. Every time we stand up, the rug is whipped out from under us. Today, the indigenous people have made great strides in addressing our murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. We now call upon this government to address our murdered and missing men and boys.

Minister of Justice: What steps is the government taking to address this issue?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for the question. It's an important one, and certainly we are working to ensure that we move forward on the issues not just of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, but in the protection of all Manitobans, and that includes missing and murdered indigenous boys and men as well.

So we will take a—an approach in that, and I work with my colleague, the member for Indigenous and Municipal Relations, as well as all of my colleagues in Cabinet as well, towards providing better solutions to what is a very serious problem.

*(14:10)

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

Provincial Justice System Aboriginal Council Representation

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I appreciate that answer.

If anyone in—anybody's family here was to go missing, I'm positive that one would be at the police station demanding answers. I'm also positive that one would be gently led aside and someone would explain the process in great detail. You'd most likely walk out with assurances, promises of updates and perhaps even a business card.

We have no such options. We are met with unfair judgment and, at times, downright hostility. The justice system is the injustice system when it comes to indigenous people.

We have seen that the City of Winnipeg has now introduced four positions on their council. What will you do for us, Minister of Justice?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I, again, want to thank the member for the question, and we look forward to working with her as well and towards finding a solution to some of these very serious issues that we're faced with.

Of course, we inherited a—after a decade of decay within our justice system, it's going to take time to find solutions to the many issues that we face as Manitobans within our justice system. So we look forward to working with the member opposite and, indeed, all Manitobans towards a safer community for all.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member of Kewatinook, on a final supplementary.

Treatment of Aboriginals

Ms. Klassen: I would like to publicly commend RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson because he publicly stated that there are racists on the force that—who he would like to see removed from duty.

Minister, you were the second MLA to visit our jails in as many 10 years. The first was our own justice critic, the MLA for Burrows. I have heard Bob Paulson publicly apologize to indigenous people twice now. We have a provincial law that protects us when we do so.

Minister of Justice: Will you apologize to the indigenous people for the unequitable treatment we continually face within the provincial justice system?

Madam Speaker: Prior to the minister answering, I would just like to point out to the member for Kewatinook that questions aren't supposed to use the word you in them; they are to go through third party, through the Speaker.

So I would just encourage the member to keep that in mind for future questions.

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, I want to thank the member for the question, and, again, we look forward to working with her and, indeed, all members of this Chamber towards finding better solutions to what is a very serious issue that we face. And, of course, after a—more than a decade of day—decay within our justice system, it's going to take time to find and develop those solutions to those problems.

The member mentions that, you know, that I have been out; I have visited all of our correctional facilities, and I have seen first-hand the hard work and dedication of those working within our system, and I want to thank them for the hard work that they do. We are meeting with stakeholders; we're talking to front-line workers, and this is how we're going to develop solutions. All of us together have to take part in a solution.

Agriculture Businesses Market Expansion

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, we know how important it is for business to have the right climate to make investments. Agribusiness, in particular, is a significant contributor to our province's economy.

Since being elected the government has been very clear that we are open to investments that create jobs for Manitobans. In my constituency, agriculture is the lifeblood of the economy.

Can the Minister of Agriculture tell us of the ways that the government is rebuilding our economy for our agricultural producers?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): First of all, I want to thank the member from Dauphin for his passion and drive for the producers in his area.

Of course, it's important for our producers to have outside markets, some markets that are grown right here in Manitoba, in investment in the province of Manitoba and to show that this government, in fact, is open for business.

We saw an announcement for the dairy sector, a company, Vitalus, Gay Lea, are investing here in Manitoba. Manitoba's shown it's open for business; it's like this type of investment that we will see Manitoba be the most improved province here in Canada.

Manitoba's Economy Government Plan

Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas): This government, according to multiple independent, private-sector validators, including the BMO, RBC, CIBC, inherited one of the fastest growing economies with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation. But since May, we've seen a different trend. In fact, according to Stats Canada, it says Manitoba just lost 10,800 full-time jobs.

Will this minister agree with families that are telling us they are worried that this government's plan is simply not working?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I do appreciate the question on our economy.

And I want to reference a report that came out from the Manitoba Employers Council, and that's actually the group of employers that actually create jobs in Manitoba. And this report just came out, called The Manitoba Prosperity Report, just came out just recently. And here's what it said, Madam Speaker: Underperformance of Manitoba's economy through the last decade is visible in many variables, including lowest population growth amongst provinces, lowest average weekly earnings

by employed residents, lowest percentage of labour force with a university degree—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —second lowest per capita spending on private capital investment, second lowest median family employment of income.

Madam Speaker, we have a lot of work to do.

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

Mr. Chief: Well, Madam Speaker, let's talk about some references.

What are we hearing here, Madam Speaker? Here's the government's jobs plan—this is what we're hearing from the Free Press, from the CBC: Store closure leaves 84 workers out of 'wreak'—out of work right before Christmas—CBC. Region coming apart at the seams amid a series of economic woes—the Winnipeg Free Press. It's pretty heartbreaking, a worker says, after he and others received layoff notices, CBC.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba families are more than just worried.

Is this minister's plan to continue to not listen to them or simply continue to ignore their concerns?

Mr. Cullen: I do appreciate the question.

The Manitoba Employers Council represents 24,000 employees across Manitoba, and we want to join them in wishing them success, this being Small Business Week.

This report goes on to say, Manitoba's facing the following realities: highest provincial sales tax rate, highest general corporate tax rate, highest payroll tax rate, smallest basic personal exemption for personal income taxes, lowest small-business corporate tax rate.

There is a lot of things that have to be repaired, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Chief: Madam Speaker, Manitoba families are telling us they are worried because this government has made a decision to ignore the very people—some of the very people who help build a strong economy. Minimum wage workers, who are most likely to be single, full-time moms working full time, for the first

time in 17 years, they didn't get a raise. Civil servants, who dedicate their lives to public service to make better lives for Manitobans, the message from this government: Your job's going to get cut. To northerners, who recognize you can't have a strong Manitoba economy without a strong North; 86 days and counting, they still want to see a visit from this Premier (Mr. Pallister)

When will this minister recognize that his plan of ignoring Manitoba workers is hurting families?

Mr. Cullen: Clearly, after the last decade of decline and debt and decay—and the NDP are still talking about gloomy and overcast skies here in Manitoba. But we think the things are on the uphill.

* (14:20)

I'll reflect back here to the CFIB report back in 2013. And the businesses were asked: How confident were you in the government, being confident in moving things forward? Eight per cent.

Let's fast-forward to the same ask this spring: How confident are you in the new government that things are moving ahead? Eighty-two per cent confidence.

Madam Speaker, sunny days and blue skies are here for Manitoba.

Freedom Road Construction Update

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): The construction of Freedom Road is a project that is long overdue. This road is important for what it represents to the community of Shoal Lake 40. It represents access to the rest of the goods and services that we in Canada take for granted, and it is a symbolic step in repairing the harm that was done over 100 years ago.

Can this Premier give the House an update on steps taken to build Freedom Road?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I thank the member for that question because, after 17 years of not getting it done, this government will get Shoal Lake road built.

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

Ms. Lathlin: We know that Freedom Road is vitally important to the citizens of this community, and that they represent a small step towards reconciliation for historical wrongs.

Will the Premier commit to building Freedom Road today and not hold up the road in procedural arguments with the federal government?

Mr. Pedersen: I thank the member for that question.

And, to give her a little bit of an update, we are committed to building Shoal Lake road. The consultations right now are ongoing with all indigenous groups. The engineering work is continuing, and we continue to work with our funding partners, the federal government and the City of Winnipeg. After 17 years of talking about it, this government will make it happen.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The ferry, which acts as a lifeline for Shoal Lake, has been out of service for nearly two weeks now. People are 'fustrated' in the community. Freedom Road would help the community to be able to access the goods and services that we take for granted. It would be a first step in addressing the boil water advisory this community has been living with for nearly 20 years.

Will this Premier commit today to concrete action to build Freedom Road?

Mr. Pedersen: Again, I thank the member for bringing up this issue because, if steady growth signs would have built the road, it would have been built a long time ago, because you know that's what—how they did infrastructure was putting up signs and pretending to do infrastructure.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable Minister of Infrastructure has the floor.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to reiterate that this government does have the commitment to build this. We're working with our federal government partners and the City of Winnipeg. We will get this road built, unlike the previous government.

Federal Health Transfers Public Funding Commitment

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I'd like to welcome the Health Minister back from his trip to Toronto, where the Liberal government made it very clear that they're going to hold the line on Harper's squeeze on

health transfers. And it—ultimately, it will be Manitobans who will be among the hardest hit.

Considering his last trip out of province that the Health Minister took was to look at private MRI clinics in Saskatchewan, Manitobans are worried that he's looking to them and their wallets to subsidize this transfer freeze.

We've seen this government's priorities. They want to help people at the top and make it harder for the average Manitoban to access the health care they deserve.

Will the minister commit to putting any federal funding into the public health-care system?

Madam Speaker: Just one caution for the member. Again, there shouldn't be any references to whether or not members or ministers are here or away at a meeting. So I would just urge caution that those types of references not be made when questions are asked.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I think the member would've been wise to let his colleague from Elmwood get up and ask the question. It probably would have been a better question than the one that was just phrased.

But I would say, Madam Speaker, having had the opportunity to meet with my colleagues across Canada, that many Health ministers across Canada are dealing with the challenge of an escalating cost to the health-care system and the volume and the demand that is coming to all Canadians and—in each province. And we're all dealing with the struggle of trying to find enough resources to provide the quality health care that each Health minister wants to provide.

My hope is that the federal government will come to the table with meaningful discussions with the Prime Minister and the premiers so we can have long-term, stable and predictable funding for the betterment of Manitobans and all Canadians.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, this minister wants to joke about it being a good question or not. I think it's clear that Manitobans want to be assured that any money that they get from the federal government that comes into this province goes into the public health-care system.

We're talking here, Madam Speaker, about things like Home Care, where this government has, with its agenda of austerity and cuts, has hinted that privatization of services like Home Care is something that they would consider.

Will this minister promise not to use any federal dollars to bring in private, American-style health delivery in this province?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, in the discussions that I had with my colleagues across Canada and the federal Health Minister, we made it clear that we needed to ensure that we had sustainable, predictable and long-term funding through the Canada Health Transfer fund to ensure that we can provide the desperately needed services that Manitobans and Canadians need in health care, unlike the previous government who decided to take money from all sorts of places and use it on untendered contracts and to provide their political staff sweet payoffs as they left the Legislature.

Madam Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

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.

And this petition is signed by many fine Manitobans.

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

Any—the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Union Certification

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly—they don't print these bigger.

The reasons for this petition are as follows:

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

Under current legislation, if 65 per cent of workers in a 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.

* (14:30)

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 to join the union is absolutely clear.

During the recent provincial election, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party announced, without any 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 workers has clearly been expressed.

This plan opens the process to the 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 intimidation during the 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.

Madam Speaker, this petition has been signed by many hardworking Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, we'd like to call for second reading Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that this House will consider second reading of Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act, this afternoon.

The honourable member for—the honourable Minister of Finance, on Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 14—The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la divulgation de la rémunération dans le secteur public, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: It is my pleasure today to rise in my place and to put some words on the record in respect of Bill 14, the bill that our new government of Manitoba has brought, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker, we all understand that it is important for Manitobans to have the information, to have the facts. Essentially, what this bill says is that accountability matters, disclosure matters, and this bill will, in essence, for reasons that I will outline,

hold government to a higher threshold if it is passed from henceforth than what was previously the case in this province.

Madam Speaker, we know that there is an interest across this whole country, throughout other jurisdictions of Canada, right here in the province of Manitoba, even at the City of Winnipeg level right now, and I've enjoyed my conversations with my counterparts at the city talking about this same desire for increased transparency on the part of government when it comes to disclosure.

And, Madam Speaker, when it comes to this initiative, this particular bill goes to that area of government function that addresses those people who work for government outside of the collective agreements, a category of employees that are typically referred to as technical officers.

So technical officers are all of those political positions. So political officers in the Legislature is often how we refer to them. So these can be the most senior people working for ministers. They can be in Intergovernmental Affairs; they can be special assistants; they can be executive assistants. I remember when I was first elected and going to different committees and being at Estimates and seeing all of these SA and EA and other positions, as well, and asking questions, because I didn't exactly know how they always fit into the system. This also, of course, goes to government communicators. And we remarked many times, we used to talk about the 192 communicators that we were committed from the outset to reduce. We just didn't believe that it represented good value for money for the Manitoba taxpayer.

But, Madam Speaker, this bill is essentially designed in such a way so that, wherever those technical officers are employed and whatever terms of their employment, that on release from employment, whatever circumstances underlie that release, that government is then compelled to release the details of severance and all other compensation that ensues as a result of that.

I can recall in the House the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) at the time, when, last spring, before the election, and indeed in the fall previous, standing in his place and talking about the need for government compensation to technical officers, government compensation to political officers, the need for it to be fair, the need for it to be transparent and the need for it to be consistent.

In other words, there should be no veil of secrecy. There should be no shroud laid upon the conditions of those individuals when they leave the employment of this place. And, indeed, we acknowledge, and so, I'm sure, would the members on the other side, that in this place especially those political appointments, people come and people go, and we thank them for their work in this place. This is a group of individuals alongside with our civil servants who work very hard, often in conditions where they aren't daily rewarded or acknowledged for those efforts. The hours are long, the conditions are difficult, the challenges before them sometimes probably seem insurmountable, but whatever the situation, in some cases, of course, and then, over time, they go on to other things.

We saw in this province an abuse when it came to the conditions around the release of these political officers. And, Madam Speaker, I will briefly outline those conditions here. And we all in this House are very well aware of them. We know that in the lead-up to the NDP leadership contest that there were individuals who were seconded to government from other areas, from other functions, from other pursuits.

I can recall Paul McKie coming over to work in this place. I can recall Heather Grant-Jury coming to work in this place. And we highly questioned the fact that these individuals were put into positions of—and roles here in the Legislature. First of all, of course, we were horrified to think that the terms of their employment here on the premier's staff were so closely aligning with dates of the NDP leadership debate.

So, obviously, that raises red flags for anyone questioning government conduct. It simply did not pass the sniff test. These were individuals who were coming into the premier's employment. They were working within government. We could not see what their designated function was. And, of course, we questioned how suddenly a new role could spring up, that they would move into. It did not look incidental. It did not look coincidental. It looked organized. It looked orchestrated. And so we had our eye on the situation, understanding, as opposition, we had a duty to taxpayers to ask questions, to inquire of government. The answers were not forthcoming.

And then, of course, Madam Speaker, we know how this rolled out. We know, and we questioned a long time, how the premier was able to use the role of the premier to make decisions to give himself the

advantage in what should have been a situation where he recused himself. He could have stepped away. He could have taken that high road. He could have appointed interim leader, stepped away, won that contest and returned. There would've been no question. The actions would've been above reproach.

*(14:40)

But in this case, with the narrowest, narrowest of victories secured, and his opponents had to ask themselves to what extent the addition of positions in the Priorities and Planning division of government advantaged that leadership contestant in that way, in whatever way that all came about, then, suddenly, those individuals who were seconded to government—came over from somewhere else—they were released.

But more than that we know, at that same time, having previously given strong indications that wherever people within government would land—speaking of technical officers—whatever leadership candidate they would support, wherever they would state their allegiances, they were given protection by the then-premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), who said there will be no repercussions. We are all one family. Individuals are free to line up behind whatever contestant they want and then, after we come together, there will be consolidation, there will be a coming together—and that's not what occurred, because, Madam Speaker, in addition to the secondments that I spoke about very specifically, there were also other technical officers within government, senior people who had occupied some of the most senior roles for the NDP leadership team. Sorry, I shouldn't say leadership team, I should say for the premier's team. One of those, of course, being Anna Rothney, who has since gone on out of this place to other employment.

Now, there is no quarrel about the compensation that Ms. Rothney would have been paid for her time in employment in this place. There would've—that would have been open. It would have been disclosed and then, on an annual basis, opposition parties and all of the public, indeed, would have been able to see the compensation. The issue arose that on securing—by the narrowest of margins, again—the premier's victory and his ability to retain the position of premiership if even for a short time thereafter, then technical officers were released. Certainly, a betrayal in any workplace. Having given one set of assurances and now summarily dismissed for reasons that were not forthcoming, and it wasn't only that

individual. As a matter of fact, we made a big deal of this because it was important to open that window and to bring that accountability. Almost \$700,000 in additional payments, not following a formula, not according to a set of strictly-defined codes or structures, but rather incenting individuals to leave here with money in their pockets.

Now, come back again to what we said earlier. That call from the opposition PC party at the time that all payments made when employees leaving should be fair, should be accountable, should be open, should be consistent, should follow the rules; \$700,000 of tax-payer money, and the member across the way, just in question period, stood and rose in his place and talked about his desire to see assurances that all the money, all the taxpayer money would be spent on health care, knowing the whole time that his own government took \$700,000 of taxpayer money and issued it quietly, not according to rules, not according to formula.

Should technical officers be paid additional monies when they go out the door? That's a separate question. Certainly, in the civil service, the members opposite understand there are rules that kick in upon release and severance is a part of the payments that can be made. When it is eligible and when it's appropriate, certainly, those payments are made. Sick leave, vacation pay—there's a number of different levers that are pulled and calculations made by the senior people who are entrusted with this function, and these people are paid accordingly. This was not the case.

But, Madam Speaker, I regret to inform you—and I just remind members of the House—that wasn't the only cover-up, because then, again, government used those powers that were at its disposal to additionally conceal those considerable payments that were made on the way out the door. I believe we referred to it at the time as a kind of a departure tax. We called it a \$700,000 departure tax creating an incentive for those former technical officers who, I guess, in retrospect, lined up behind the wrong candidate to go out the door with a very rich settlement.

But then the government, understanding completely that any order-in-council that they would pass at Cabinet prior to March 31st would have to be publicly disclosed in the Public Accounts when they would be published. So opposition came to understand this government will have to at least disclose these amounts even if they will not do it today, even if they won't do it for accountability in

this Legislature, but, more importantly, accountability in front of all taxpayers, in front of all Manitobans. While they talk a good game on affordability, pulling that money out of public coffers, assigning it willy-nilly to individuals to silence them and to send them out the door without a quarrel—the Ombudsman took this view. He clearly indicated—the Ombudsman office indicated this was a, clearly, an issue of a dispute within a group. It was an organizational dispute with monies spent in order to resolve a labour dispute. Madam Speaker, that should be shocking to all Manitobans, but this government, understanding it had latitude that it should not have ever exercised, held back those orders-in-council on some of the severance.

Now, of course, understanding public disclosure, they could then hide and say, oh, we will completely be disclosing all the amounts that are payable. But they understood what they had basically done is bought themselves a year's time. The disclosure around Ms. Rothney's severance payments, whatever constituted those payments, whatever subcategories of pay they determined and by whatever formula they determined, it would never be uncovered. And the amount, in the aggregate, would only be seen for the first time not in the fall of that year, not in August or September, when the former Finance minister finally disclosed the Public Accounts. Instead, they held it for a complete year.

I submit to you, Madam Speaker, that this was an egregious act that did not follow anything that could be described as accountability. And I am pleased today that we have the chance to introduce this bill, to talk about The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act. Let me briefly describe what this bill does.

This bill goes to simply make sure that the Legislature, that the government in power follows the rules. When it comes to any contracts that are awarded, and technical officers come in either on contract or secondment, then, in this case, the rules change, and the government would be compelled to, 30 days after that contract or secondment is finalized, they would have to disclose; they would have to inform the public. No more one-time-a-year reporting. No more fixed-date of reporting, but rather a fluid mechanism by which perhaps on the first day of every month, maybe on the last day of every month, that disclosure would be made; any member of the Legislature, any member of the public, would have the—would be in possession of that information. On the other side, Madam Speaker, wherever there

was a technical 'offic'it'—officer in the employment of the Legislature and they were released or left, whatever monies were paid to them outside of their salary would also be disclosed, on a monthly basis, on the same schedule.

Madam Speaker, I would submit that this increases public scrutiny. Indeed, the Ombudsman made this point, saying, that the public had the right to this disclosure and that people working for the government should have a reasonable expectation that their right to privacy is diminished in comparison with the overarching right of the public to have the information. So, certainly, the Ombudsman made that declaration; we stand by it as well. Public money should be subject to public scrutiny. The Province is charged with the stewardship of funds, and we must ensure that not only do we manage these funds well but we manage them transparently.

So we believe that the changes that this bill brings will strengthen our system. We have said, as well, that when it comes to the how to disclose this, we want to be very clear: technology is always changing. We used to drop a set of books on the desk every year. I know that other members across the way—and I have talked about whether this is the best way, in a modern society, to be actually disclosing and publishing reports, and I would welcome the members on the other side to continue to have that conversation with me as Finance Minister because we know when it comes to Finance, we're a big chopper down of trees in terms of publishing the annual reports and the budgets and all of these things.

So, as we move forward, what we've said is let's continue to be fluid about the how. Maybe we will disclose, to start out, on a website. We have in mind to use that area of the website for the government of Manitoba. Where it comes to proactive disclosure, it's a one-stop shop for disclosure

* (14:50)

So, as we move forward, what we've said is let's continue to be fluid about the how. Maybe we will disclose to start out on a website. We have in mind to use that area of the website for the government of Manitoba where it comes to proactive disclosure. It's a one-stop shop for disclosure. It would make a lot of sense to me that we could put that disclosure there. But who knows? Maybe in 20 years from now no one will use the Internet in that way at a computer terminal and we'll be, maybe, all device-held, and

who knows what the technology will afford us with in terms of opportunities at that time.

Madam Speaker, I know there's others who want to speak to this bill, and I welcome the discussion that will ensue. We take seriously the discussion and the decisions of the Ombudsman's report on how the past government conducted itself with the disclosure of severance—of payments.

We stand in support of this bill. We stand in support of the right of all Manitobans to have this information, to have accountability. Governments should not be able to hide; governments should be made to report, to be accountable for the monies that it spends on behalf of all Manitobans.

Questions

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

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, I'm inclined to ask the minister how many cups of coffee he had this morning, but maybe I should just advise him to just hold down on the caffeine. Whipping himself into a frenzy like that was really quite something over, really, a bill of—a bill that, really, does not address the key issues that—of consequence to the people of Manitoba.

However, I would ask the minister if he could tell the House just how long the current rules for disclosure have been in place.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, I don't—I'm not certain whether the question previous is about intake of caffeine or if it's on a different subject. Certainly, I think it's strange that the member would point out that we would be strong in our language about this bill. I think that he, probably, doesn't appreciate the strength of our argument. Certainly, it creates uncomfotability for him.

But, in terms of relative level of enthusiasm in this House, nothing compares quite to the enthusiastic goings-on of the member for Fort Garry-

Riverview. No one can hold a candle to that level of unmitigated enthusiasm.

The rules in place before were there for a long time, I assure him.

Mr. Allum: I'll take that as a compliment for the Minister of Finance. I just was noting just how excessively exuberant he happened to be in the course of his opening remarks.

Unfortunately, he didn't answer my question. Could he just tell us how long the current rules have been in place?

Mr. Friesen: I'm not certain why the member wants to revisit the past. What we'd like to do is discuss the bill that is on the table that is clearly within scope this afternoon.

What we're doing is bringing a new rule, and he understands that what we're doing is we're bringing additional requirements under the compensation disclosure act. What these rules do is they strengthen disclosure to technical officers within the employment of government to members who are not under the civil service agreement. It—we all know the threshold being at \$50,000, it covers compensation.

What this bill does is, of course, when it comes to severance, when it comes to contracts, when it comes to secondments it clears up those rules, provides accountability, discloses the amounts.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The number here of \$50,000 as the lower limit for recording, anything above that must be reported. I just wonder how long that \$50,000 number has been in place and whether it has been increased over time at all.

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for River Heights for the question.

The member and I both know that that threshold has been in place for quite a long time, and he and I have both in the past asked questions about that threshold level and whether it is—whether that level is still a salient level to maintain in lieu of the fact that, of course, arguments we've made that everything goes up in time in terms of level.

I want to assure the member I've had the same discussions with the City of Winnipeg in respect of their efforts to bring accountability—for their accountability. I think there's a whole separate discussion on threshold disclosure amounts. This one is at least a first and very good step on other disclosure.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Well, the question, then—the minister mentions that he was in discussions with the City of Winnipeg. The question is why was the City of Winnipeg—why wasn't it included in the scope of this bill?

Mr. Friesen: Well, first of all, I want to make very clear that the City and the city councillors have a totally separate discussion going. The member will be aware of these discussions.

What I did in my role of Finance Minister is pick up the phone and consult with my counterparts at the City of Winnipeg, trying to ascertain what they were up to, what the intent was, where there was a shared concern around accountability in the system. Those members know the history of that. So we take that collaborative approach. We care to reach out and we did that in respect of this, but the city action is separate from the bill that we are discussing today.

Mr. Allum: I'm still waiting for an answer to my question. If we're going to have questions and answers, I'd appreciate it if the minister would answer them.

Could he tell us how long the current rules have been in place?

Mr. Friesen: Well, again, I want to assure the member that we are—we're very clear that we are looking forward to the debate today on this bill, a bill that makes a substantive change to The Public Sector Compensation Act, providing this additional disclosure.

Now, if the member wants to—I know that he has a degree, I think, in history—and so, if he wants to talk about the history, there's a lot of history within this area that we're bringing change to. Happy to have the conversation with him. He can indicate if he wants the number reported in months, in years, you know, we can make sure to get the information to him in the—about the past.

We're more interested in the future and how this bill changes. It helps Manitobans.

Mr. Allum: I do have several degrees in history and, as Santayana said, those who ignore the past are condemned to repeat it.

But I do want to say, to the minister, that he just spent a long, long, long time in his preamble, in his speech, talking about the past, so I just ask him to come clean with us, for this side of the House. Edification—tell us, please, how long have the current

rules been in place? It's not a hard question. Answer the question.

Madam Speaker: I would just like to interject here, you know, in terms of the member saying to the minister: Answer the question. I'm not sure that that's actually the type of language and tone that is useful in this debate. So I would just encourage a little bit more care in terms of how the questions are posed.

Mr. Friesen: Well, I'm used to that kind of strategy, the tactic that the member employs when he tries to go a long, long way around. It's a lot like the bipole line; instead of going directly to customers, it goes an awful long way out of its route and it creates a lot of inefficiency. But I think trying to project where he's going, I think what the member is suggesting is that somehow it's been this way a long time, and so the status quo is sufficient.

We reject that argument as government. With \$700,000 of special payments made to send other staffers out the door, we think that is the strongest signal that the system is not okay as it is. It needs correction. We believe this legislation brings the necessary correction to protect all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) [*interjection*] oh—the honourable member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: I think that one of the attempts of this legislation is to make sure that the full accounting is there for remuneration that individuals get from government dollars or government-funded dollars.

One of the things that we found in the past is that it's very easy for individuals to be reported in one place, in the report, for one type of compensation and another place, in the report, for another type of compensation. So you don't get the picture of what the total earnings of an individual from government dollars are.

Will the government be addressing that?

* (15:00)

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for the question. And, of course, this was work that was—that we pointed to, as well, when we were in opposition. This is a separate issue the member brings up, but important one. For anyone who has tried to actually use the voluminous information that is presented on an annual basis and to be able to trace and find threads and search in a non-digitized format section by section, it's not easy.

I would say to the member that the actions we are undertaking in respect of this bill do not represent the sum total of our initiative when it comes to reporting and the need for more accountability. I think that electronic presentation and modernization are things that we can contemplate. I look for his help in getting there.

Mr. Allum: I'll pick up where I left off. Forgive me for not directing my question through you. I think you could understand our frustration when we ask a simple question and just can't get an answer. It gets a little hard on this side of the House.

So I'll just ask the minister one last time if he could just please answer the question: How long have the current rules been in place?

Mr. Friesen: Yes, again, I'm not certain where the member is going, but the rules were unchanged for a long time because these members never changed the rules. They never cared to change the rules to strengthen the protections for Manitobans. Now, they were in power for 17 years, so we can say to some minimum these rules were unchanged in 17 years when it came to additional disclosure of compensation at severance.

But the Ombudsman took the view that the best practice was not followed. We share the concerns raised by the Ombudsman. The rule changes we bring now—I focus this member's attention on the now, today's bill, today's opportunity to strengthen. We invite them to get onside, see this legislation passed and protect all Manitobans this way.

Madam Speaker: The honourable—oh. Are there any further questions?

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I was reading up on the proposed legislation, and there was a portion where deputy ministers, when they are fired or terminated from government service, are not included. Why weren't other employee groups included in the scope of the bill? Why are we giving the minister a chance to cover up for some?

Mr. Friesen: I have to indicate, Madam Speaker, that I'm not sure what this question is asking, but I want to assure that member that he seems to have his facts mixed up.

It is exactly because of a cover-up by the last government—or let's just say a failure to be disclosing necessary information, information that Manitobans wanted to be in possession of. We are bringing these rules for the precise reasons to strengthen the public

accountability. He could be not—he could not be more wrong in the assertion he just made.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: Question period being over, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I want to put it out there, to begin my comments on this bill, that we started the question-and-answer period, I think, in a very congenial fashion, not—hardly overexcited, hardly—the simple—[interjection]—and now the minister won't let me speak.

And that's unfortunate that now it's my time to debate and I find myself being heckled by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen). I find that really unfortunate, and I would ask him for a higher standard of conduct in this House than he would just show during his opening comments on the bill and during the question-and-answer period.

He knows full well that these rules have been in place for a long, long time, in governments before ours 17 years ago. He knows full well that Conservative technical officers were paid under the—severance—under the same rules as other staff. And what he's trying to do, I think, is to take transparency—which, I don't think anyone's—objects to, or accountability. I don't have any particular objection to this bill at all. But we were trying—what he wanted to do was to engage in what has become standard operating procedure for the government, and that's to torque issues up and to engage in hyper-partisan, political attacks on the official opposition when, in fact, they are the government of Manitoba. It's their responsibility to govern. And it's their responsibility, I might add, because these rules are now in place that, when we ask questions prior—during the question and answer period, that it's incumbent upon the Minister of Finance to answer them in a fashion that respects the procedure, that respects members opposite when they're asking the questions and, frankly, respects the process that was agreed to by all parties in this House several months ago.

We're looking forward to a higher standard of conduct from the Minister of Finance in that regard, but he seems unable—seems unable—to resist hyper-partisan, political attacks on the NDP and, for the life of me, I don't understand why he does that. I think he takes his lessons and his orders from the Premier (Mr. Pallister), and I think it 'ractually' starts with the

Premier of Manitoba, who's not really interested in governing on behalf of the people of Manitoba, not really interested in addressing the critical issues that face Manitoba today. They're not really interested in providing those programs and services and supports to families that are absolutely needed. He has one thing on his mind—one thing on his mind only—attack the NDP at every conceivable point and really disregard the need to get on with the business of governing. And I wish he would just do that, as one would expect of any responsible and respectful government.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

It's no doubt, Madam Speaker, that—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that the NDP believes in transparent government, and that is accountable to citizens. We weren't elected just once over 17 years; we were elected four times, one of the longest periods of electoral success in Canadian history. And, when they diminish—when the government continuously diminishes the achievements under this government, the progress made to address critical issues in our neighbourhoods and in our communities, it just goes to show you just how utterly hyper-partisan the government is. And, in fact, it reflects, quite honestly, a Stephen Harper approach to governing, which isn't really about addressing the public interest; it's almost entirely about trying to score points against the opposition. We're not interested in that.

We're—have a job to do as the official opposition of Manitoba: to hold the government to account. That's the parliamentary tradition. We come into question period every day. We ask hard, pointed questions of the government. And what we've—have soon come to realize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is a government with no answers. It's a government with no plan. And it's a government that's utterly disinterested in governing on behalf of all people of Manitoba.

We were in to see the Finance Minister for a briefing, and my friend from—

An Honourable Member: Elmwood.

Mr. Allum: —Elmwood was with me, along with my friend from Flin Flon. I think they would both agree it was very congenial in meeting. It was questions and answers with the minister. But, in that case, as the Deputy Speaker may know, there's also public servants in the room, and so it's a much more respectful tone than would otherwise be the case than

when we're in the House, and we continually, day after day, minute after minute, instead of governing on behalf of the people of Manitoba, we're forced to listen to a hyper-partisan political attack that torques the political agenda and, actually, does a great, great disservice to the people of Manitoba.

* (15:10)

We certainly know the value of political staff. I had the great honour and privilege of being both the minister of Education and Advanced Learning, as well as the minister of Justice and Attorney General, and we know how utterly invaluable those incredible folks are to making sure that we get the work done on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

We certainly have enormous respect for our own political staff. I certainly miss those who are, really, frankly, not only just former staff and colleagues, they were great, great friends of mine, and not having them around, as I know all members would agree, is very difficult and I miss them sorely.

And so we're—we don't want to see a bill like this turned into a hyper-partisan political attack that really does a disservice to a tremendous political staff who serve us all in this Legislature very, very well, and we would hope—we would hope—that instead of engaging in a long speech of hyperbole from the Finance Minister in discussing the bill, that he would just get down to the brass tacks of what the essence of the bill is about, why he's putting it forward and get on with it, and then when we get into our question-and-answer period that he respectfully answers questions that are put to him in a most respectful manner.

This is the purpose of that particular process, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and so I hope, if you get a chance to speak to him or someone else does on the other side of the House, they can relate to the fact—because I don't think he's listening to me now—could reflect the fact that we would like a more respectful tone when it comes to that particular part.

Bills aren't introduced. Question-and-answer period is in place. Please answer the questions I asked him in a respectful manner, and I hope he will work with us in that regard to make sure that the people of Manitoba are well-served by processes that we undertake in this Legislature.

But we want to say, when it comes to this bill—or it came to the bill on adding more people to

Treasury Board that was in committee last night that drew, well, no one, and/or other bills that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) has put forward, that these are, I suppose in some sense, good housekeeping matters, something to get on with. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're no substitute for getting on with the business of the day and addressing the very, very deep challenges that exist in Manitoba today.

We'd like to see from the Finance Minister a jobs plan, something that gives hope to the—to young people in this province that they have a future and that they can depend on the government for—to look out for their well-being and their future. So we would like the minister to spend less time on these kinds of housekeeping things that really are intended simply as hyper-partisan attacks on the NDP and we'd like him to spend more time—and it's a simple request, Mr. Deputy Speaker—have him spend more time on a jobs plan for young Manitobans to ensure that they have a future in this province. To date, we've seen none. There hasn't been any indication of a jobs plan.

There hasn't been any indication that they've been working with labour organizations in order to address important employment issues. We've seen no evidence of any kind—even a scrap of paper that would suggest that there's any kind of plan for jobs in this province. *[interjection]* And, in fact, what we know to be sure—as my friend from Elmwood just reminded me—that, in fact, instead of a jobs growth plan what we've had is almost 10,800 jobs lost in the last six months. So we're not exactly going up, but we're going down—*[interjection]* Yes, it's the lowest common denominator.

We would like to see, instead of these kinds of housekeeping bills, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a plan for infrastructure. We've asked many, many times the Minister of Infrastructure to provide us with a plan, and it's quite clear from his answers that either the script he's reading from isn't very good or he just doesn't know. And I hazard to guess that it's the latter, that he doesn't have a plan for building roads. We actually know, for a fact, that they've slowed infrastructure spending down quite, quite considerably, and, as a result, it's not only putting our infrastructure in a greater deficit, but it's also resulting in significant job losses. And those are good jobs for Manitobans that pay good wages that support their families. And we haven't seen an infrastructure plan.

Likewise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my friend from Fort Rouge has asked, on several occasions, what the education capital plan is for Manitoba. He's asked quite directly: Will they be building a new school in Brandon? Is our government at announce, because, in fact, our government had built or refurbished 35 schools across the province during our time in Manitoba, including, in fact, a brand new state-of-the-art school in the Minister of Finance's constituency of Morden-Winkler, a brand spanking new high school in the minister of health and healthy living's constituency, in Steinbach. I had the great honour of being at the opening of both those schools.

And so what we would like is, instead of less emphasis on small housekeeping bills that result in being a hyper-partisan political attack on the NDP, that they would get—the government would get on with the business of governing. We want to see a jobs plan. We want to see an infrastructure plan. We want to see an education plan. We want to know—because we know, for a fact, that the government is sitting on almost \$600 million of projects that are—of community organizations, social organizations, neighbourhood organizations. They've gone through an enormous amount of work to put proposals together, to get references, to crunch the numbers and put them in. And, instead, what we have is a government that's not governing. They're not doing anything. They're sitting on over \$600 million worth of projects and, instead, the House is forced to debate small housekeeping bills as the one put forward by the Minister of Finance today. And we'd certainly like him to get on with the more critical issues.

My friend from St. Johns has asked the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) I don't know how many times of what his plan is for creating more space—child-care spaces. And, in every answer we get from him, it's pretty clear he doesn't have a plan either. And so we're—we now—that's—so, to date, that's no plan for jobs, no plan for infrastructure, no plan for education, no plan for child care. And that's just the starting point. My friend from Flin Flon has got up on several occasions and asked: What's the economic development plan for the North? What we've got back in return are answers that are short on detail but long on hyper-partisanship. Of course, bashing down on the NDP. And, frankly, it's—that kind of answer is just—those kinds of answers is just not doing the job of governing. If you want to celebrate your election, if you want to celebrate those long six months we've had to endure of crowing from a—*[interjection]*—crowing, crowing, crowing—tiresome crowing from

across the floor. *[interjection]* Yes, strutting, yes. If only it were another six months, I want to say to my friend from Fort Rouge.

But, instead of being bigger than your britches, going around and crowing all the time, what the official opposition really wants out of the government is for them to start governing. To date, so far I've said it—talked about good jobs; a program for that, we haven't seen it. No program for investing in our infrastructure. No program—no plan for education. No plan for child care. No plan for the North. And then my friend from Concordia gets up today. He—and asks a question of the Health Minister about what the plan is for public health care in Manitoba—universal public health care in Manitoba that's equitable for every Manitoban, that provides for free access for all Manitobans regardless of your class, of how much is in your bank account.

* (15:20)

And did we get an answer on that? Of course, we don't. Instead, we're required to debate bills in the House—small housekeeping bills that we have no particular objection to. If government wants to take it from severance disclosure from six months to 30 days, well, great, you know, good, fine. That's their prerogative. But what we don't understand is why there's this intense and—as I say, intense, relentless hyper-partisan attack on the NDP on the 17 fantastic years of government that we provided—17 glorious years.

And, you know, I can hear my friends from the government chuckling behind me, but maybe he and I would like to go for a little walk down downtown Winnipeg sometime and see the difference between when I moved here in 1996 and what it's like now. Well, why don't we start right up on—we'll just take a little walk right now. And we'll start at Main Street, why don't we? We'll start on Main Street, and you'll find—let's see; there's the WRHA building on Main Street, new United Way building—very important organization—on Main Street. There's the Bell Hotel which provides wraparound services to those providing—suffering from very difficult mental health and poverty issues. And Bell Hotel transformed from a—kind of a tough, rough-and-tumble place into a place of healing and reconciliation. How important is that?

And we'll keep going down Main Street. We get past that, get to the union tower, a very run-down place when I moved here in 1996. I worked at City Hall. You walk outside, look at the union tower

abandoned. Now it's a fantastic place owned and operated by Red River College. And that doesn't even get back to talking about Red River College on the other side. It's on—

An Honourable Member: Princess.

Mr. Allum: —on Princess. Thank you. That fantastic campus. And so, we keep walking up Main Street there; you turn the corner and what do you find? Is the MTS Centre. It's spectacular. Of course, they were opposed to the creation of the MTS Centre in the first place. And you keep going and you walk by state-of-the-art Hydro building that brought Hydro employees downtown. Clean, green renewable energy for future generations, and so you see that as well. Across the street from there, I think there's a new hotel called the—

An Honourable Member: Alt.

Mr. Allum: —Alt. That is a by-product of the investment made in the MTS Centre, and I note that the Leafs are in town tonight—not exactly my hometown in Toronto, a little bit away, but I was exciting to have the Leafs in town, but were it not for our government in those 17 glorious years, the Leafs wouldn't be in town tonight for Jets fans to cheer against.

But, as you see—you get to the—so, we're now walking by the Hydro building in all its great glory, one of the most energy-efficient buildings if not the most energy-efficient building in the country and maybe in the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you keep walking up there, and you get to the U of W, and it has also been transformed. I started teaching there part time, admittedly, because I was working full time at the City of Winnipeg. Campus was very tight, very small. Now you look at it after our glorious 17 years and the U of W has been utterly transformed—*[interjection]* And it's Kyoto-compliant, my friend from Fort Rouge reminds me. A world-class campus, downtown Winnipeg.

So, if you really want to be honest about the record of achievement under the past 17 years, then I invite my friends from the government, take a stroll downtown. New housing, new development—*[interjection]* The human rights museum, another example. And of course, that's in partnership with federal and municipal governments, because we're nothing if not collegial and collaborative in it.

So I want to say to government members that you watch your Cabinet and your Premier (Mr. Pallister) engage in really, really hardball,

hyper-partisan political activities, and I'm guessing it makes you feel pretty uncomfortable. I don't think you went to the doorstep and said, you know, I want to be your MLA so that I can engage in hyper-partisan political activity in the Legislature. I don't think any of my fine colleagues new to this Legislature went to the door and said—talk like that. I've gotten to know you a little bit and I quite like you and respect all of you, and I just don't think that's why you stepped up and put your name on the ballot. But I want you to know that's the path you're being led down by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his hyper-partisan Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen).

And I asked you on several occasions before and I'm going to do it again: exercise your sovereignty as an MLA. Don't be led down the garden path by that kind of political activity. Stand up for yourself, have a backbone. And when you get a chance to see and talk to the Minister of Finance in some future date, say to him, you know, when that guy from Fort Garry-Riverview gets up and asks a friendly question about how long the rules have been in place, how long the current rules have been in place, will you just ask him to—if you don't mind—to answer the question. It's not that hard. It doesn't really require a hyper-partisan political lecture. It's not what's required in this House.

You don't want to see that. We want to make the most of our time in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and so all we're asking, that when we're going to deal with these kind of housekeeping bills—and believe me the government has a boatload of them, because, as I said, they don't have a plan for anything else.

An Honourable Member: No plan.

Mr. Allum: No plan and no answers that's for sure. And then—and on top of that, absolutely no interest in governing on behalf of all the people of Manitoba because we're forced to deal with these small housekeeping kind of bills that, as I say, we don't have an particular objection to. Let's not—let's leave the hyper-partisanship out of it. Let's not go down that path. Simply come in, engage on a—in a good Q and A. Let's have a good debate on the merits of the bill. Let's talk about the things that could be done to improve it and to enhance it. Let's not continue down the path of taking 14 minutes of a 15-minute speech and hammering the NDP when it's not necessary torquing things up for no apparent reason.

My friend from Elmwood asked some really astute questions about the inclusion of the City of Winnipeg in the bill, and only because the Finance

Minister, in his long hyper-partisan speech, had mentioned the City of Winnipeg on several occasions. So my friend from Elmwood gets up and he says, well, you've talked about the City of Winnipeg ad nauseam during your speech here, why aren't they included in the bill?

Do you think we got an answer for that? No, there was nothing forthcoming on that either. It just—he's going to put the bill through. It's going to go for third reading. It's going to get consent sometime—royal consent sometime down the line. The City of Winnipeg still won't be in it, but he'll be phoning and consulting with them that would be very helpful.

You know, why not do the homework first? Call the City of Winnipeg, get them involved, maybe even call other members of other municipalities and see what can we do here to be more accountable and transparent when it comes to these issues. And—but what I've been trying to say in the very short time I've been speaking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is they—like I said we have no, no, no issues particularly.

I know my friend from River Heights also asked some good questions. There are probably some improvements that can be made, but we don't want to really drag out these housekeeping bills. We were elected. We have fought and battled for the issues that are absolutely central to the people of Manitoba, and when I say the people of Manitoba I mean all of the people of Manitoba: in west, east, north and south regardless of class, regardless of race, regardless if you're a long-standing Canadian or a newcomer or a refugee, we care about all of those people. That's what motivates New Democrats. That's why we're in this House.

We're in this House to try to address the issues of the day in order to create a fair, more just, more equitable society for every single Manitoban, and instead we have to spend an exorbitant amount of time listening to a hyper-partisan political—political attacks that don't serve anyone very well and, frankly, reveal the government to be what it actually is. And the people of Manitoba may not have a clear sense of that right now and, of course, it's our job as opposition to get that message out and, of course, we'll be doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (15:30)

But it won't be long. It won't be long that the people of Manitoba themselves will recognize, in the new government of Manitoba, the same old government of Stephen Harper in Ottawa. And that's a shame. We really don't need to go down that path

in Manitoba. We saw what the consequences were for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Let's not go down that path. Let's not go down the path of austerity. Let's not go down the path of hyper-partisan political attacks where everything—absolutely everything—is a set-up for a political attack. It's not necessary. It's not needed. The people of Manitoba don't want it.

We have a job as opposition here to hold the government to account. We expect answers to questions when they're posed so that we can get a better understanding of the bill and the ways in which it might be enhanced. We're all about people and families, on this side of the House. We're always going to be about people and families, on this side of the House.

And my suggestion is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's move on from this bill, this kind of housekeeping bill. Let's forget the hyper-partisan political attacks that come from the other side, day after day after day. And let's get on, let's get on, let's get on, once and for all, for governing, for all the people of Manitoba all the time. That's what we want, on this side of the House. Thank you.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I listened to the member's comments with moderate interest. He really didn't talk about the bill that is in front of us, but since he opened that door, I will step through it later in my remarks.

But, first, being a new MLA, I'm not aware of some of the goings-on in previous sessions, but I can tell you this: that this government, being its six-month anniversary today, has done more in six months than the previous government did in 17 years. You know, and that's—I'm just sticking to the facts. And it's—when you're talking about the facts, it's truly not partisan.

Now, this bill—I was really intrigued with what the Finance Minister had to say about what happened, in the recent past, that people were seconded to work on political campaigns. Is that—was that correct? Wow. And, through the premier's office? And then, when they didn't support the right person, they were let go? Like, and I know I'm just new here, but, you guys, like, this was—that's ridiculous. What was this?—a madhouse? You can't go around hiring people for political, partisan purposes and then fire them at great taxpayer expense and then hide it. Like, that is not within the keeping of what Manitobans believe in.

Now the fact that \$700,000 was used in severance, like, that's a lot of money to a lot of people. And the NDP may say, well, you know, we put the Province \$10 billion in debt, so don't worry about it; what's \$700,000?

Well, there's a few things. One is the principle. I come from a political background in Ottawa, and what has happened in Manitoba would not happen in Ottawa for—at any party level, as far as I know. Well, maybe the NDP federally, because they got caught using taxpayer money for partisan purposes. So it might be a cultural thing endemic in the NDP DNA. But I will note that I was very surprised to see what some of the salaries were of these people. I don't begrudge them the salaries, like, \$124,000, \$150,000, \$136,000. These are people that I understand were seconded from unions. But, boy, if I was a union member paying dues, I would be hopping mad. How can salaries like that be paid? I bet that is more money than the workers themselves make in those unions. That is scandalous. Perhaps—I have an idea. Perhaps we should bring forward some transparency to unions. *[interjection]* Disclose? We'll put that on the to-do list.

The—we tried to do it with the private members' business bill—well, one member tried to do it with a private members'—didn't quite get it through. But the ideas, you know, are good. The—because this side of the House is for the common working person. That side of the House is for big union bosses, for six-figure salaries with no accountability, no transparency and they try and hide it—deliberately. We heard the Finance Minister describe how they went through an order-in-council to kick the ball down the timeline so that it would get washed under the rug, so to speak.

This bill will end that and it will end it for this government. We're—not only are we talking the talk, we're walking the walk, and it's in black and white in the bill in front of us.

Now, there's transparency already in anyone who earns over \$50,000 in the—through the—and is paid through taxpayer dollars in Manitoba, and that was good. I found that very helpful when I was UMSU president; I could check out my university professors' salaries. Very interesting, good stuff—though I had to go to the archives to do it. I like the idea that was suggested earlier, putting it all online. Perhaps that's something we can discuss at committee.

Now, the member from Flin Flon talked for five hours, wasted five hours of legislative time in this

House, and now we have the previous NDP speaker saying, well, we shouldn't waste time.

An Honourable Member: It's only wasted if you weren't listening.

Mr. Fletcher: The—now the member is heckling, and I am glad I am not listening to what he says, because based on the five hours when I was listening, nothing much was said. The fact is when the member who— from the NDP—Riverview? Was that? Is—

An Honourable Member: Fort Garry-Riverview.

* (15:40)

Mr. Fletcher: Fort Garry-Riverview. Thank you— was speaking, he said—talks about hyper-partisanship. Well, this is not a hyper-partisan bill. How is it hyper-partisan? It's pointing out something that happened that the NDP messed up on. I think we can all agree to that, and we're just bringing transparency to it. And, if the NDP feel it's just housekeeping, then I—sure that they will have no problem in supporting it. In fact, perhaps they'll have some suggestions like I heard from the member from Tyndall Park about accessing it on—the information on Internet.

The—you know, the member from—where was he from again?

Some Honourable Members: Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. Fletcher: Fort Garry-Riverview. Thank you. He opened the conversation up, asking what is—been going on. Well, the Province of Manitoba is in its—in the worst financial shape in its history. We're fortunate there's low interest rates right now, but, if they go up, our debt-servicing payments will go through the roof and same for Hydro, which is another \$24 billion, if you want to throw that in there. The NDP are like octopuses into your pocket. You know, they get you in the pants; they get you in the shirt; they get you, you know, in the shoe. They—you know, if you have anything behind your ear, watch out.

And, certainly, if there's anything—if you have—if you're—well, we established yesterday that there's some Trumpism over there, on the other side, and some Republican—if they had hidden silver in their backyard for the end of the world, which might actually happen if Trump wins, the—which he won't, thank goodness, but it would be a very cold lunar night before we would be able to recover from the economic hardship that the NDP have brought us.

You know, the other—I'm really into this show Vikings. You know, it's the latest show on, I don't know, the History channel or Syfy. And the Vikings remind me of the NDP. They go in somewhere that was wealthy; they destroy the place; they take all the wealth; they leave nothing behind. People are devastated. The education system, as it was back then, is destroyed. Anyone who has a belief other than the Vikings are killed. They—and there's no written record. That's like the NDP. There's no—there's really no trace on paper, just the devastation.

And that went on for hundreds of years. It wasn't until the Vikings—Charlemagne put an end to that. Well, it started just at the end of his reign, but it was after the Viking scourge that civilization began again. And that is what is happening in Manitoba. The Vikings no longer control the purse strings. They've been banished. We love Vikings; we just don't like them with power or money.

In regard to some of the things that—you know, talk about partisanship, I will give credit to the NDP provincial government under Gary Doer. I remember very well the announcement between the federal and provincial government on the MTS Iceplex, four indoor ice rinks that is—I used day to day, and I think was a great asset to the recreational ability for all Manitobans. I can—I'll give credit to Gary Doer for the wheelchair ramp outside this very building which cost about as much as what the NDP paid in severance. Isn't that interesting? What can you do for that money? You can make a building as glorious as this, but with 40 steps outside, wheelchair accessible with the kind of money that the NDP blew on severance.

The other—you know, the member from Fort Rouge mentioned the human rights museum. Yes, that was the previous government, federal government. They put in a huge sum of money into that. And operating in 'peperture' and there—I think the member would agree that there are exhibits that reveal some of the challenging times that Canadians have had in the past and people from all over the world have had, and it celebrates human rights. That is something that happened in the previous administration.

Now, the member also—from Riverview—brought up health care. A fun Fletcher fact: the—in 2004, a health accord was signed and the provinces were given 6 per cent additional funding year after year for 10 years compounded. That agreement's coming up for negotiation. But the federal government did

what the previous government—or the previous Liberal government cut the social transfer payments. Even during the biggest economic downturn we kept those funds coming to Manitoba and Ottawa.

But the reason I raise this is—and this is the whopper, ladies and gentlemen—is the NDP getting 6 per cent year after year over and above what they got the previous year, did not spend that entire amount on health care. They spent it on other priorities. They—the Liberal Health Minister just yesterday stated that provinces did not fulfill the expectations of the accord, that provinces did not use the money in the way it was intended, and who was in power? Who was in power? Someone tell me, who was in power in Manitoba? Oh, it was the NDP, and the NDP squandered money that was directed to the health-care system.

Let's talk about education. We have the lowest results in the entire country on education. My colleague from St. James and my colleague from Kirkfield Park, we met with the school board, and we were, along with the school board just aghast at what has happened to the Manitoba school system. I happen to have nieces that live abroad, and they—one in the States and one in the UK—and they're light years ahead of the equivalent age group here in Manitoba, and they're only eight. Yes, my niece from England sent me a letter in Greek the other day—Greek. That's, what, grade 2? That—but they measure results.

* (15:50)

Everyone is measured. Every school is measured, so you know where you stand. That's called transparency. It brings the bar higher. It allows people to excel. Instead of rushing to the lowest common denominator, which is exactly what the NDP philosophy is: no one can fail anything even though they don't show up to school or write exams; you can't fail. Well, with that attitude, you fail not only in—that student, their family but you fail society. And it goes to universities as well. You know, I was president of the University of Manitoba Students' Union. When the NDP took over, they undercut they froze the allotment of funds to the universities. They claimed to be working for the students by reducing the tuition; that didn't do anything for the students. It just—it helped the kids in Tuxedo as much as the kids in Point Douglas. Targeted funding, thinking about what you're doing is the best way to get results. You know, there are students who need financial support, and they should receive it if they

have the ability. But to do it, you know, for the millionaire kids is kind of a—not necessarily good public policy.

But the way you can deal with that is through transparency, again, which is the theme of this bill. This bill is to bring transparency to government so that people are not hired for political partisan reasons. Now, I will say that the salaries—again, I'm blown away by the salaries—\$150,000. In Ottawa, the member from Elmwood, I think, will confirm this, the average—the most we could pay was \$79,000 for a political staffer. And nobody ever got that; at least, not in my office. And, when I was a minister, six figure—it was just not—it's not—six figures would have been a tough sell to get through anywhere. But here we have evidence, and no one seems to be raising an eyebrow. But, boy, that—those unions and the taxpayers, you know, they really need to see what the previous government thought was reasonable. If I was—you know, those union dues—are those really going to the benefit of the members, or do we think that going to the big union bosses? Well, transparency tells us it was going to the big union bosses.

Now, the 8 per cent GST, PST—the PST—you know, I mentioned octopuses earlier. Eight arms, 8 per cent PST. Is that a coincidence? Maybe, or, maybe, that's the NDP philosophy: to pick your pocket with as many arms as—that are available in the animal kingdom. Vikings work hard at destroying civilization. Thank goodness the Conservative Party—and I don't want to be partisan, but I will make the observation that Manitobans saved Manitoba civilization, gave us hope.

And, as the Premier (Mr. Pallister) says, under a Conservative government, the only thing better than today living in Manitoba is tomorrow living in Manitoba. And I think he is right.

The financial devastation, aka by the Vikings and octopuses, is indicative of the NDP philosophy, but it puts us in a very difficult position. And the member from—where was that guy from again? River—

An Honourable Member: Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. Fletcher: Oh, Fort Garry-Riverview. They—that member kept on referring to a little bit of money. What's \$700,000? Well, that's a lot of money, and when you're running a \$8-billion debt with a billion-dollar deficit with a Crown that has \$24 billion in debt, you got to watch every penny and it needs to be

demonstrated from the top. That's why the Premier (Mr. Pallister) reduced the size of Cabinet. That's why he's bringing forward this legislation. It's not partisan legislation. It is legislation Manitobans expect. They expect transparency and accountability, and that is what this government's bringing them. They didn't receive that in the last government, so I'm told.

Now, could it be that I'm—been misinformed? Well, I look at the numbers. Numbers don't lie—*[interjection]* No, it's true. The province is in—an economic wreck. Taxes are high, higher than our sister province, Saskatchewan. You know, when I was growing up we used to make jokes about Saskatchewan. They now, up until six months ago, were making jokes about us. Now we can both focus on Alberta and make jokes about them, because their NDP government is tanking their economy and I can hardly wait for a new government in that province.

You know, they have people in Ottawa—even Ottawa, where they would not put up with this kind of secrecy and blatant partisanship or outrageous salaries for political staffers. Like, the people in Ottawa dealt with a lot bigger—with all due respect, it's—you know, like, it's bigger issues than whatever the, you know, than a leadership race. But yet, that's—and they got paid a lot less. But it shows—it shows—the income inflation—like, when you lose track of where people are when you—when the government looks out just to sustain themselves.

Now, I'm glad that the Finance Minister was able to educate this new MLA on the shenanigans of the past. I'm glad the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) has brought forward legislation that will end some of those shenanigans. It will bring transparency and accountability, set the tone for the entire government, set the tone for all levels of taxpayer-funded agencies, universities, Crowns and so on. Transparency brings its own accountability, and with accountability we have a chance to get Manitoba out of the economic fiasco that we have found it in, but only with perseverance, hard work, dedication, principle and, hopefully, co-operation from the other members to get it done.

* (16:00)

I'm a Christian man, I am quite willing to forgive as long as people act in a way that demonstrates true regret, and I have to say some of the signals from the NDP doesn't show or demonstrate true remorse for their record.

I have highlighted in the spirit of some of the good things that were done, like Plessis underpass is another one, the Convention Centre another one but, if you look at it as a whole, the province is a mess, and the transfer payments from Ottawa have—health, but also others, increased from about 29 cents in Gary Filmon's time to over 40 cents in NDP. So the federal government can actually claim 40 cents of every announcement that is made by the Province. That's sad.

Look, Madam Speaker, let's bring transparency and accountability and God keep—

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

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): The member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) has mentioned a word, which is: squander. And it is a very telling word that shows how they treat government spending for the poor as squander. And, when that was said, it shows you an attitude problem. And I won't dwell too much on that because it will speak for itself, as in the Latin words *res ipsa loquitur*.

The laws proposed by the honourable Minister of Finance was designed as a housekeeping bill that seems to propagate the notion that, by introducing a bill that says disclosure or transparency or openness, it will solve their problem. And I think the biggest problem that they're trying to solve is that there were 17 years of government on the part of the previous government, the NDP government, that has provided progress in so many fronts. And we are proud, as members of that government, that we were able to put in enough investments to our province.

The monies that were poured in downtown Winnipeg and the facilities that resulted from those investments are there for all to see, and it's amazing that, sometimes, it has been ignored. In fact, during the time that there was a vote regarding the MTS Centre, and even the Investors Group Field, right by the University of Manitoba, the Conservative caucus at that time opposed—opposed—the construction—opposed the construction—of those facilities. And it was more out of a partisan attack on the program of government.

And it was—it has not stopped up to now. And it really confuses me a lot that after six months of Conservative rule, they are still acting like they are opposition. And it is a very difficult position, I understand, that now the Minister of Education seems to find himself, well, with a lot of things to do.

And I understand that when you're in opposition, it's easy to criticize; it's easy to say things that are not really what you meant, but you just wanted to make some political scores.

And the member from Morris is the expert in that, and he usually does that with aplomb and a lot of arrogance. When he tries to make a point, he uses the social media. And he's good at that.

Now, the transparency that's spoken of, in this bill, is something that really should be defined more than anything else. Transparency requires that it should not be a one-way mirror, because then it will be not transparent; it will be opaque. But then the bill itself provides for the minister himself to be able to not do any disclosure of the names, if he so decides. And there is a protecting the employee's identity portion of it, and there is a condition that it's only when safety is at risk. And I love it. I love the way that it was phrased in this legislation.

What are the mechanisms in place to report employee compensation? We have been told that the minister will design and formulate how the disclosures will be done. Will it be a billboard right on Portage and Main that will show John Smith or Amy Smith has been paid so much, or is it just in some sort of a website? And will that be reported to the Legislature? Is that something that will be done? We do not know.

And the form of disclosure that has been made a ministerial power instead of being included in the public accounts section of the legislative process, will that really help us in solving a problem? And why was the City of Winnipeg excluded from the provision of this bill when it was the City itself that was asking that it be allowed to make those disclosures?

* (16:10)

And the criteria that will be used by the minister to determine whether or not an employee's safety is unduly threatened, is that something that's subject to the discretion of the minister alone? There are so many questions that beg to be answered before we could even start criticizing the way that this bill was introduced in this House. The partisan preamble to the presentation shows the intent that it was more meant to shame, insult and hammer the previous government for certain things that have been imagined to be transgressions. Well, it is apparent that this is more a political weapon that is being used against the previous government by a government

with 40 members—with 40 members who could actually govern.

But government—governing or governance requires that the government should have plans, plans about jobs and plans about moving the economy. From what we hear from all the pronouncements from the opposite side of this House is that everything is under review. Everything is on a full suspense. And some have been stopped. Let's take the purchase of the Liquor & Lotteries building. And it was done with a lot of consultation, and it was already a transaction—the purchase itself was already consummated, and there was supposed to be plans that have been, well, executed: plans that were designed, plans that were drawn, and now, as soon as this government of the day was sworn in, the first thing that the Minister for Crown Services, or somebody in his stead, announced that it is being kiboshed. It's being stopped. And the former government's attempt at reviving downtown by putting the headquarters of Liquor & Lotteries downtown so that there will be an extra 450 employees who will be present downtown during the daytime, at least. It will—it became impossible.

The notion that the question period is a period of time wherein the opposition—Her Majesty's loyal opposition—could ask questions and receive answers has been played around with. There has been a lot of non-answers from the ministers who stood up in supposedly replies to questions from—legitimate questions from the opposition.

This is a parody of the rules, and it is a tragedy that the ministers of the Crown have failed to do their job. Their job would have been to provide reliable information to members of the opposition so that the members of the opposition could vote in favour or against some of the bills that are presented by the government. But, because of the refusal on the part of the ministers, and considering the nature of the attitude that's prevalent in all the ministers—I would say all the ministers—they have learned that, by not answering questions, they have succeeded in preventing the opposition from doing its job.

Well, I must submit that they have not. There's more questions that are coming their way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they'll have to explain why they have failed to answer some of the most pressing questions about the government plan to increase or, at least, eliminate the job losses.

We are hemorrhaging. We are bleeding to death with our jobs here; 10,800 jobs. And it's amazing that members of the opposite side seem to not care. Is it because those jobs are disappearing from the North or from the city? There are some jobs that have been declared as lost, even in some manufacturing sectors. And, just yesterday, when the Manitoba Hydro CEO declared that there will be more jobs that will not be happening at the Hydro organization. He said that there will be a little bit more of the tightening of the belts.

Now, it's concerning that, instead of the Minister for Crown Services saying those policies, it has become the job of somebody else. And we are lost, in some sense, about what the ministers really are up to. When we—when this side of the House asks any questions about what the Minister for Families will do about daycare spaces, we always get—the traditional and typical answer is that it is very important. Everything is important. But no information is forthcoming. Nothing will be said about the question. The question itself will not be answered.

And it's amazing how they even—they as in the members of the Conservative caucus—would even jeer and clap and celebrate the non-answer. It's as if it is their style of being transparent, transparent as in: we'll never say anything, transparent as in we'll cover up the answers with non-answers, and we will never tell you anything, and we will only tell you when we want to, if we want to. And it's the same attitude that, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself was inviting members of the opposite to join. And it's been a really hurtful exercise in humiliation when the Premier himself says that we are willing to work with you.

* (16:20)

And what we hear are partisan attacks, even during those—even the only public consultation process, the prebudget consultation process. When the first one, it was partisan. The answers that were given were partisan. And I don't even know if they were recorded.

But, when we were acknowledged as being present by the honourable House leader for government, there was that hint that you're here, but you're not here. And I was hoping that if it's at all possible, a little bit more respect would have been exercised. If we were just acknowledged, instead of being invited over and over again. Once we have declined it officially, there is that sense that we

would be there in the capacity that we want to be. And we cannot be forced to participate by humiliating us, by publicly telling us that we acknowledge your presence and there is a place here at the table, if you want to.

I would appreciate—I would appreciate it very much—if that is omitted from the proceedings in the prebudget consultations, because we intend to be with the public every time that there's a budget consultation. But then, if we are always told that, you're here, there's a place here for you, it is one way of humiliating a member of this Assembly. And, if that is not intended, I'll take it for what it is. It's a political, well, snipe.

I take—I took great pains in travelling from Tyndall Park—

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable House leader.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Point of order, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me the member has wandered far and wide from topic at hand, and I would like to remind all of us we are discussing, this afternoon, Bill 14, the public sector compensation disclosure—disclosure amendment act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order. The—are you still—honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino).

Mr. Marcelino: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think it is a point—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are you speaking on a point of order?

Mr. Marcelino: Yes, on the same point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Marcelino: It is not within the ambit of the honourable House leader who raised a point of order to tell me, to tell the member for Tyndall Park, how to debate this issue. And I don't think it is a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable House leader for the government.

Mr. Micklefield: Mr.—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. It doesn't—okay. Additional information?

Mr. Micklefield: Just to clarify, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was not actually speaking to the member

from Tyndall Park or any member; I was addressing yourself in my comments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Well, since this is second reading of the bill, we want to make—the point of order that was spoken, that we want to be more relevant to the actual bill. But, you know, we don't want people to sway away from the actual relevance of that bill.

Yes, so, I just wanted to just confirm everything that—when it comes to the debate of the second reading of the bill, it's the principle of the bill. And sometimes it might go other—like, away from the bill, too, but it's basically, the content will—is part of the bill. And so, it's—we're actually talking about the bill itself and the principles of the bill.

* * *

Mr. Marcelino: Thank you, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]* I mean, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I misspoke again. Thank you very much for the admonition. And I was—if only the government House leader waited for a second, I would have gone back to the point.

There's that sense of propriety that I heard from my mother before, when she was still alive, that as you speak, you should also try to listen to the reaction of the audience. And from what I gather when I spoke about the transparency of the government about—it's more about a failure on my part to understand why none of the questions from members of the opposition have ever been answered.

There was a play around of words and phrases, that every time a question was asked regarding, say, Freedom Road or the east-side authority or daycare space or housing, the predictable answer was always way beyond the scope of the question. And now we have here an apparent attempt to, maybe, cure that defect and maybe a realignment of attitude towards transparency. From what I gather, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act as—*[interjection]*—thank you—as a measure to keep governments, current and future, to be open and transparent is a goal that all of us are trying to secure for ourselves.

The dysfunction that we—or, from my point of view, that we have in this Legislature when members of—when ministers of the Crown refuse to give specific answers to questions from Her Majesty's loyal opposition is a travesty of the procedures. And it was done on purpose. And it was done in a way that really befuddles any observer.

* (16:30)

If we were to take back, and take a look at Hansard, the questions that were asked of members of the Cabinet—more precisely, the ministers of the Crown—the answers they give are automatically way off base, not responsive to the question. Even for six times the question from the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum)—six times he asked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen). The Minister of Finance said nothing about how long has this rule been in the books. And he never answered it.

It is all right to say you don't know if you don't. It is all right to say that you'll keep it under advisement or hold it as notice of a question that you need to answer later. We are poorer for the experience of having a travesty of question period and debates. We are paid well as members of the Legislative Assembly. And, as such, we are not doing our jobs if we do not govern the way that we should. Her Majesty's loyal opposition is also a member of the Legislative Assembly. We are entitled to some of the privileges of receiving honest answers.

So, when you speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you speak of transparency, it should be across the board. It cannot be just one or two issues. And you're transparent regarding disclosures of severance packages, but you also have to be transparent and open about the answers and the questions. And we are willing to work and work ourselves into the graces of the ministers for as long as there's some honest answers that are given to honest questions.

We are not trying to be facetious about our questions. When a question is asked, it took us about maybe 10 minutes to formulate a question that's decent, but it's also one of our ways of eliciting honest answers. So transparency is something that works two ways.

And I am almost at the end. In concluding, I thank—

An Honourable Member: Three more minutes, Ted. Keep going.

Mr. Marcelino: Okay, I was told to keep on going.

The—Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of my hobbies, one of the ways that I spend time is by reading up on Hansard.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Marcelino: And I saw that for those times that I asked the Minister for Crown Services questions during question period, during those times—there's only six times that I asked questions. And, for every question that I asked, I remember no answers except the usual package that says, well, the mess and the former government—and it is more of an obfuscation. Obfuscation means you try a smokescreen, and you deviate from the question and you answer it in some ways that you like. It's not really just to answer the question.

So I said I feel frustrated. And that's—Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's the reason why I don't want to ask any more questions of the Minister for Crown Services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): And always a pleasure following my critic, the critic for Crown Services and the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino), and we appreciate the fact that he got up and agreed with our position that they did leave a mess in the Crown corporations. They doubled the debt of Manitoba Hydro from twelve to twenty-five billion, but that's not actually what we're debating today. We're debating the principles of Bill 14, the genesis of which started, Mr. Acting Speaker, in the civic election of 2014, I believe, was the last civic election, where then-candidate Judy—

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the—I was standing up and I should have been recognized because we're speaker No. 5.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My apologies. I apologize. It was on an order that I had here, so I missed it by one. So I apologize. So I'll call for the member of River Heights. *[interjection]* I apologize. I'll let the Minister of Crown Services continue and finish, and then I'll go to—to your—the member of River Heights next.

* * *

Mr. Schuler: Well, thank you very much, and I will keep my comments short. I appreciate there is only—only so much we could handle and we got all of that and more from the member for Tyndall Park, so I do appreciate having the opportunity to get up.

Bill 14 is very important. To take public money and pay off your political staff because they got

caught in a civil war in the crossfire of a civil war within the NDP was unfortunate. That should have been public. They should have had to disclose what kind of monies was paid to those individuals so they could go get high-paying jobs in Alberta. That is a disgrace, Mr. Acting Speaker.

It is unfortunate that the taxpayers were so disrespected and that this actually took place, and, basically, what this bill should be called, it should be called preventing the NDP from damaging the NDP, and I would recommend to all members that this is a—how we want to have good behaviour from the NDP party here in this Chamber and the way they do their affairs.

This is a very reasonable—it's an important bill, and it protects taxpayers from NDP who want to use public money to pay off their staff, so they can go to Alberta and mismanage and do the kind of shenanigans in Alberta what they did here to Manitoba.

With that, I believe the member for River Heights would like to put some comments on the record, and, of course, my esteemed colleague and former seatmate, I would like to give him that opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: I just want to say and speak briefly on this piece of legislation. It's reasonable that we should be making changes to the act. My major concern is that the government has done only half the job that needs to be done. There are clearly considerably more changes that should be made to this act, and they should have been brought forward at the same time.

I've alluded to a couple of these earlier on. For example, it's been many, many years that we've had a threshold of 50,000 and it's time to look at adjusting that threshold upward, given the length of time that it stayed at 50,000.

* (16:40)

Second, I believe that there needs to be some changes so that when we are having reports of income by individuals or for individuals, that when an individual has more than one source of government income, that both should be reported in the same place so they're easy to find, and that what's happening now is that an individual—oh, we came across, for example, a physician in The Pas who was earning a substantial amount of money on fee for

service in one place, and he was earning a substantial income from salary in another place. And, unless you were able to track down the two independent places, you didn't realize what the total income was. And it's time now, with electronic reporting and all that, that we should bring the system up to date and that the combined income of individuals should be reported in total and not just the income from one source and one place and from another source and another place.

I think these two changes would, to some extent, balance themselves off. We'd probably catch a few more people who had combined income of—if we moved to 60,000, over 60,000, then we'd drop a number of people who had less than 60,000, if that's what we move to. But it's time to make some changes to make this a more reasonable reporting process and one that is friendly to those who are trying to find the information without trying to capture the income from people who are—what was a very substantial income at one point and is probably now below the provincial average. So we're capturing a lot of people that we probably don't need to be capturing in terms of their income.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Radisson.

My—*[interjection]* Yes. Sorry. Yes. The honourable member for Radisson.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record this afternoon about this bill. It's an important bill because it's about accountability. It's about transparency. It's about integrity. And, you know, listening to the honourable member from Fort Garry-Riverview—*[interjection]* I remember that name very well. Thank you to the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) for drilling it into our memories.

But in any case, you know, I can appreciate why the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) calls us good housekeeping. He appreciates the contents of the bill and yet doesn't necessarily want to talk about it. He calls it hyper-partisan. And, to me, this bill is all about integrity, accountability, transparency. And in that way, it's about a contrast. I think what we have before us as a House is a contrast that we're seeing between the new government that Manitobans elected last April and the previous government of—under the NDP. *[interjection]* I believe the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief) is

trying to make me think he was my whip, but thankfully, he's not, so.

In any case, as I was saying, this bill is really about a contrast, I think, that Bill 14 shows us that our new government is about accountability but the previous government, well, not so much. When the previous government was asked to reveal severance packages to the tune of \$670,000, not only did they not do so but then they kicked it down the road and delayed and delayed. So even though the member for Fort Gary-Riverview claims this is good housekeeping and it's something that he can approve and that it's something good and beneficial, yet the actions of his government while he was in power and I believe in Cabinet at that time, they tell a very, very different story. They point in a very different way indeed. *[interjection]*

And, as the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) has just told me, there's a different kind of housekeeping, and I am going to get to that, the kind of housekeeping that Manitobans are—were involved in just six short months ago. But in any case, once again, that contrast between our new government that believes in transparency.

So this new legislation—who is this new legislation going to apply to? Is it going to apply to NDP staffers? Well, maybe eventually, after some—many, many years. But, more likely, it's going to apply to Progressive Conservative political staffers. That's because we believe in transparency. We understand what it means when we use public dollars, that we're accountable to the public who pay those taxes.

We believe in leading by example and, once again, a contrast. We, under our Premier (Mr. Pallister), have a smaller Cabinet. Under our Premier, we believe in setting a tone from the top. And here we are with the previous government that, if that was leading by example, shame on them—shame on them, because I can tell you I'm—as a father of six, I certainly don't want the examples of their kind of disruptive behaviour, their kind of manipulation and distortion and blockading to be the kind of behaviour that my children would model.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Not only are we talking about leading by example, but we're talking about putting public interests first. And when you put public interest first, then you're going to understand that you're accountable. You are accountable to Manitobans, to

individual taxpayers, to voters, to ordinary Joes and Sallys on the street. Those are the people who you're accountable to. And, when I was campaigning out in Radisson, and knocking on doors and talking to people, that came through loud and clear. And a great example of that kind of desire for integrity, and desire for transparency came—I was talking to long-time—until this past election—but long-time NDP supporters at the door.

And, one after the other, because it happened countless times, that I spoke to previous NDP—self-professed NDP supporters who had supported you for 17—and probably 30 years. And yet, this time, they were committing to supporting me. They were even putting signs in their lawn. And the reason that they're doing that is because they tell me it's the lack of integrity—it's the lack of respect for the taxpayer, lack of respect for the voter that was demonstrated by this previous NDP government.

A great example, actually, is the PST increase. And Bill 14 doesn't necessarily deal directly with that, but when you look at the PST increase, it was more important to these NDP supporters, these previous-to-this-election NDP supporters—it was more important to them how the tax was raised than that it was raised. I had numerous people talk to me and say they would be happy to pay that 8 per cent PST and, in fact, they're happier paying it now than they were six months ago, because now, they know that the money that they're paying is going to be used wisely. That the money that they're giving to the government is going to be used carefully, whereas what they saw under the previous government—under the previous NDP government—was that that money that they paid was not being used wisely and that it was obtained surreptitiously, without a desire for—I should use my words carefully. But, in any case, without a willingness to be accountable, without a willingness to display integrity. And, in fact, we were told it was utter nonsense that they might increase that PST—ridiculous that they might increase that PST. And that's what made long-time NDP supporters come and vote for me as their Progressive Conservative candidate, and now their Progressive Conservative MLA for Radisson. And I hope to continue to serve them well with integrity. Thank you.

Getting back to the contrasts. Getting back to the contrasts. The member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski) just showed me, actually—he had a picture on his cellphone of his daughter. He had just visited with his daughter out in Vancouver Island.

And she was holding up a beautiful rock with a fossil on it. Now, I kind of thought the fossil looked like Darth Vader, but I was told: no, this is actually a trilobite. And, you know, trilobites are very interesting things. And I think we can tie that to the NDP somehow, because—I don't have to talk about if they're fossils, or that they're extinct—those are things that I'll leave to the members to figure out for themselves, but they were just generally not regarded on as putting the public interests first and foremost as they hovered on this—bottom of the ponds.

* (16:50)

Now, enough about paleontology. I do need to move on. I do need to move on back to the contrast that we're seeing, that Bill 14 is revealing between the new government that Manitobans have elected and the ones that they left behind.

We have a new government that believes in freedom of access to information. The previous government is blocking, blocking, blocking; our new government is ensuring legislatively through regulation that this kind of information is going to be on the public record, that it's going to be available for public scrutiny. And that is a key thing that that full disclosure happened, that's a contrast between this new government and built with—is outlined in Bill 14 and the example we saw from the previous government. And, really, what it all comes down to is stewardship.

Growing up that's—my parents taught me that my attitude towards money, towards the environment even needed to be based on an attitude of stewardship, but it wasn't that you had to be afraid of spending or using your resources but rather you had to use them wisely. And that is the key thing, that's the fundamental issue that we have here because our new government is committed to doing that and to doing that in a transparent, open and accountable way. And by you exercising good stewardship and exposing all public monies to public scrutiny, as we should, we're earning the trust of Manitobans. We earn it every day and we continue to earn it, will continue to earn it for the next countless number of years, I do hope.

Our new government, as the members opposite are well aware, are fixing the finances. Why do we have to do that? Why do we have to do that? We have to fix them because of 17 years of neglect, and that's the contrast, and we're going to ensure that that is going to build a stronger economy for Manitoba and that we're going to do that while repairing our

services. And the members opposite know how desperately this is needed.

Getting back to the—let's get back to the issue at hand here, which is that contrast that Bill 14 clearly illustrates. Bill 14 talks about the way that our government is committed, and it is a small thing; the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) is accurate in saying that—in that this is one of many steps that our government needs to take and there are many, many more that are going to follow. But it's illustrative. It's illustrative of our desire to get value for the money and to ensure that the taxpayer dollars is being used wisely.

Now, beyond that, I think it's also illustrative of another contrast that maybe the members opposite don't want to talk about, which is the difference between what we see happening on this side of the House, which is a team environment, which is one where we're harmonious, where we all work together, and what we saw on the other side of the House where members were not working well together, where there was open rebellion, where there was open criticism—[*interjection*] The harmony that we experience in our caucus is wonderful, it's wonderful.

I've been on a lot of teams—throughout my career, I've been on a lot of teams, whether that's a sports team—

Madam Speaker: Order. We only have about seven minutes to go, and I am kindly asking all of you if you could please be attentive to the speaker that is in debate. And, while we may not always agree with each other, I think we do have the responsibility to be respectful and listen to the debate. And I would encourage members to give that a shot for the next five—or seven minutes.

Mr. Teitsma: Madam Speaker, I appreciate your direction in that regard, and I hope that the House will work together as a team that we will all be able to experience the kind of harmony that I've been enjoying on the team that is the Progressive Conservative caucus. And it's fundamental, I think, because, you know, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview talked about what members like myself did when we were campaigning. And I apologize for the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) that his comments were not sufficiently interesting enough to form the basis for some of my notes here, but with a little work, I think you can—you might be able to get there. But in any case, getting back to the member for Fort Garry-Riverview, who talked about

campaigning, talked about what we were saying at the doors as Progressive Conservative candidates, and I think, what we were pitching to voters.

And the answer is, well, what we were telling them is that we would give them accountability, that we would give them integrity, that we would keep our promises, that we would do what we said. That's what we do. That's what we said we'd do. That's what we're doing. That's—we're going to keep on doing, because that's what leadership looks like—that's what leadership looks like—and I know that the member for Fort Garry-Riverview might not want to hear about it, but he mentioned a word, and it'll come up in a moment here, but let's consider for example what examples of shameful, hyper-partisanship we have seen, because although we've heard accusations of that occurring in this House, I'm not seeing it.

But what I am—what I can remember is what I faced on the campaign. And what I faced on the campaign was shameful. What I faced on the campaign in terms of hyper-partisanship was a willingness to play politics with the lives of cancer patients. What I faced within my own constituency—I don't know how widely spread this was, but was a willingness to print what was completely fallacious and distribute it to rental units throughout the riding, claiming that, somehow, under a Progressive Conservative government, rent controls were to be immediately abolished and rent rates would go up by 10 or 15 per cent. That's the example of hyper-partisanship that I encountered when I was campaigning. That's a disastrous campaign, frankly, and the results are in, aren't they?

Because, you know what, Manitobans saw through that façade. Manitobans saw to it that they would get a new government, a new government that is committed to accountability, that's committed to operating with integrity, that's committed to operating with transparency, and will work hard to keep their promises.

An Honourable Member: Hear, hear.

Mr. Teitsma: Thank you—[*interjection*]

And that's what Bill 14 talks about. And I thank the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) for keeping me on topic as I should be, because that's what teams are good for, and I appreciate very much the help and support that I've gotten from my fellow caucus members and the good harmony that we experience every working day, not just when we're all together as a group in caucus, but one on one, we're helping

each other and I believe we're consistently putting the interests of Manitobans first, and that's what, really, Bill 14 is about. It's about what's in the interest of our public, what's in the interests of Manitobans.

And what's in the interest of Manitobans is for them to have a government that is going to be accountable. Now, what does accountability really look like? What we need to think about there is—I think, for example, of my own marital relation—my own marriage relationship. I'm accountable to my wife and she's accountable to me. And what does that mean? Well, that means that we openly share information with each other about where we are and what we're doing and how we're spending our time and how we're spending our money.

And it's the same way with the Manitoba public, with the voters of Manitoba. When they elect a government, they expect that government to be held accountable. And part of that accountability is for us to be open with the way we're spending our money and the way we're spending our time, that we're going to do it wisely, that we're going to do it

effectively and that we are going to govern in a way that contrasts sharply from the example that we saw, especially in the previous few years under the NDP, that that—the government that we saw under the NDP—I see I'm down the third title, okay—was drifting. It was drifting, it was off message; it was broken up. Saying it's rudderless suggests it's a ship that was all put together, but we all know people were in the boats. They were off. They'd left the beach and they'd moved on and the main ship was broken to bits. And the result was that Manitobans were not being led in a way that they deserve to be led.

We will lead Manitobans as a good government. Bill 14 is a great example of that and I encourage you all to support it, because under Bill 14—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 13 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

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