

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

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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

Thursday, October 20, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Annual Report 2015-16.

I am pleased to table the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation First Quarter Report for 2016-2017.

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): I am pleased to table the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation Annual Report from April 2015 to March 2016.

And I'm also pleased to table the Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship Annual Report from April 2015 to March 2016.

Madam Speaker: The required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Diwali

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize members of the South Asian community in Manitoba as they celebrate their annual Diwali Mela, the Festival of Lights.

Diwali is a five-day Indian festival, which is observed by the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains and also observed by the non-religious.

The joyous theme of this annual celebration represents a period of renewal and inspires hope and optimism for a harmonious world. During Diwali, devotees pray and reflect on the meaning of life. People are encouraged to see the good in others, including enemies. It is also a time to reinforce one's faith.

The lighting of the diyas represents victory of good over evil, lightness over dark, truth over falsehood and knowledge over ignorance. Its significance and spiritual meaning is generally the awareness of inner light.

The largest Diwali celebration in Winnipeg will be hosted by the Hindu Society of Manitoba on Saturday, October 22nd at the RBC Convention Centre. The program will feature traditional and modern dances representing the diversity of culture in India. I encourage all Manitobans, Madam Speaker, to participate in this vibrant celebration, which is expected to draw 5,000 attendees.

Multicultural celebrations are integral to creating social harmony and fostering dynamic communities. The social capital created allows all citizens to take pride in enjoying their traditional celebrations while inviting their neighbours to engage in fellowship and cultural awareness.

Madam Speaker, I urge all members to take a moment to reflect and recognize how fortunate we are to live in a place where we actively share and celebrate traditions from all over the globe. I am proud that Manitoba is a symbol of multiculturalism that unites family, friends and community.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in welcoming some of the members of the Hindu Society of Manitoba to the gallery: Dr. Raj Pandey, S. Dev Parbhaker, Bhadresh Bhatt, Ms. Sonia Sharma, Vinod Chaudhery and Ravi Chhibba. Welcome.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, this year's Diwali celebration, also known as the Festival of Lights, will take place on October 22nd. Here in Manitoba, the Hindu Society of Manitoba will hold Diwali Mela at the RBC Convention Centre, which is open to the public.

Every year thousands of people attend the Mela, which showcases the best music, dance, food and fashion that Indian culture has to offer. Congratulations to the organizing committee of the Hindu Society of Manitoba and all the volunteers for what I know will be a superb event.

Madam Speaker, Diwali is called the Festival of Lights because the common practice is to light small

oil lamps or candles and place them around the home. These lights symbolize our journey from darkness to eternal light. Traditional Diwali activities include cleaning the home, preparing special foods, making personal resolutions and spending time in celebration with family and friends.

Celebrations like Diwali help create vibrant communities here in Manitoba. Newcomers and long-time residents can enjoy their traditional celebrations while non-Indo-Canadians can learn about their neighbours' culture. It is truly a multi-cultural society when we can share our customs and traditions with one other.

Madam Speaker, Diwali is a time to express our gratitude for what we have achieved in the past year and to rekindle the spirit of hope for a better and brighter future. It teaches us to uphold the values of peace, harmony and understanding.

I encourage all of us to adopt the messages of Diwali by giving thanks, seeking inner peace and being compassionate towards others. I wish everyone in Manitoba a happy Diwali.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak in response to the ministerial statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to speak in response to the ministerial statement? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am delighted to speak in the House today about Diwali, as it is one of my favourite festivals. In the past I've had the opportunity to celebrate Diwali here in Winnipeg with my friends at the local gurdwaras, but one day I hope to be able to celebrate in India. Unfortunately, this year, I'm going to be just missing it during my trip to India.

Diwali is celebrated by millions of people all across the world. This bright festival of Diwali, a five-day event, it falls between October and November every year. It marks the end of a harvest season and it also marks a time of the highest exchange of sweets. It is a special festival with big feasts, lots of dancing and an opportunity to dress up and wear your new jewellery.

Diwali is also known as the Festival of Lights. It is when people set off fireworks and firecrackers all night long and they hang up lights and set up candles

all over their houses. The lights are set out in place to pay tribute and to guide the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, into homes.

The lights also bring awareness to inner light, and it symbolizes the good overruling the evil. When I think about this I reflect on a story that I learnt when I was studying Hinduism at the University of Winnipeg: the legend of Lord Rama and his wife Sita returning to their kingdom in northern India from exile after defeating the demon king Ravana.

I'd like to say Sat Sri Akal to our guests who are up in the gallery today and encourage all members to get out and celebrate Diwali. It's a wonderful, fantastic festival.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, on a ministerial statement.

Multiple Sclerosis Day

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): On a ministerial statement, Madam Speaker.

I rise to recognize Multiple Sclerosis or MS Day in Manitoba and the work of the Manitoba Division of the MS Society of Canada. The MS Society of Canada provides support and services to people who are affected by MS or an MS allied disease. The MS Society provides services to patients, families, friends, caregivers, health professionals, employers, institutions and students.

In 2017, May 27th will be marked as World MS Day, a particularly important day in Manitoba and Canada, as Canada has the highest rate of MS in the world: 3,500 Manitobans and 100,000 Canadians are estimated to be affected by this disease.

There have been significant improvements of treatment and medical supports for MS patients over the last decade, and this is in no small part because of the advocacy, support and fundraising efforts of the MS Society.

I would like to take a moment to recognize a few representatives from the Manitoba Division of the MS Society who join us here today: Erin Kuan, Llona Niemzyck, Signy Hansen, Shirley Atkins, Darell Hominuk, Ada Jane Okonkwo, and Lizelle Mendoza.

As the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living, I want to take this opportunity to thank them sincerely for the work they do as allies, advocates

and champions of those courageous Manitobans who are living with MS.

* (13:40)

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, I'm honoured to speak about multiple sclerosis day here at the Legislature and to recognize the tireless efforts of the MS Society. Today is a call to action to support the people and the families who are battling MS and to renew our pledge to continue striving for a cure.

Madam Speaker, each day, three more Canadians are diagnosed with MS, and women are three times more likely than men to develop the disease. Over 3,000 families in Manitoba struggle with the unique plight of MS each day. Canadians have one of the highest rates of MS in the world, and Manitoba has some of the highest rates in Canada. We still don't know the cause of MS, but we do know the consequences all too well. This horrendous disease can affect vision, hearing, memory, balance and mobility. Nearly 80 per cent of people with MS become unemployed as the disease progresses.

People are commonly diagnosed between the ages of 15 to 40 years, the years of their lives when they should be working. Our Province needs to do everything it can to improve access to employment for people affected by MS. The red carnations we're wearing are a part of MS Society's noble efforts to remind government of what people with MS struggle with each day. Not only does the society work to improve the lives of those affected by MS, but they also educate the public, involving all Manitobans in the journey to find a cure.

For that, we can't thank them enough. Thank you to everyone involved in the fight to end multiple sclerosis, from doctors, nurses and health-care workers to amazing non-profit organizations like the MS Society. Special thanks to the MS Society's Manitoba division for their continuous efforts to spread awareness in Manitoba and improve the lives of Manitobans living with MS. Let's take some time today to reflect on how we can improve the lives of those affected by this disease.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to speak to the minister's statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Today, I speak on multiple sclerosis day in Manitoba. Today, we wear our carnations over our hearts to think of those here in our province and across the world who are living with this disease and think about what we can do to help.

Multiple sclerosis is the most common serious neurological disease in young adults living in temperate climates. It is very common, sadly, in Manitoba. The age-adjusted prevalence in our province of 227 persons per 100,000 population is among the very highest anywhere in the world. Because of its very high prevalence in Manitoba compared to other places in the world, it is a condition which we in Manitoba should be especially concerned with. Indeed, our Liberal caucus believes that we in Manitoba should be leaders in the world in research, in treatment and in prevention of multiple sclerosis.

That is the goal which we believe should be the goal of our government and of our province. Addressing and achieving this goal is vital if we are to reduce disability, to save lives and to enable people in Manitoba to live full lives. We welcome the members of the Manitoba division of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, who are here today, and we thank them for the amazing work that they do every day to support people and families who are living with multiple sclerosis.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Crown Services, on a ministerial statement.

Increased Highway Fatalities

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Yes, Madam Speaker. Today, I rise to bring attention to an unfortunate and unhappy circumstance occurring in our province. With more than two months remaining in the year 2016, 85 Manitobans have already had their lives cut short as a result of a road fatality. To know that 85 Manitobans so far this year have already lost their lives in motor vehicle collisions is very concerning.

Today, as minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, along with my colleague, the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), we took part in an event that was meant to serve as a sombre reminder of the consequences of dangerous driving on our provincial roads. The backdrop of this event included the wreckage of vehicles involved in a serious collision and was meant to demonstrate the

devastation that occurs to a vehicle as a result of a collision.

What was not shown was the devastation due to the injuries or loss of life of the drivers or passengers involved in serious collisions, and that, in many of these collisions, impairment by drugs or alcohol, speed, distraction and non-use of seatbelts played a role is even more tragic. The tremendous impact a death related to a motor vehicle collision has on the families of the victim is immeasurable. Whether it's a mother of four or a young man who had just finished high school, a motor vehicle fatality is a catastrophic and heartbreaking event.

Our government is committed to working with MPI, our law enforcement partners, and groups like MADD Canada and all Manitobans to improve safety on our roads, and we encourage awareness of the perils of impaired, distracted and dangerous driving.

We know Manitobans are concerned about road safety and so, too, is our government.

Madam Speaker, even one death as a result of a road fatality is one too many.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It is true this has been a terrible year in Manitoba for road fatalities, both on our rural highways as well as roads in our cities and in our towns.

And it is true, Madam Speaker, that there are many illegal and dangerous practices that some Manitobans continue to do over and over and over.

And, of course, I think every member in this House understands the dangers of impaired driving which is, of course, illegal, but also a threat not only to the driver, to anybody who's a passenger in their vehicle, but to all of us out on the roads. We know that it took action to ensure that Manitobans wore seatbelts to try and reduce injuries and deaths and, even now, it's very frustrating for all of us to hear of fatalities and the word is that the driver or the passenger didn't have their seatbelt on.

And we know we have to do more to take on distracted driving; people texting and driving or otherwise being distracted from the dangers on the road create a huge problem for all of us.

As an NDP caucus, I pledge we will support meaningful measures by this government to take on the challenges of impaired driving, of distracted driving, of speeding. We will also be sharp critics

when we believe that not enough is being done on these important grounds.

I want to take the last few seconds to thank our law enforcement officers, the city of Winnipeg police, the RCMP, municipal police forces for the work they do to keep us safe, and also for the horrible, horrible job they do when a tragedy on our roads happens, to have to tell families that they've lost a loved one.

So I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the chance to speak to this.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Candy Neustaeter

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): It gives me great pleasure to address the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to highlight a constituent who embodies the positive attitude and perseverance that makes our province of Manitoba great. I would like to welcome her today, as she is in the gallery.

On October 7th, Candy Neustaeter invited me to Take Your MLA to Work Day. The event was sponsored by Blue Sky Opportunities, a non-profit organization committed to maximizing the independence of adults with intellectual disabilities through employment and residential opportunities within our community. A huge thank you goes—extended to the program co-ordinator, Rhonda Epp, for the invitation.

Born in Winnipeg, Candy spent her childhood growing up in Alberta and southern Manitoba. In 1996, Candy sought out Blue Sky Opportunities to help her find meaningful and competitive employment which would allow her to support herself, realize the joys of home ownership and offer the opportunity to travel.

With decades of hard work, Candy's dream has materialized and, with the help of Blue Sky Opportunities, Candy has been employed with the Friesens Corporation since 1997, making her a 19-year veteran of the company.

* (13:50)

Although technology has changed the nature of the workplace, Candy has persevered in showing the resiliency necessary to become a member of the prepress production control support team. With this determination, Candy realized the joys of homeownership in 2009 and has travelled extensively across Canada.

If that isn't enough—impressive enough, Candy is a highly decorated silver Olympian, laying—Special Olympian, laying claim to a gold medal in 2000—in 200-meter and a silver medal in the 100-meter at the 2014 Special Olympics summer games in Vancouver.

Most recently, Candy won gold in a 200-meter, silver in the 400-meter and bronze in the 2016 provincial Special—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Margret Benedictsson

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Every member of this House is aware that this year marks the centennial of the first women gaining the right to vote in Manitoba.

While Nellie McClung is rightly given a lot of attention and credit and a wonderful new mural on Sargent Avenue, there were other Manitoba women involved with the struggle for women's suffrage.

One of the loudest and most articulate voices came from Manitoba's Icelandic community. Margret Benedictsson arrived in Manitoba around 1892 and lived for several years on Maryland Street in the West End of Winnipeg.

Within six years she had founded Freyja, an Icelandic language literary and political journal named after the most prominent goddess in Norse mythology and believed to be the only suffrage publication ever to appear in Canada.

Within the pages of Freyja, Margret Benedictsson advocated not just for the vote, but for true full citizenship and participation for Canadian women in all walks of life. Not only did she believe that women would improve the quality of public life, she believed that women were entitled because of their inherent rights as sovereign human beings.

Her views were considered radical at the time, as were her views on marriage as an equal partnership and the need for female employees to have better wages, time off, and protections from the paternalistic control exercised by male employers.

Margret Benedictsson's efforts provided support to the suffrage movement but also unified female Icelandic voices across Manitoba. Although she'd left Manitoba by the time the right to vote was given, it was fitting that Thomas Herman Johnson, himself

the son of a pioneer Icelandic suffragist, was acting premier when the law was passed in 1916.

This weekend, the New Iceland Heritage Museum in Gimli will launch an exhibit on the suffrage activity of the women of New Iceland. I encourage all Manitobans to learn more about outspoken and progressive women like Margret Benedictsson who advanced human rights in our province.

Thank you.

Simon Munday

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am honoured to rise in the House today to recognize the achievements of an amazing Manitoban with whom I've had the privilege to work over the last five years.

For over 28 years, Simon Munday has held numerous important positions with Special Olympics Manitoba. Simon's journey with Special O began in 1987 as a coach, where he let his passion for sport and his admiration for athletes involved shine through every day. He attended three world games, once as Team Manitoba Coach in 1991, and twice as Team Canada Mission Staff in '97 and '99.

Simon was hired as technical director for Special Olympics Manitoba in 1988, moved on to regional director, program director, and then assumed his most recent role as president and CEO in 2002. Beginning in 2009, Simon served on the North American Leadership Council, where he held the position of chair for five years. His unparalleled devotion to the Special Olympics movement is an inspiration to the athletes, staff, board members, and the broader community alike.

Madam Speaker, I have had the great privilege to work with Simon since my appointment as honorary board member for Special O in 2011. In 2013, I was honoured to introduce and have passed in this House a private members' bill to proclaim the second week in June as Manitoba Special Olympics Awareness Week.

On September 20th this year, I had the pleasure of attending Simon's retirement party. This was a bittersweet moment as we all wanted to wish him our best for a well-deserved retirement, but also knew how much his incredible presence in the Special O community would be missed.

Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased to have Simon, his wife Karen, son Scott and new president

and CEO of Special Olympics Manitoba, Jennifer Campbell, as my guests in the gallery today. I ask that all members of the House join me in honouring Simon for the legacy he has firmly established within the Special Olympics organization, for his impact on the Manitoba communities touched by his work.

Happy retirement, Simon.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Entrepreneurship Journey

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): With amenities, possibilities are endless.

I would like to summarize my entrepreneurship journey in hopes that sharing it will help all future entrepreneurs.

In 2000, the first 10 homes on my reserve were equipped with water and sewer. It was so weird to see kitchen taps and a flushing toilet.

I had done my feasibility study, and all signs indicated to open a laundromat. I drafted my own business plan, and I contacted two Aboriginal financing institutions, Tribal Wi-Chi-Way-Win Capital Corporation and Kitayan Community Futures. Both tried to outdo each other in hopes of becoming my financiers.

My need was 90 grand, and I had to come up with a minimum 10 per cent equity. My family rolled up their sleeves, and many fundraising events later, we had the money.

I had the experience of entrepreneurship. I had identification, banking history and I had established credit, so I was immediately approved for my business loans. I was on cloud nine.

I went to the businesses on my plan and proudly turned those quotes into orders. Those businesses were equally proud to support an indigenous entrepreneur.

As soon as the winter-road season opened, my merchandise came in. The cost of transport was enormous, but I was ecstatic. We built a new building with eight washers and eight dryers. Klassy Laundry opened its doors in August 2001.

I did end up selling my business to my manager because even though I had a successful business, I needed to move south to learn what an economy looked like.

Thank you.

School Supply Fundraiser

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, for the last two years, Staples in Steinbach, along with the Steinbach Family Resource Centre, have held an annual fundraiser where donations are gathered from the community to purchase school supplies for students whose families cannot afford them. For many families, sending their children to school can be a financial challenge when it comes to providing the basic essential tools for learning.

Last month, Vicki Olatundun, executive director of the Steinbach Family Resource Centre, and Gerald Jeske, the general manager of Staples in Steinbach, raised \$8,242, the most successful endeavour ever.

The money raised has gone to help 175 local families send their children off to school fully prepared, ensuring that they have all that they need to make their school year successful.

Whether a family was new to Canada, just suffered an emergency or from a single-parent family struggling to make ends meet, Vicki and Gerald teamed together to ensure that children were supported and were able to go to school with great dignity.

On behalf of the Manitoba Legislature, thank you for your generosity of spirit. Thank you for your kindness, and thank you most of all for your compassion for those who are in need. You have demonstrated the best of Manitoba.

Colleagues, please join me in recognizing Vicki and Gerald, who are here with us today in the gallery.

Introduction of Guests

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

And I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Wisconsin State Representative Joan Ballweg, Midwestern Legislative Conference Chair; Iowa State Senator Janet Petersen, Midwestern Legislative Conference First Vice Chair; Michael McCabe, director, Council of State Governments, Midwestern Office; and Ilene Grossman, assistant director, Council of State Governments, Midwestern Office. We welcome all of you here to the Manitoba Legislature.

* (14:00)

Also in the public gallery we have with us today, Vicki Olatundun, executive director of the Steinbach Family Resource Centre; Gerald Jeske and Dustin Lynes, the general manager and assistant manager of Staples Steinbach; Rachael Siemens and Carmelle Wiebe, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Goertzen).

And also in the public gallery we have with us today Richard and Irene Bevan, grandparents of our page Nathan Dueck, and also we have Nathan's aunt, Irene, and all are visiting from Victoria, BC.

And also in the public gallery from Red River College, Language Training Centre 15 adult English language students under the direction of Linda Schroeder, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Logan.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Freedom Road Construction Government Intention

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier is dragging his heels on Freedom Road while the people of Shoal Lake wait. The federal government has committed to the project. The City of Winnipeg has committed to it as well. But where is the Province?

Chief Redsky is frustrated. He says in 2015 our former government had the political will and the commitment to get the job done.

Why is the Premier showing the same—not showing the same political will as our government demonstrated? Why is he refusing to take action on Freedom Road?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Thanks to my colleague for the question.

Political will, Madam Speaker, is not enough to build a road. You see, this is the difference between our predecessor government and our own government. You see, they put up signs saying steady growth but didn't actually invest in the people of Manitoba in any real way. And they claimed they cared about the people of Shoal Lake. There's so much love in this room right now but it has to translate into action at some point. And the action's

been taken by this government after 17 years of no action on the part of the previous government.

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

Ms. Marcelino: There was funds budgeted for that Freedom Road under the previous government.

Madam Speaker, our government has signed an agreement with Shoal Lake 40. We began the environmental assessment in March. We have shown the leadership needed to finally get this job done and get the road built. But these positive steps forward were ripped up and have stopped in their tracks by the Premier. Instead of taking swift action, the Premier has wasted half a year on this important file.

When will the Premier stop holding up this project and start taking real action?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, what was stopped in its tracks six months ago was a defeated, tired-out NDP government.

Wouldn't this be—if press releases and promotional advertising and signage could build roads, then the NDP would've built a lot of roads. But they didn't. They spent half a billion dollars on the east-side road and they got less than 50 miles actually finished. That is not how you build roads. We know how not to build roads by watching the NDP.

But on this side we have undertaken the work. To do the work that gets the road built is the important thing, not to issue a press release, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Perhaps the Premier needs to have a conversation with Chief Redsky.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, this government is hiding behind consultations to excuse their lack of action. The City of Winnipeg is on board, the federal government is on board, the chief of Shoal Lake 40 is on board. Everyone else is on board except the Premier.

Now we read that Manitoba is looking for ways to cut its share: Is this what the Premier's reviews mean, finding ways to shortchange the people of Shoal Lake 40?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the people of Shoal Lake 40 were shortchanged, frankly, for 17 years under the

previous NDP government who didn't get a thing done—didn't get a thing done. There's no grader; there's no earth moving; there was no consultation; there was no planning; there was no engineering study. There was no real work done at all, actually, until, oh, just wait a second, just prior to the last election, when the previous administration flailed away and said, let's love the Shoal Lake road project they'd ignored for close to two decades. That's not getting the job done.

We are 99 per cent done on all the work, on this side of the House, in six months, and you people on the other side of the House, that previous government, got nothing done for 17 years.

Fentanyl Deaths Public Health Crisis

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): This morning, we heard first-hand the heartbreaking stories of how fentanyl and carfentanil have brought devastating pain and grief to families. Families of overdose victims like those of Arlene Last-Kolb and Christine Dobbs are passionately advocating for this government to properly recognize this public health crisis. Their sons, Jessie and Adam, are just two of the 29 known deaths linked to fentanyl in Manitoba last year.

In light of their powerful stories this morning, will the Minister of Health move to recognize the scope and immediacy of this problem in Manitoba and declare a public health state of emergency?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I appreciate the question from my friend from Concordia. It's a very serious issue, and having spoken with loved ones who have lost children or other adults in their families due to addiction, I think we all feel the heartache and the empathy for those individuals.

I appreciated the comments from the federal Minister of Health, who has asked all health departments to come together for a summit on the issue of opiates in Ottawa next month. We have agreed to that, along with other provincial governments. We look forward to a national strategy to deal with what is clearly a significant, significant issue, Madam Speaker.

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

Naloxone Kit Availability

Mr. Wiebe: Indeed, Madam Speaker, we're pleased that the federal government is now at the table, but, as the family said this morning, this government shouldn't wait for the federal government to act. There are things that can be done now. These advocates are saying the most important tool that we have against fentanyl is public awareness and proper education on overdose response. By declaring it a public health emergency, this minister could move immediately to increasing access to naloxone kits so that everyone is able to administer the 'lifestaving' antidote.

Will the Health Minister mandate that naloxone 'kist'—kits must be available over-the-counter at all pharmacies and be distributed at shelters, hospitals, schools and community-based addiction centres?

Mr. Goertzen: Certainly, we have already committed to increasing the distribution of naloxone kits, Madam Speaker. Education is always an important part of ensuring that young people and adults have the information that they have. We are certainly concerned that many of those who are taking the dangerous drugs, not only opiates but other drugs that are on the streets, don't always know what it is that they are taking, don't always know what the effect of it is.

We certainly have health officials who are providing information in a number of different ways, but I do think we will need a co-ordinated strategy. It's something that is supported by governments across Canada, whether they are New Democratic governments in Alberta, whether they're Liberal governments in Ontario or a Progressive Conservative government in Manitoba, we all believe there needs to be a co-ordinated response, Madam Speaker.

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

Addiction Services Expansion of Resources

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): We've heard time and time again from families that the resources for addictions treatment are stretched to the breaking point all over Manitoba. In Selkirk, for instance, the wait for drug users has recently increased to nearly six months due to a lack of staff. Addicts are seeking help, and they're directed to an already overwhelmed counsellor in towns miles away. These people are

asking for help and they don't have six months to wait around.

* (14:10)

Will the minister agree to expand resources and make it easier for people struggling with addictions to get the lifesaving treatment and follow-up that they're asking for?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that over the last many years, more than a decade, the resources that are needed to deal with issues of addictions and mental health, and those that are often co-related, have not kept up to the demand, have not kept up to the significant problems. That is something that didn't happen over the last 17 years, and there is no doubt that there is a stress and a strain on the resources as a result of the demand not being fully met by the previous government.

We have committed to ensuring that there is a strategy that co-ordinates both of those. Together we will fulfill that commitment and look for better ways to use the resources that we have to help those who need the help, Madam Speaker.

Tolko Industries Future of Operation

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The workers and pensioners in The Pas and in Churchill and, in fact, all over the North, need to know that their jobs and their futures are secure. They need assurances from this government that it will act in their interests.

And can this government offer any guarantees that the Tolko plant will remain open beyond the three years?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I do appreciate the member's question. I know he's concerned about northern jobs, as we are, and, obviously, we believe in the long-term commitment to northern Manitobans in terms of the long-term commitments to businesses that want to do business in Manitoba.

We're not about to cut cheques for the short-term like the previous government did. That's not in the best interests of Manitobans, and it's not in the best interests of business.

We are committed to working with northern Manitobans.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, a letter has been sent to employees and pensioners regarding the government's concession to allow a vote on a proposed pension moratorium. The letter states, and I quote: The concession will relieve some of the short-term and medium-term financial pressure for the potential buyer.

Workers and pensioners want a long-term solution.

Madam Speaker, will this government come to the table with one—and I will table that letter now.

Mr. Cullen: I'm not sure what the member opposite is proposing we do.

We've obviously had some discussions with Tolko in terms of their asset, going forward. We know the previous government has put some short-term solutions on the table that obviously didn't work for Tolko.

We're interested in long-term solutions for the potential buyers there. We've—they've come to us asking for some requests. We've had a look at it with—come back with a subsequent proposal, we think, and it's up now—it's now up to the vote for the people involved in that particular pension. So we look forward to the outcome of that vote in the next couple of weeks.

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

Mr. Lindsey: The people of the North, both in The Pas and Churchill, need to know that their jobs are secure and that their pensions will be there for them in the future.

What guarantees in writing has this government received that those jobs and that future will be there for those workers in the North?

Mr. Cullen: I will guarantee, on behalf of our government, that we will continue to consult with the business community there, the communities there. We will be discussing it with the business community that want to come and do business there, and we will certainly have consultations with the pensioners there.

We're committed to working with northern Manitobans to support northern Manitoba jobs.

MMIWG Families Liaison Unit Funding

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Earlier this week I asked if the government would be applying for federal dollars allocated to the national inquiry to support MMIWG families through this very difficult process.

The Minister of Justice responded with, and I quote: We have submitted an application to the federal government to fund the family information liaison unit that currently exists provincially.

Is the minister able to share exactly what, and most specifically, unit she is referring to?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for the question.

Of course, we are fully committed to participating in the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry. In fact, we were one of the first provinces to put our order-in-council in, and this is an issue that came up at a federal-provincial-territorial meeting that I was at last week—the last week. And, certainly, Manitoba's victim services branch has submitted an application to the federal government to fund a family information liaison unit, and we will continue to call on the government to answer that question. We have not yet heard back from the government.

We hope that members opposite will support us in that initiative to ensure the proper funding is there for those who need it.

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

Liaison Contact Position

Ms. Fontaine: In today's Winnipeg Free Press, the minister makes specific note of Shannon McCorry. Most of us know that Shannon McCorry is the Project Devote family liaison contact who I've had the pleasure of working with for the last couple of years in concert with Medicine Bear—the Medicine Bear co-ordinator.

I'm just curious if whether or not the minister has actually changed Shannon's job description, because her job description, her roles and responsibility, is as a liaison between Project Devote police and families, not counselling.

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for the question. I know she's very passionate about this, as we are. And we want to ensure that missing—that the inquiry is supported, and we are in favour of that, and we have said that.

We have applied to the federal government for funding. They have it—they have told all of the provinces across Canada that they will fund these victim services, and so we have applied for that funding, and we hope that members opposite will stand with us and—in order to ensure that that funding does come to Manitoba to adequately protect those who need it.

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

Medicine Bear Program Support

Ms. Fontaine: For years, indigenous-run programs like Ka Ni Kanichihk's Medicine Bear have provided culturally appropriate services for MMIWG families, including ceremony elders, counselling, advocacy, feast, beating circles, gatherings; the list goes on and on and on.

I'm wondering if this government is going to commit to partnering and supporting financially, Medicine Bear, to be able to execute the work that they need to execute in order to support our Manitoba MMIWG families.

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, I want to thank the member for the question.

Of course, we want to be able to support those families; we've indicated that. But we can't do that without the federal funding that comes from the federal government. That's why we have sent—we have asked for that funding to be delivered to Manitoba, and we hope that members opposite will stand with us and support us in our initiative to get that funding, because it's needed in order to protect those families, those most vulnerable families in Manitoba.

Zebra Mussel Infestation Boating Education Program

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): We all read with interest this morning that the minister is having a bit of a problem. She has money that was supposed to be going into an important education program, which is now going to be spent during the winter months.

The problem is, this program is for zebra mussels, which—I don't know how many boaters are

going to be on the waterways, but perhaps the minister could tell us: How many boaters is she going to be educating about zebra mussels between now, mid-October, and March.

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question.

You know, this government is not going to take lessons from the previous government to—who failed to act responsibly and prevent the spread of zebra mussels. They knew about this issue since 2009 and failed to address it, and now we are left with the serious nature of this issue and ensuring that we get it right for Manitobans and ensure that our lakes and streams are not going to be impacted by any further spread.

* (14:20)

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

Mr. Altemeyer: The minister completely ducked the issue and the question at hand.

The minister, earlier this year, made a very strong case, or attempted to, that they were going to, on the one hand, budget more money for zebra mussels, and now we find out that, actually, they are dramatically spending less than what was previously in place under our government.

So I have to ask again: How on earth can the minister go to Manitobans and say that a boating education program on zebra mussels, that the money's going to be spent during the winter months, and that that's an effective use of valuable resources?

Mrs. Cox: Again, thank you, minister, and thank you to the member opposite.

I'd like to indicate that the members opposite and their government spend—or wasted \$500,000 on an attempt to prevent the spread of zebra mussels, and that certainly did not go very well.

You know, they are in within all of our—the Red River, Lake Winnipeg and Cedar Lake, and, you know, we are going to make sure, on this side of the House, that we prevent the further spread.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: So the minister's admitted that their prevention efforts this year started very 'leat'—very late, excuse me, during the summer session, not until

July. This is the same minister who claimed, on the one hand, they were going to spend more on this very important issue and is now spending dramatically less, and, yet, in the paper we read that the minister is striving to be results-based.

Can Manitobans expect more of these types of results from this minister?

Mrs. Cox: Thank you to the minister opposite.

We definitely are results-based, and we are working together to ensure that we prevent the further spread of zebra mussels, unlike the government opposite, the former government, who took \$17 million out of the budget for Conservation over a four-year period.

We care and we're going to get it right.

Ambulance Fee Reduction Government Election Promise

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, Manitobans were misled this past election. The government promised 50 per cent off ambulance services. What they failed to mention was that this plan would be implemented over the course of eight long years.

There's an urgency for a radical change. A reduction of 5 per cent just doesn't cut it. In other words, you're taking \$26 off a \$522 bill.

Madam Speaker, will the minister acknowledge that Manitobans believed the Premier (Mr. Pallister) when he said that ambulance fees would be cut in half, turning that \$522 bill into \$261?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, obviously, one of the great concerns that we heard during the election and, certainly, in the lead-up to the election, was the high cost of ambulance fees, and we made a commitment that we would be reducing ambulance fees. We'd be reducing it over the course of a term. We'd be reducing it in our first budget. We've committed to that. We've delivered on that. We have been reducing the ambulance fees. Of course, all of us would like the ambulance fees to be lower and be lower quicker.

Nothing happened in the previous 17 years. Things happened in the first few months under this government and they'll continue to happen.

Ms. Lamoureux: This past Monday the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) said, and I quote: "I remember

talking to a woman in my constituency just a few months ago who talked about making a decision to not take her husband to ER because they simply felt they could not afford the trip, and I thought how horrific that any Manitoban should be put in that situation." End of quote.

Madam Speaker, the government acknowledges that Manitobans are being compelled to make decisions that are potentially detrimental to their health.

When will this government take away the fear from Manitobans who need to utilize our ambulance services?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, our government made a commitment to begin to reduce ambulance fees. We fulfilled that commitment in terms of that, starting to reduce it with our first budget. *[interjection]* I certainly hear the comments from members opposite, from the NDP. They are quite loud now about reducing ambulance fees, but they did absolutely nothing in 17 years.

We've been in government for six months, have already started to reduce ambulance fees. The members opposite sat on the government benches and said nothing, zero, zip, nada for 17 years about this.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Allow me to tell you about my friend Gunther *[phonetic]*. Gunther *[phonetic]* used an ambulance in November of 2014 and his bill was \$500. Unfortunately, he had to use an ambulance again just a few short weeks ago. This time around his bill was \$522.

Madam Speaker, his bill increased. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) told us that the ambulance fees were going down by 5 per cent.

How can the minister explain Gunther's *[phonetic]* situation when his ambulance bill went up?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, we acknowledge that the issue of ambulance fees and high ambulance fees is difficult for Manitobans. That's why we committed during the election campaign to begin to take action. It's why the budget, budget '17, 2016-17, contained that commitment to start reducing ambulance fees as of January 1st.

It was in the budget; it's being delivered in the budget; a commitment was made; progress is happening. Would we like it to happen faster? We would, Madam Speaker, but at least progress is happening, progress that never happened in the previous 17 years.

Manitoba Hydro Debt Increase

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Madam Speaker, the problems facing Manitoba Hydro after a decade of debt, decline and decay under the NDP are becoming increasingly well-known across the province. Unfortunately, NDP members, like the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), are still claiming that everything is completely fine at Hydro, despite the mountains of evidence to the contrary.

The member for Fort Garry-Riverview says that Hydro is in a sound financial position and that the alarmists' talk damaged the brand of Hydro.

Can the Minister for Crown Services please tell the House the truth about Hydro?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): I'd like to thank the member for Dawson Trail for that great question finally—finally.

Under the NDP decade of debt, Manitoba Hydro was severely affected by NDP political mismanagement, and Hydro's debt went from \$12 billion to \$25 billion. Manitoba's new government was elected to fix the finances, and we were elected to do that, and we will continue to do that, unlike the member for Fort-Garry Riverview and the NDP's decade of debt.

Truth doesn't damage a brand, Madam Speaker; the NDP bankrupting Manitoba Hydro did.

MTS Sale to Bell Competitive Environment

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My question is to the Premier and concerns the takeover of MTS by Bell.

Madam Speaker, this government should come to its senses. For reasons only known to itself, it supports a merger that will hurt Manitoba consumers and lead to less competition.

And I'd like to ask the Premier whether he agrees with this quote: The public instinctively knows that

when they have more choices that prices go down and more competition, they're well-served by that.

These were words spoken by the honourable Tony Clement, a former minister and colleague of his in the Stephen Harper government.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I really appreciate the member for Louise Bridge for raising that question, and I want to say that I thank him for referencing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pallister: I'm sorry.

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder to all members that they are to be—they are to be identified by either their constituency or by their ministerial role, and I would appreciate if all members would co-operate with that.

Mr. Pallister: Oh—will I get to complete my answer, or no?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I stand corrected, and I appreciate the member for Elmwood, located very near to the Louise Bridge.

*(14:30)

What the member has done in his preamble is reference an interesting concept, normally foreign to the members opposite, of competition. In fact, in the constitution of the NDP until about three years ago, there was a phrase that said: We're opposed to competition; we favour co-operation. So I would encourage the member to co-operate in discussions on the prebudget consultations, come to them as a member of the Legislature, as he was elected to do. We've given him that opportunity. I encourage him to show up.

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

Mr. Maloway: I'm waiting for this minister to offer one good reason to support this merger. And why won't they listen to Manitobans? Does he agree with this quote: Greater competition in the telecommunications industry leads to lower prices, better service and more choice for consumers and business? That was a quote, words spoken by James Moore, minister in the Stephen Harper Conservative government and former colleague of his.

Does the Premier agree with James Moore?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I actually agree with the former Auditor General, who commented in a report just a couple years ago that it was impossible for the government opposite to get value for money if they didn't shop around like Manitobans do when they spend their money. That's who I agree with.

And so the members opposite go out and they do untendered contracts like—for things like Steve Ashton's famous hydro dams, Madam Speaker, day after day, going out, giving contracts to friends, not shopping around, not tendering, not using the free market for what it's designed to do. Now, this, of course, results in tremendous waste because it doesn't get value for money.

That behaviour was typical of the government opposite, and they wasted millions of dollars as a result of it. So don't try to come to the defence of the consumers that you ravaged for 17 years now.

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

Mr. Maloway: This Premier and this government cannot even agree with its federal cousins. Why can't they recognize the truth? Tony Clement could recognize that the Bell-T-MTS merger will hurt consumers. James Moore could recognize the Bell-MTS merger will hurt consumers.

Why won't they listen to the one good idea that came out of the Harper government?

Mr. Pallister: Well, frankly, Madam Speaker, it is advantageous for me to note the preamble, in the commentary, the member referenced the word unity. Frankly, I have to say, speaking of not being united in a common cause, I realize, and so do the members opposite, they engaged in a dysfunctional internal battle that changed their party's symbol from a pumpkin to a mandarin orange, because it splinters apart so easily.

The fact of the matter is, the members opposite couldn't even get along with one another, couldn't listen to each other, decided not to support their own principles, in fact. When they went to the doors, they knocked and they looked Manitobans right in the eye and they told them they wouldn't raise their taxes, and they went ahead and took away the right of Manitobans to vote, and they did it anyway.

This is not the party to stand up and talk about unity in this House.

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

Basement Flood Protection Request to Retain Subsidy

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): This question is to this Premier as well.

The Conservative government decided to punish people who own older homes when they cancelled support for the Basement Flooding Protection Subsidy. They should reverse the decision immediately. Many homes in Winnipeg were built without basement-flood-protection systems, but without this subsidy, the cost of upgrading is out of reach for many Manitobans. The City has the good sense to keep the subsidy until at least 2017, but it's unlikely they can keep the program going longer on their own.

Will the Premier recognize his mistake, partner with the City and restore the Basement Flooding Protection Subsidy?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I thank the member opposite for the question.

Coming into a new government and working with the mayor and council of the City of Winnipeg, this particular fund, that was available for utilization in the years when there was a lot of excessive weather and rain, et cetera, that caused a lot of basement flooding, was well-utilized. We certainly acknowledge that. However, in recent years, especially the past year, it is extremely underutilized, and, therefore, the funding was coming to an end, and it was the decision not to renew it.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Maloway: To the Premier: The most vulnerable houses are the ones connected to the out-of-date combined sewer systems, which is the case in the older parts of Winnipeg. A home is the most important investment a family can make. And we introduced the program to help owners of older homes protect their investments and have peace of mind that raw sewage isn't going to end up in their basements.

Will this hands-off Premier help protect Manitoba families and restore the basement-flooding-protection subsidy?

Ms. Clarke: I thank the member opposite for his question.

And, again, we have had a good working relationship with the mayor and council since this government took over six months ago. We meet on a regular basis and bring forward all issues and related to the city of Winnipeg. Good discussions have been held, and they have not brought forward any dissatisfaction with the decision not to continue this program. So, therefore, I would acknowledge that they are not likely getting a lot of inquiries other than what they've indicated are underutilized.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Maloway: The Premier should know that since 2011 the sump pump subsidy has helped more than 3,000 families in Winnipeg protect their homes. It's just one way to keep things affordable for Manitobans. It means less money spent on repairing damage, better insurance rates and more money in the pockets of Manitoba families.

Will the Premier do the right thing and restore the basement-flooding-protection subsidy?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, speaking of repairing damage, Madam Speaker, the member's a little late in doing that for his own party. Frankly, they walked up to the doors—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pallister: Well, honestly—he talks about protecting homeowners—he walked up to the doors of the people in his constituency. He knocked, looked them right in the eye and he said, I promise I won't raise your taxes. And he was so embarrassed by the fact that he had. Now, whether he knew about it or not, we don't know, because of that mandarin-orange effect that takes place over there all the time. But that being said, he knew that he had had an adverse effect on every homeowner so much that he blocked out the NDP on his signs in the election six months ago. And he put—you know what he put on the sign? What'd he put on the sign?

Some Honourable Members: Louise Bridge.

Mr. Pallister: Louise Bridge, he did. He replaced his party with a bridge, Madam Speaker. Good idea.

Shoal Lake 40 First Nation Request for Premier to Visit

Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas): We know that the good folks up in Shoal Lake 40 have welcomed many visitors up to their community. Chief Redsky

and elected officials up there, the elders, members of the community and young people, Madam Speaker, they like to share how wonderful their community is, and they like to share how important Freedom Road is.

I ask the Premier: Will he take the time to visit Shoal Lake First Nation and hear these stories first-hand?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I thank the member for bringing up this issue again because it just goes to show that after 17 years of failed infrastructure built, the only thing they could put up was steady growth signs rather than building roads.

After 17 years of doing nothing on the Shoal Lake road, all of a sudden they show this great desire to see it built. And that's what we will do. This government will get that road built, unlike the previous government.

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

Mr. Chief: We're hearing first-hand—I know that Chief Redsky and member—many members of the community would like to, and they would welcome the Premier to come and hear first-hand from members of their community. They don't want to lose another construction 'season'. Design work has started on Shoal Lake—design work has started on Freedom Road.

I know the members of the community would be proud to welcome the Premier of Manitoba to visit Shoal Lake.

Will he commit here today to visit Shoal Lake First Nation?

* (14:40)

Mr. Pedersen: Well, Madam Speaker, again, I thank the member for bringing up this issue, because in the dying days of the previous government, they used the East Side Road Authority to try and make it look like they were going to build a road.

And we know all we have to do, and if the member needs a copy of the Auditor General's report to see what a failure east-side road was, I have extra copies in my desk. I'll be glad to send one over to him.

This government—this previous government could not build a road; \$500 million they spent and

got 50 miles worth of roads. That is not good economy.

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

Mr. Chief: I would encourage the minister to take the time to go up to Shoal Lake First Nation, get to hear first-hand from members of the community how important Freedom Road is. I know they would welcome the minister. And the message that he just gave me, he can give that directly to the community members themselves.

Will the government show some real action, get moving on Freedom Road, and if they're not prepared to do that, will the Premier and this minister at least take the time to go visit the community?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, this is—with all due respect to member opposite, Madam Speaker, this is the fundamental difference between the previous government and our own. The member opposite would enjoy going out and doing a photo op; I would enjoy getting a road built.

I care about the people of the community deeply. We want to help them get access. We want to help them have the remediation they deserve after a long, long time of not getting it. Certainly, 17 years under the previous administration was a long time for everybody there. And no matter how many photo ops, press releases or signs the members opposite put up, they did not get done what we will get done.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

This ruling shall address both the matter of privilege raised by the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Ms. Squires) on the morning of October 13, 2016, as well as the point of order raised by the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) during the afternoon of that same day.

In her privilege submission, the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage stated that when listening to a recording of off-the-record comments from question period on October 6, 2016, she could hear the member for Wolseley say, and I quote, "take your pants off," end of quote, while she was answering a question. The Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage stated that she felt the comment was, and I quote, "outrageous, offensive and not

befitting of this place," end quote. She concluded her remarks by moving, and I quote, "that my privilege as a parliamentarian has been breached and that the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) should apologize to this House," end quote.

The Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Maloway) spoke to the matter before I took it under advisement.

Speaking to his point of order that afternoon, the honourable member for Wolseley stated that the words he had spoken off the record during question period on October 6, 2016, were, and I quote, "take a pass on it," end quote. The member also tabled an audio recording of the exchange.

I took this point of order under advisement as well.

I would again thank the honourable member for Wolseley for that information, but for the record I would rule that he did not have a point of order.

As members know by now, when a matter of privilege is raised in the House there are two key points on which the Speaker must decide. First, whether or not the member raised the matter at the earliest available opportunity and, second, whether or not a *prima facie* case of privilege has been established.

On the first point, when raising her matter of privilege the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Ms. Squires) did specifically address the question of timeliness, indicating that she had first heard from other members what they thought had been said by the member for Wolseley, but in order to be more certain she requested an audio copy of the incident from my office, which was provided on the morning of October 13th, 2016.

As is our practice, the same recording was made available to the official opposition and the independent members. The minister further indicated that as a result of her duties as minister, she was unable to attend the House proceedings that morning until the moment she arrived to raise this matter, which was around 12 noon. She indicated that due to these factors, that moment was in fact her earliest opportunity to raise her matter of privilege.

On this point, I would first commend the minister for explaining the time frame involved so precisely, as that is helpful in making a determination, and, second, I believe she did meet the

condition of timeliness in raising the matter when she did.

On the second point, I would rule that a *prima facie* case was not established in this case for two basic reasons. First, issues related—relating to language, decorum and procedure are inherently questions of order and not privilege. Any complaint about language used in this House should be raised as a point of order and not as matter of privilege. This sentiment has been reinforced by numerous Manitoba Speakers. Further, O'Brien and Bosc state on page 618 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, that, and I quote: ". . . any Member who feels aggrieved by a remark or allegation may also bring the matter to the immediate attention of the Speaker on a Point of Order." End quote.

Second, as I have ruled previously, off-the-record language cannot be considered or ruled on by the Speaker. I delivered such a ruling as recently as October 17th, 2016, and this was consistent with decades of Manitoba practice. Accordingly, the alleged comments in question, having been made off the record, cannot form the basis of a matter of privilege.

While I cannot officially rule on these alleged comments, I would note for the House that I did listen to the recording from that day. I could see the potential for various interpretations of what was said, but when I listened, I heard the phrase, and I quote, take a pass on that, end quote.

Further to these points, I am going to take a moment while I have your attention to discuss parliamentary privilege. While I would never deny any member to raise privilege in the House, I fear that if we continue to see privilege raised as often as it has been recently, we may run the risk of seeing a devaluation of the intent of parliamentary privilege. This recent trend has also cast a shadow on how the media and general public are viewing our Assembly.

Essentially, issues are being raised under the rubric of privilege which would be better raised as points of order and not as matters of privilege. Joseph Maingot advises on page 220 of the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that, and I quote: "Questions of privilege are frequently raised but few are found to be *prima facie* cases. Furthermore, Members have a tendency to use the rubric 'privilege' to raise what is really a matter of order, or in the words of the Speaker of the House of Commons, a grievance." End quote.

Members should be aware that parliamentary privilege is a constitutional right flowing from the United Kingdom's Bill of Rights passed in 1689. This right has been passed on to Parliament of Canada and to the provincial legislatures from Westminster and has been incorporated into the Canadian experience to provide protection from members to exercise their parliamentary duties free from interference. This includes the individual protections of freedom of speech, freedom from arrest and civil actions, exemptions from jury duty, freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation and molestation and exemption from attendance at court as a witness.

The collective privileges of the House are the power to discipline and expel members, the regulation of its own internal affairs, the authority to maintain the attendance and service of its members, the right to institute inquiries and call for witnesses and to demand papers, the right to administer oaths to witnesses and the right to publish papers containing defamatory material.

To be clear, a matter of privilege should only be raised if the related incident falls directly into the categories identified above. I must also note that in responding to a matter of privilege, the Speaker is restricted to assessing only whether an action complained of is a prima facie case of privilege and not to determining the orderliness or appropriateness of the action. This is a key distinction. Privilege has a very narrow scope, and Speakers are limited in how they must deal with such matters.

As I hope the House is now understanding, members should consider using the vehicle of points of order to raise most concerns. Under that rubric, the Speaker has greater scope and latitude to deal with the orderliness of the action complained of, free from the stricture of having to assess only whether the matter is prima facie.

*(14:50)

Over the years, successive Manitoba Speakers have consistently ruled that the following concerns should be raised as points of order and not matters of privilege: unparliamentary language, allegations of misleading the House and disputes over procedure.

Further, the failure of a minister to answer a question is not a matter of privilege, and statements made outside of the House do not form the basis for a breach of parliamentary privilege.

As well, disputes over facts in debate should not be raised as matters of privilege nor points of order, as they are simply disagreements between members which should be addressed in debate.

I trust that all members will heed these words and govern themselves accordingly when seeking to address future concerns in this House.

And before I conclude, I feel compelled to address the behaviours of members in this place in recent weeks. To that end, I would like to quote a ruling from Speaker Reid delivered on August 27, 2013, as I believe the sentiments expressed then are relevant to recent events in this Chamber. Speaker Reid stated.

And I quote: "I am aware that there are currently many important issues before this Assembly, issues on which Members hold strong and divergent opinions. It is entirely appropriate for Members to hold these strong and divergent opinions on issues. One of the basic principles of democracy is the fact that elected representatives can disagree in a place like this. Despite these disagreements, though, Members should still conduct themselves in an orderly manner, and show respect for one another and for the institution they serve.

"It is on this last point where I must raise a concern. As Members know, I believe strongly in the principles of a respectful workplace, namely the right of everyone in the workplace to expect to be treated respectfully and the responsibility of everyone in the workplace to refrain from disrespectful behaviour. As your Speaker, I try every day to hold everyone, including myself, to that standard. I would like all Members to consider these sentiments and to strive to set a new and better standard for our behaviour in this historic place by showing respect for each other and especially for this institution, even when disagreeing on important issues." End quote.

I will leave the House with a reminder that each of you is here today to—pardon me. I will leave the House with a reminder that each of you is here today due to the support and encouragement of thousands of Manitobans, hard-working citizens who put their faith in you to be their voice in this place. I would encourage you to think of those citizens every time you speak in this House and to strive to be worthy of their support and respect.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I would just like to take a moment to thank you for your ruling and to

humbly apologize to this House, to you and to the member for Wolseley.

Madam Speaker: I thank the member for her apology to the House and to the member of Wolseley. Thank you.

Point of Order

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, as you have just advised us, I want to acknowledge and thank the minister for the apology.

Madam Speaker: And I would like to also acknowledge the member for Wolseley for his comments, and thank you very much everybody.

PETITIONS

Bell's Purchase of MTS

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): 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 to 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.

Union Certification

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

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

Under the 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.

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

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 workers to vote and 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 the workers has already been expressed.

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

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

And many hard-working Manitobans have signed this petition, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would like to announce a Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on October 31st, 2016, at 9 a.m., to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report, Annual Report to the Legislature, dated March 2014, chapter 6, Managing the Province's adult offenders; Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated May 2016, Managing the Province's adult offenders. Witnesses to be called: the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), Deputy Minister of Justice.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on October 31st, 2016, at 9 a.m., to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report, Annual Report to the Legislature, dated March 2014, chapter 6, Managing the Province's adult offenders; Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated May 2016, Managing the Province's adult offenders. Witnesses to be called: Minister of Justice and Deputy Minister of Justice.

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, on House business, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet, at 6 p.m., on the following dates: Tuesday, October 25th, 2016, to consider Bill 8, The Protecting Children (Information Sharing) Act; Thursday, October 27th, 2016, to consider Bill 15, The Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention Act (Advanced Education Administration Act and Private Vocational Institutions Act Amended); Tuesday, November 1st, 2016, to consider Bill 9, The Election Financing Amendment Act (Repeal of Annual Allowance).

I would also like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet to consider Bill 7, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, on the following dates: Thursday, October 27th, 2016, at 6 p.m.;

Tuesday, November 1st, 2016, at 6 p.m.; Thursday, November 3, 2016, at 6 p.m., if necessary.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet, at 6 p.m., on the following dates: Tuesday, October 25th, 2016, to consider Bill 8, The Protecting Children (Information Sharing) Act; Thursday, October 27th, 2016, to consider Bill 15, The Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention Act (Advanced Education Administration Act and Private Vocational Institutions Act Amended); Tuesday, November 1st, 2016, to consider Bill 9, The Election Financing Amendment Act (Repeal of Annual Allowance).

* (15:00)

And it has also been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet to consider Bill 7, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, on the following dates: Thursday, October 27th, 2016, at 6 p.m.; Tuesday, November 1st, 2016, at 6 p.m.; and Thursday, November 3rd, 2016, at 6 p.m., if necessary.

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, we'd like to resume debate this afternoon on Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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—will resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), second reading of Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Radisson, who has 13 minutes remaining.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to continue to address this House on this important bill. I suppose I should mention that the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) made it necessary for me to speak, perhaps, a little earlier than I expected, so I really appreciated the opportunity overnight to further gather my thoughts.

As I said yesterday, this bill is about accountability. This bill is about integrity. It's about transparency. And I can understand why the members opposite want to deal quickly with this bill because it's an uncomfortable topic for them. I'm sure they'd like to forget why this bill is necessary. As I recall in question—in the question period associated with this bill, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) asked how long existing—the existing legislation was in place, and he asked it multiple times. Perhaps he's thinking if it was good enough for so many years, you know, why change it now?

Well, I think he knows the answer. I think he knows the answer. It was good enough for Gary Filmon, but it wasn't good enough for your government, and that's the problem. It's because of the actions of his own party, the actions of his own Cabinet that he himself was a member of, that this act is needed. It's because that government refused to be transparent to Manitobans, that government refused to be accountable to Manitobans, and that government refused to properly use the funds of Manitobans, the public funds that they are entrusted with on the Cabinet table.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So what was the result of their actions? Well, last April, Manitoba voters took a long look at yesterday's NDP and they concluded that, to quote someone from yesterday, we have some bad hombres here, and we're going to get them out. And that's what they did on April 19th.

Speaking of what was on TV last night, and getting back to Bill 14, I, like many members in this House, I'm sure, were—was too busy to even start watching TV until a little later into the evening, and for myself I chose to watch the Jets game—a recording of the Jets game, I might add, because I was out so late. As it was, due to the late hour and the long day, I dozed off on the couch with the Jets down 4-3.

When I finally woke up, TSN was showing Europa League soccer highlights. Well, thanks to the wonders of modern technology, I was able to rewind my PVR and get back to where I started. I got to watch our Jets—I got to watch our Winnipeg Jets, in particular that new phenom Patrik Laine—mount a comeback, slay the deficit and gain the victory.

Now, Manitobans would love to be able to rewind the last few years, wouldn't they? They'd love

to be able to hit the reset button on yesterday's NDP. Manitobans would love for them not to have to know that there were \$670,000 of payouts made—severance payouts made under Bill 14 without—with a government that refused to explain how and why this has happened.

Governments would—or Manitobans would love to hit the reset button and the rewind button on the litany of untendered contracts that the previous government dealt with. Manitobans would love to hit the rewind button on the out-of-control deficits that our government now has to clean up, and Manitobans would love to hit the rewind and the reset button on the mounting and massive debt in Hydro. And you know what? I think, actually, the members opposite would love to be able to hit the reset on their own party. But, unfortunately, the disastrous results of the failed rebellion and the cowardice shown by the NDP Cabinet that preceded it are known now. And the members opposite can't undo them. They can't, because that's not the way things work in politics. When something's done, it's done and it stays done. And that's not the way it works in real life either. The things that this previous government did have consequences. One of those consequences is that our government introduced Bill 14 as a direct consequence of the actions that that government undertook.

Manitobans would love to hit reset. We would. But we can't. We can't just reset our annual deficit to zero dollars and magically balance our budget. We can't just undo the extra billion dollars that was spent on Bipole III. We cannot undo the government actions that they undertook in concealing \$670,000 of severance payments. You can't snap your fingers and change the sheets on a soiled bed; you have to do hard work. You have to do dirty work, quite frankly, sometimes. And you have to clean up the mess.

And what we can do, then, as government, and what we're committed to doing, is cleaning up that mess. We are going to correct the course. We are going to change direction. And Bill 14 is just one of those steps in the right direction. It's a small step, but it is an important step. And it's a significant step. It's a significant step, because it represents keeping our promises, something the previous government failed to do. It's a significant step, because it's symbolic of what was wrong with the previous government and what's right with this one. Where they failed, we will get it done. But the NDP still hasn't learned. You can hear it in their chatter. You can hear it in their questions in question periods, where—while—where

they demand action on files that they themselves have neglected for years and sometimes over a decade. They like to spend more effort on making press releases than about getting actual results.

You know, I'm a technology guy. I love software, hardware. I love high-tech stuff. But I can tell you, if the NDP was, for instance, asked to build a hover board, they'd have 10 staffers write the press release. They'd have these staffers work on glitz and glamour and advertising campaigns and then, after a few months, they'd realize they hadn't even done anything to actually build the hover board. So then, finally, they'd send somebody off to the hardware store to get a plank and a couple of wheels and put in a request for an extension and a budget increase. It's short-term thinking. It doesn't achieve results. It wastes—the waste the taxpayer dollars. And that's why we need Bill 14. Manitobans made it very clear that they were tired of the old and tired NDP government.

Speaking of tired, yesterday, I said that the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) had not given me any material to work with in terms of my response here today, in the debate today. But, when I reviewed Hansard this morning—again, thank you for the opportunity to have a little bit more time to consider—I did find something that the member for Tyndall Park had to say. He said that our government's invitation to prebudget consultations and our repeated pleas to the members opposite to join us at the consultation table to participate in the prebudget consultation process with ordinary Manitobans, with stakeholder groups, that invitation was declined. And he claimed, the member for Tyndall Park claimed that that invitation was in and of itself hurtful. He then even went on to say that the submissions being given at the consultations were partisan. He claimed that the submission made by the MGEU, the Manitoba government employees' union, was partisan. He claimed that the submission by the Manitobans for arts was partisan, that the submission made by Make Poverty History was somehow partisan. It's ludicrous, absolutely ludicrous. But, in any case, I want to get back to what the member for Tyndall Park said when he claimed that the invitation that we had extended to him was in some way hurtful.

*(15:10)

Let's imagine there's a family that's organizing a get-together, and the leader of that family says—*[interjection]* Absolutely, I'm a member of a large

family, and there's other members in Tyndall Park—the member for Tyndall Park likely has a large family as well that he would like to get-together from time to time for family gatherings.

Now, so what does the host do? What does the host do? He sends out invitations to all the members of the family, and he says, let's all get together. Let's all get together as a family to do what families should do together. Invitations go out. Now, he gets some responses. He gets responses from some members that say they will only attend if their specific requests and demands are met. Now, the host is gracious, and the host is generous, and he—and the host responds and says, you know what? All those things you want, as the members of the opposition requested, all those things that you want, you can have. And that's what our government—that's how our government responded to the response that we received from you when you asked to be present at the table and have equal opportunities for questions and be able to work on the report together. We said yes to all those things. We were gracious hosts, as we should be.

Now, 'nevertheless,' these members, despite all their demands being met, refuse to attend. They refuse to attend the family gathering.

Now, the host, at this point—who do you think is feeling hurt? Who do you think is being rude? Well, it's pretty clear to me that the host is being generous and gracious. The host's feelings are being hurt. And those members who choose not to show up, they're the ones doing the hurting, and they're the ones being rude. Nevertheless—nevertheless—the host still sets a spot for those members and makes sure that they have the opportunity to attend. And, in fact, when they're nearby, on the day, on the actual hour of the event, once again the invitation is extended to please take their place as a member of the family at the table, and it's refused. It's refused again. And that's what the member for Tyndall Park did when the Government House Leader (Mr. Micklefield) invited him to come and sit at the table with other MLAs from all the parties in the House so that together they could consult the public.

It seems like the NDP members, when they attend these consultations, they want to forget. They want to forget—well, there's a bunch of things they probably want to forget. But the thing I'm talking about in specific is that they want to forget that they are members of an Assembly, that they are elected MLAs, and to be an elected MLA doesn't just come

with rights and privileges; it comes with responsibilities. If you want to be a member of the public instead of a member of this Legislature, there are ways to get that done, and there's ways for that to be arranged, speaking of elections.

I just want to get back to Bill 14. *[interjection]* It would be a great idea. And I only got a short time left to speak. So, getting back to Bill 14, Manitobans told us in April what they wanted. They wanted a government that cares about results. They wanted a government that's willing and committed to being transparent. They wanted a government that's committed to being accountable, and bringing forward Bill 14 is one more step along the way. We should all support this bill. It's a necessary thing, and it's been made necessary by the actions of the previous government. It's an important and symbolic step because it represents our government making a commitment to Manitobans, fulfilling the commitment that we made during the election that we keep our promises and that we will be open, we will be transparent, we will be accountable to them, to the Manitoba taxpayer, to the Manitoba voter.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 14. And I've been listening to a lot of raging in this House over the last day on this bill, and, initially, we thought that it was going to be a bill that would be, you know, one speaker from each side and send it off to committee because on the surface of it, it seemed like a reasonable bill. Perhaps with an amendment to include the city of Winnipeg and some other minor amendments that could be sent off to committee, but, obviously, the members want to rage on and on about things that have very little to do with the actual bill. And they've kind of gotten our interest, piqued our interest and, I think, yes, we might just want to stay around a few more days on this bill because we have speakers here who want to get points across and want to counter some of the misinformation and lack of balance, I guess, that we're hearing from the other members.

And also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, the government has just announced that it is setting up committees and they've given us a list of committee hearings on the bills for next week. And, curiously enough, they have scheduled Bill 7 for only three evenings: October 27, November 1st and November 3. And that's kind of interesting because November 3 is the drop-dead deadline under our sessional order under the memorandum of

understanding that the government and the opposition and the Liberal Party signed months ago. And so how they think that somehow they're going to be able to follow the normal sitting hours and the rules that we adopted for committees to be able to put—to handle all of these presenters in only three nights within those hours is actually almost impossible. Perhaps not when you consider how many presenters have already registered.

But, you know, the members opposite should know that going back a number of years here on a very—on controversial bills, even they, on the Human Rights amendment back in 1987, produced, you know, 150, 200 people, I believe, to appear before committee. So somehow they think that Bill 7 is going to, you know, stay at 30, 32 people, that's kind of dreaming.

So, if you were to triple those 30 people, which is certainly reasonable, you would need three times the amount of time. And so what you are going to be doing to these people is disenfranchising, you know, two thirds, and I'm saying it's going to be a minimum of 100 because that would be a minor —

An Honourable Member: 500.

Mr. Maloway: Yes, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) said there'd be, like, 500 registering.

So I have no idea what he plans—what the government plans to do about this when they try to jam the committee on Bill 7 down to not even have it sit. Here we are already having dealt with this bill and we could've started committee hearings even yesterday, and they're not planning to have any for another week—another week from now will be their first night.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to deal with some other issues here regarding Bill 14. You know, it's actually called The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act to require the additional disclosure of any individual employment contract or secondment agreement between the government and the person who is appointed as a technical officer after May the 2nd, 2016. It also requires that any severance paid to a technical officer with an employment or secondment agreement employed after May 2nd, 2016, must be disclosed within 30 days.

Now, I listen to members in this House talk about severance issues and talking about mentioning the names of people from the previous government who were paid severance that added up somewhere

around 670,000, according to the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma)—and the member is nodding that that's correct it's 670. And, you know, the member for Radisson he's an expert in financial literacy, and I would like him to open his adding machine right now, get—*[interjection]*—yes, don't clap too soon members—and I would invite him to give him time to fire up his computer here, fire up his adding machine and lets do some totalling here because, you know, he—the Conservatives like to—seem to pretend that somehow that severance started like some—you know, under our government in the last year, that there was no severance ever paid before that.

* (15:20)

And I think some of the newer members here might have been bamboozled into—or misinformed into believing that. We have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have the leader of the opposition at the time, the current Premier (Mr. Pallister)—the current Premier—he claimed, get this, he claimed that no staff member had received severance from his office; that would be the opposition leader's office at the time. This is a total falsehood, total fabrication, total nose stretcher, and they—

An Honourable Member: A point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point—the honourable House—Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been explained to this House, on more than one occasion, that language like falsehood or total falsehood, such as we've just heard, is out of order, and I would ask the member opposite to retract that part of his speech, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member from Elmwood, on a point of order.

Mr. Maloway: Well, is it—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the same point of order—

Mr. Maloway: On the point of order—I guess there's some efficiencies here, because I have the ability to deal with these point of order.

I would like to check the words and see whether the words spoken, in fact, are on the unparliamentary list, to start with. But, if they are, I'd be happy to retract them.

The fact of the matter—and that's all—that's right. Okay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for—the honourable Government House Leader does have a point of order, as the word falsehood has been ruled as 'unparliamentary.'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So, the honourable member from Elmwood.

Mr. Maloway: And so that particular word is unparliamentary, but nose stretcher I don't think is on that list. But I just want to proceed and say that the Conservative caucus—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind the honourable member from Elmwood that you have to draw—undraw—the word falsehood.

Mr. Maloway: Oh, yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On the point of order, I do withdraw the word falsehood.

Now, as I'd indicated before, I don't recall ever seeing the word nose stretcher on that list of unparliamentary words, so I'll accept that that is probably a good substitute.

Now, the Conservative caucus, using taxpayers' dollars, paid severance to at least one staffer when the current Premier was the leader of the party, and—but there were a total of three—three—Conservative staff members who received severance. Now, do we have an issue with this? No, we don't, because severance is a normal process, normal part of the employment process. We have paid out severance; they have paid out severance.

But to have them deny it, have their leader deny that it ever happened, or they in their speeches suggest that somehow it's only happened during the NDP period in government, but it doesn't happen in the Conservative governments—and I'm just going to start dealing with case No. 1, so the member for Radisson still has a little bit of time to get that calculator working. But there are three severances for Conservative staffers, and they total \$127,000.

Now, I don't know any of these people and—but I know some of the members opposite probably know them. There is one, Maureen Cousins, who worked in the Conservative caucus at some point, was paid \$47,000 in 2015 dollars. There's another person named Tricia Chestnut, \$46,000 in taxpayers'

severance. And a person named Rochelle Squires, \$34,000 in severance. There is nothing wrong with this. This is a normal part—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order has been called by the member of Kildonan.

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): Mr. Deputy Speaker, a member's name cannot be used in this Chamber. They must be referred to by their riding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That's correct.

The honourable member for Elmwood, on a point of order—on the same point of order.

Mr. Maloway: On the same point of order, I withdraw any improper suggestions here. I was just simply reading from a list, and—okay. All right. So I withdraw any reference to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes. It's still the members of the Legislative Assembly, so they have to be referred to by their constituency.

* * *

Mr. Maloway: Okay, so this person is a member of the—okay, yes. That's fine. Now, I'll start to deal now—*[interjection]*

Mr. Maloway: Now, we're going to deal with the A list, the A list of severance. Now, where—I just have to have the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), who is the expert in financial literacy. Get that calculator working, and let's work together on this, okay?

Now, once again, I don't know all these people, either, but—and I assume that he probably knows some of them, but if he doesn't, he soon will. We have No. 1 on the hit parade here, Julian Benson. Does anybody remember Julian Benson?

An Honourable Member: Oh, yes.

Mr. Maloway: Oh, there's one or two, get a nod here. Well, he was a very powerful guy. He was the secretary to the Treasury Board. And he got severance in 1998. But adjusting for, you know, to 2015 dollars, he got \$78,873.03. The member for Radisson, put that on your calculator.

And now we move on to the second—the second member, Taras Sokolyk. Does anybody remember him? Very famous guy. He was the chief of staff. Chief of staff to who, you might add? Well, chief of staff to the premier, Premier Filmon. And he had an unfortunate falling out over some issues of the day, and he, too, collected severance.

An Honourable Member: Oh, the vote rigging.

Mr. Maloway: Vote rigging, yes. I think I do remember that. And he drew \$129,341.74. So I ask the member for Radisson, please add that to your calculator.

And we have the third person, David Langtry, senior manager. And some remember him as a Conservative candidate in the north of Winnipeg. And he got severance, too, adjusted to 2015 dollars, \$112,622.24. Let's add that one on too.

Oh, here's another one. You all know—we all know this one: No. 4 Hugh McFadyen. He was chief of staff, and his 2015-adjusted figure was \$60,672.05. And then, No. 5: Bonnie Staples-Lyon. I remember her, secretary to cab-com. Oh, yes, we all know where that is, \$89,123.87. Now, I won't ask the member for Radisson yet for a running total. But, you see, I have all mine totaled here at the end, so we'll be—compare where we get.

And we have Fredrick Mantey. Now, we always knew him as Rick because he was a very young guy in those days, and he used to be around here working in the Speaker's Office, as I recall, a number of years ago. And someone told me he's back here, that he left Manitoba for a long period of time and did good in a neighbouring province, in Saskatchewan. And, in fact, you know, he was the highest paid—did you know that he's the highest paid civil servant in Saskatchewan? Huge amount of dough, right at the top of the pile. But then he was involved in an unfortunate trip or two abroad, and things happened, and he ended up taking a lesser position, I believe.

*(15:30)

But here is what he left Manitoba, well, left Manitoba, here is what he got as severance back in 1999, so that's the time of the end of the government, \$102,845.27. Then we have Cynthia Carswell, professional officer, for \$68,128.07; Heather Campbell-Dewar, professional officer, \$57,702.63. Now, I'd ask the member from Radisson, does he know what that grand total comes to on his calculator? Well I just, you know, I'm, I know he's

got this resolution on financial literacy and it's—financial literacy is very important.

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

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order, the Government House Leader.

Mr. Micklefield: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when making speeches, members are not to speak to other members, only to the Speaker or, in this case, I believe that the member opposite just started what sounded to me like a conversation with another member in this room, and that is not appropriate while making a speech on a bill that is actually about something which we feel is of importance, not joviality, jocularly, or some kind of humorous thing to grandstand on.

So I would like to bring that to your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, namely, the fact that the member opposite did not address another member in this House through yourself, but started talking to that member directly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader has said that, indicated that the member should be speaking to the Speaker—and the honourable member for Elmwood, on the same point of order.

Mr. Maloway: On that point of order, I don't think that the member has a point of order; I always address the Chair here in the House, and I'm simply dealing with facts and figures that have been put on the record, or not put on the record, I guess, by other speakers in the House. I'm doing a comparison here between our list of severance paid and his party's list of severance paid. And I'm just about at the end of that list.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Elmwood.

Mr. Maloway: Well, thank you, Mr.—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would like to caution all members, when heckling takes place, that may encourage members who have on the floor to respond, so that would ask the honourable members to be mindful of this.

* * *

Mr. Maloway: So, once again, to the member, through you, my total here comes to \$699,309.90, and the member just completed his speech just before I started and he had referenced that the total amount of severance that was paid under the previous NDP government was \$670,000. And, as far as I know, my understanding of financial literacy says that 699 is bigger than 670; therefore, on that basis, my financial literacy says that it's the previous Conservative government under Gary Filmon who actually paid out more severance than the previous NDP government.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this really is not a conversation that we should even be having here, but it only comes about to show members that in fact severance is normal. It's a normal part of doing business whether you're in government or whether you're in the private sector. And, when you get up and rage in this House, as members are—have been doing and will be doing, then we intend to respond, in kind, and point out what I've just pointed out to you. And you're going— *[interjection]*

This list, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is in Hansard now, and I'm sure that my colleagues, who have a copy of this list, too, will be more than happy to do the addition totals for you in their speeches that shall follow after mine.

So, I mean, that's really just my point here, is that sometimes in this House we think we have a, you know, a big issue that somehow is sort of unique, right, and then we find out afterward that it wasn't such an exciting journey after all, because, in fact, what we are chasing was actually done by our own group and that there's nothing exceptional about it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP believes in a transparent government that is accountable to all its citizens, and that's what I—I want to point out some elements to how things have changed over the last number of years in government, particularly in our last 17 years, to make government information more available to the public.

The member should know that in the days of the Filmon government, that there was no waiting room—hospital waiting room figures available. There were people lying in the waiting rooms of hospitals across the city and across the province, and there were no numbers to show how many people were in the hospital hallways. But it was the NDP government that changed all that. That—when Gary Doer came

into power, he directed the hospitals to make that information available, and not only make it available but put it on, I believe, a website. And so, ironically, the Conservative opposition, for those next 17 years, were able to get on the computer in the morning and stand up here in question period and question the very government that made all that information available, about why we got six people in the hospital in Concordia in the hallways, why do we have 10 people at the Health Sciences Centre.

Well, the reason they were able to do it is because the NDP mandated that an—that information be made available. That was never available under the Conservatives. It never had been available, so that is a—that was an improvement that we made in transparency. And there are all sorts of examples, and I'm going to get into some of them, because I know the member is really eager to learn all of this stuff, right?

So we take responsibility for being open and accountable to Manitobans, and well, also we believe that having a professional and fairly compensated political staff is an integral part of delivering quality service to Manitobans. Political staff, you know, we don't think should be treated to partisan attacks or treated as political pawns, but we're not going to back down when the other side wants to go on the attack. I mean, we can—you know, we will respond. And we have to respond.

We support transparency, and we'd like to see the scope of the bill expanded. And that the member for River-Riverview?

An Honourable Member: Yes, Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. Maloway: Fort Garry-Riverview made an excellent presentation on the bill yesterday, and we pointed that out, that we have no problems with this bill. We want to see it sent off to committee. We want to see it amended. You know, what is the problem?

They claim—the government claim they're talking to the city. Well, what in the world are they talking to the city about? I mean, all they have to do is say you people have a problem over there and we can help you solve it. Are we to be included in this bill or not? And that's all he was suggesting. But to listen to the howling reaction from the other side, again, you know, after his speech or during his speech, I mean, it doesn't really, you know, make a lot of sense to me.

* (15:40)

So we support an expanded bill, and we also—we thought the government should also find time to address important issues, including creating good jobs for young people, investing in our infrastructure and schools and creating new opportunities by funding programs like child care.

We strengthened—and here's part of the areas that we had strengthened while we were in government: The Elections Act; we beefed up FIPPA legislation; we made more government data and information available online. The government online programs, you know, they started with Gary Filmon. I was involved in those from '99 on, and they started with Gary Filmon and they were in their infancy then, and our government proceeded to put a lot more programs online, not in isolation but in—at about the same time as other provinces.

And so, we tried, through meetings with various provinces, to do some trading of software programs that would work, would fit here, that were used, say, in Alberta or other provinces, and online programs that were done here were being done elsewhere. And so, Manitoba was not exactly a leader in online programs but it was not a follower either. And in terms of security, we were, like, probably the best in the country and I think probably we still are.

We made sure the public was free to access information. We put more information online because we can't expect Manitoban citizens to be filing FIPPA's they do searching online at home. We posted all government contracts online. It's the most transparent system now of any Canadian province. We released key department statistics online like EMS response times, the number of doctors, nurses so the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) could, you know, sit there and look at his computer in the morning and get up in question period and look really intelligent and ask a really intelligent question about ERs and doctors in Emerson, thanks to what Gary Doer did getting all this information up there on the website. Graduation rates, funding of First Nations, CFS authorities, so for front-line workers. We disclosed minister's expenses annually, minister's out-of-province travel expenses, which I'm sure was not that popular in some quarters but we did it anyway. We made The Elections Act more powerful. We banned corporate and union donations.

I remember the howling and crying that back in 1999-2000 when Gary Doer introduced a ban on union donations and corporate donations, which, by

the way, was first brought in this country by René Lévesque in Quebec that goes back now to—I'm trying to guess the year—'76, somewhere around there. And the next jurisdiction to do it was, I believe, Manitoba, and then I think Jean Chretien did it federally. So, it's become a little more popular. But we ban union and corporate donations, well, what do the Conservatives do? They were outraged about this. They—we cut off the source of their funds and they were not happy at all about this.

They was always—all designed to keep big business and powerful lobbyists from influencing elections. We also restricted third-party advertising during election campaigns. We were the first government in Canada to introduce legislation protecting whistle-blowers. We created the lobbyist registry to keep lobbying in Manitoba opened and transparent.

We extended freedom of information legislation to public bodies that the Conservatives had specifically excluded. FIPPA now covers municipal governments, which it didn't before, school divisions, universities and health regions. And we shortened how long Cabinet documents were to be sealed.

Well, you know, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), if he, you know, actually takes a moment out to listen to all of this and actually thinks about this, he would realize that the Gary Doer government did a lot, did a lot of—took a lot of measures to move us ahead in this area as opposed to the type of propaganda that he and the other long-serving members of the Legislature have tried to do to brainwash the new people coming in, and you know how they give them all these notes and you just don't believe all this stuff you get like, you know, do your own research and make your own notes and, you know, feel free to make changes.

Now, in terms of municipal transparency, we believe that the transparency and accountability should not be limited to the provincial government; it should apply to all levels of government. No matter whether elected officials and senior civil servants work for the Province, the City or the federal government, Manitobans expect the highest standards that would be met. And, for example, we all remember former Winnipeg CAO Phil Sheegl resigned in October 2013, took more than a year and a half to reveal that he'd received \$250,000 in a severance package. Former CAO Deepak Joshi received more than \$567,000 in compensation after he resigned. The City of Winnipeg received—recently

passed a motion to reveal what portion of payments to staff earning \$50,000 or more per year covers vacation pay, severance, salary and other benefits.

Now, this is a situation that's crying out to be included in this bill. And we ask that question. Well, how difficult is it for the provincial minister to contact the City and, you know, get them included? It's unfortunate that the minister's passed up on this opportunity to improve transparency at all levels. And this suggests this bill is more concerned with settling old political debts than advancing Manitoba interest.

Now, we do not take any lessons in transparency from this government. It misled the Manitobans about the size of the deficit in order to try to settle a political debt. You know how they come out and they said, well, the deficit's going to be this amount, and then, oh my goodness, it's, like, a billion. It's over a billion. All of a sudden they got reined in. Well, you didn't tell—you know, it wasn't that; it's a little less. And, you know, I don't even think it would be a record by even Manitoba standards, because their Filmon Minister of Finance, Clayton Manness, back in 1990—I don't know, to '91, '92, '93, in there, had, like, an \$800-million deficit. If you were to adjust that for inflation to bring it up to 2016, I don't know what those numbers would be, but I'm sure that somebody with financial literacy in their background and a good calculator could do that and let us know. It misled Manitobans about a \$170-million difference in the deficit. This is no rounding 'error'—error, but a clear attempt to play with Manitoba's budget for political purposes.

Now, in terms of the Seniors' School Tax Rebate, the government was less than straightforward with Manitoba seniors when they cut the Seniors' School Tax Rebate. Premier (Mr. Pallister) went on CJOB during the election, he promised seniors that we'd keep the credit—matter of fact, I think the Attorney General's office answered an inquiry during the election about this very issue and was quite incensed when they found out that, you know, 30 days after the election, the whole ballgame changed. We don't consider seniors earning a family income of \$40,000 to be wealthy. In fact, we know that this credit helps many low- to middle-income seniors stay in their homes longer.

And we also proposed a new income tax bracket on the wealthiest 2 per cent to help support low- and middle-income families. And the Conservatives opposed it.

And the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) will know that I ran in the election big—a big wrap, which is like four pages, in the local Herald, and talking about this very point, discussing this very point. And the Finance Minister claimed to find savings of over \$100 million in the budget, but they couldn't explain where those savings were. And our members asked about that. They—there's millions in cuts to property tax rebate for seniors. There are just a lot of different issues here that this government has, in its short period of time—like, it's only been six months, and the amount of errors and miscalculations and missteps are amazing at this point.

* (15:50)

So, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), when he was in opposition, he was holding his press conferences behind doors—remember that hide-and-seek exercise that he had.

But I just want to say in my remaining 30 seconds here that we will be sending this bill to committee at a certain point. But, you know, I have—we have other members here who want to make similar speeches to the one I just made and may want to deal further with some of this severance business that the government seems so determined that it wants to talk about.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): I am very pleased to be able to put some comments on Bill 14 on the record today. Bill 14 is about trust and accountability. Our government was elected on a mandate of being open and transparent. Bill 14 is part of fulfilling that election promise to Manitobans.

As members, we already are aware current legislation requires that salaries of all civil servants making more than \$50,000 be publicly disclosed. Our legislation is doing three things: It will subject political staff salaries to the same public disclosure rules; it will require public disclosure of severance payments and of secondment contracts.

Political staff are paid with taxpayers' dollars and should not be subject to this information being disclosed to Manitoba. There is no reason why they should not be subject to the same type of public disclosure and scrutiny as civil servants are.

Let me remind everyone here why this legislation is needed. We all remember the previous government during some of the infighting that they

saw last year paid \$670,000 to staffers and they left the province. They promised that political staffers could campaign for whomever they wished in the leadership race, so many of their people had taken up that offer.

Then the honourable member from St. Boniface won the race, they decided some changes to their ranks of people who had campaigned. So they spent nearly \$700,000 getting rid of people. A government can't use Manitoba dollars to settle political scores, and they weren't upfront about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We didn't find out until much later.

However, we as a government are going to address it. Unfortunately, we don't know exactly how much money was spent as a breakdown. We know that there were five people who received payments but we didn't know how much they got because the information was not disclosed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's got to change.

Our new bill will require that all severance payments be disclosed within 30 days of payment being completed. Under the previous system governments would disclose salaries in their annual public accounts. Now the information will have to be posted within 30 days of new hires being made. The bill will require that secondment contracts be also disclosed. Finally, this bill is retroactive so as to apply to all staff hired by the governments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, other jurisdictions have already gone down this path. Alberta's public sector compensation disclosure legislation requires that severance payments be disclosed and it applies to staff in minister's office and the premier's office.

Manitobans expect integrity and disclosure from their government and we, as a government, will lead by example. Mr. Deputy Speaker, increasing the transparency of our political staff will help ensure that these types of abuses do not occur.

These changes we are making will require a higher standard of conduct from governments going forward. I think that it's something that all members of this House should be able to get behind us on, and I invite them to join us.

This is not an attack on civil services. Their salaries are already subject to public disclosure. It is an attack on secrecy and mismanagement, an attack on cronyism.

Once again, all that we are doing is to subject political staff to the same rules as civil servants and

to require disclosure of secondment and severance agreements. I don't see how anybody could consider that unreasonable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is setting a new standard of transparency. We are cleaning up Manitoba politics and we will be more transparent than ever before.

In doing my research for this particular bill, I came across two articles written by Professor Paul Thomas, who we all know is one of—a very well-respected professor in the province of Manitoba. And he wrote two articles, and the first one is: Broken promises, public ignorance fuel political distrust; and the second one is: Accountability industry failing to improve the public trust. And both are related somewhat to Bill 14, because they go to indications that transparency and trust is needed, which is bill—which is what Bill 14 is the basis of.

Professor Thomas goes on to say in his first article: In all western democracies, there's unprecedented public anger, frustration, disillusionment and mistrust of politicians in government. Such a climate of public opinion has given risen to populist leaders who claim they are not politicians and that the political systems in which they operate are corrupt and broken. It is rare today to hear someone argue politics is a noble profession and the government is a positive presence within the economy and society.

The anti-politics and anti-government mood is reflected in the rise of leaders such as Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump in the United States; Marine Le Pen, the leader of the National Front party in France. Such populist leaders capture the anger and resentment of many people who feel left behind by economic upheavals. There is a strong anti-immigrant message in their political appeals also.

It has always been accepted politicians fudge—it's always been an—accepted that—a thought that some politicians fudge the truth, but now many people believe they lie 'retunely'—routinely and gain a position in office, and once there, they serve their own interests rather than the public. Disgust with politicians goes a long way with a lack of confidence in government as an institution. After decades of being told government is ineffective and wasteful, many people have come to believe it.

And Bill 14 is the type of initiative that changes that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In Manitoba in

April 2016, the Progressive Conservatives took office, committed to making the province the most open, transparent and responsive jurisdiction in the country. Some developments must be the grounds for at least conditional optimism. Some political leaders recognize there is not democratic malice in this country that requires attention.

Evidence of that malice is not hard to find. Over four decades, going back to the 1970s, polls reveal trust in politicians in government has declined slowly, and only the occasional short-lived, small upswing. In November 2014, polls were done of ethical leadership program by Ryerson University, 50 per cent of Canadians declared they did not trust politicians. Nearly three quarters of those respondents believed politicians regularly break election promises, Mr. Deputy Speaker. More than 70 per cent of the respondents believe elected representatives quickly lose touch with the people that elect them. More than 50 per cent believe that politicians use tax dollars to buy votes. Perhaps most disturbing, one third of the respondents believed politicians frequently accept bribes and one fifth declared political corruption had led them to stop voting.

* (16:00)

Mr. Chairman, that's alarming. And those are, again, the things that our government is trying to change with executing and implementing such bills as Bill 14.

There are many factors, both historic and more contemporary, that have caused this serious trust gap to develop. Historically, since the 1960s people have become less trustful of elites of all kinds. After decades of post-'ware' prosperity and the expansion of the welfare state, there were a series of economic downturns and downsizing in the public sector supported by high-octane rhetoric that any ambitious governments tried and ended up in failure.

Some problems such as poverty and climate 'chames' seems difficult to address. Political leaders and their parties were guilty of over promising and failing to be candid about the limits of government action in, for example, limiting the impacts on globalization and keeping society perfectly safe from terrorism. Poor political leadership, broken promises, and scandals involved in illegal and unethical actions were factors. Party competition became negative, personal, excessive in the view of most citizens.

Again, Madam Chairman, it's the government's responsibility to ensure that they set an example for their people and present bills of ethnic value. Again, Bill 14 does that.

The media has played a part as well. The media industry has been more diverse, competitive, aggressive and instantaneous on a 24-7 basis. Mainstream news outlets, editorials, opinion columnists, cable news hosts, bloggers and online social media compete for an ever-fragmented audience by magnifying and sensationalizing problems that arise in government.

The existence of access to information and whistle-blower protection laws—which our friends in the NDP initiated—along with an army of oversight bodies from various purposes ensure a regular supply of reports from which parliamentary opposition and the media could draw mainly negative news about the political and governing process.

The public cannot escape some of the blame for the negative political culture that exist today. People are paying less attention to politics and government. Many are ignorant and the basic features of the political system—of the basic features of the political system—and that's a shame. And we as politicians have to correct that. Less than 5 per cent of Canadians belong to a political party. There are estimates that 30 per cent follow political debates closely. People tell pollsters that they want authentic leaders who will tell it like it is.

The interaction of less deferential and ill-informed public, the complex problems facing governments, poor leadership, blunders, and misdeeds, and increased transparency have all combined, with the support of media, to foster a culture of anger and frustration. And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the first part of Professor Paul Thomas' articles in regards to the distrust that's created in the system. And, again, I come back to referencing Bill 14 to this, because, again, Bill 14 is to create transparency and to create trust within the political system that we're so proud of.

Mr. Speaker—Deputy Speaker, in a second article, accountability industry failing to improve the public trust—excuse me, Professor Thomas indicates: In a previous article, I presented a diagnosis of why public trust and confidence in politicians and governments is probably at an all-time low.

Asked to rank occupations in terms of trust-worthy, respondents typically placed politicians at or

near the bottom of the list. Asked how often they expect government to do the right thing, more than 60 per cent of the respondents say never or only some of the time. It should also be noticed that the significant portions of the public are well informed about politics—or ill-informed about politics and government. There's an extreme cynicism that exists out there, and, again, we've got to change that.

As trust and confidence in politics and government has slowly declined, the public has insisted on more regulation, transparency, monitoring and accountability for both politicians and public servants. This approach is based on the premise that the best way to ensure greater integrity in politics and more effective performance by government is to eliminate or at least reduce the need for trust. In other words, we will produce more trust in public officials by institutioning the principle of mistrust. This approach to restoring trust has led to a relatively small—compared to the rest of government—but influential accountability industry in the public sector. At this time deregulation of the private sector was taking place, the regulation of the public sector was increasing. Each new instance of 'blumber'—blunder or abuse led to the addition of new rules, usually layered on top of existing ones. The result was the emergence of a new branch of government concerned with promoting and policing integrity in politics and effectiveness in government.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Here are some examples of what Professor Thomas indicates of what he means by the accountability industry: a strengthened role for the Auditor General, practising value-for-money auditing, extensive policy regulating procurement of goods and services, restrictions on government advertising, lobbyist registration, a ban on corporate and trade union donations to political parties, which I'm proud to say that we have in Manitoba right now, which both parties—or both former government and government of today support—conflict—excuse me, a reduction of conflict-of-interest rules, values and ethics codes, freedom of information and whistle-blower protection laws, requires for performance measurement and reporting and the adoption of open government practices, proactive disclosure of actions of politicians and public service—servants.

To enforce these new rules, there is an array of integrity and performance monitors: internal and external audits, integrity commissioners, information

and privacy commissioners, both general and specialized ombudsmen, language commissioners, election agencies and commissioners, children's advocates, and the list goes on and on. If rules and policing could guarantee integrity and sound performance, it should follow the public trust and confidence that would be—that will have been increased.

Instead, during the period of expansion of the accountability industry, mistakes and abuses occurred to—and public trust and confidence continued to decline. In response, the leaders of accountability industry, both inside and outside government, argue it will take time for the rules and monitoring mechanisms to deter irresponsibility behaviour, and those devices are deficient and inadequately enforced.

There is some truth to these arguments. However, we also need to recognize the accountability industry has ended up strengthening the prevailing negative stereotypes of politicians and, to a lesser extent, public service, that exist in the public mind. This happens because the reports of accountability industry flow into parliamentary and media forums where the findings mainly are negative views and amplified and sensationalized.

And I think that's a very valid point, Madam Speaker. I think that we have to be very careful of when we address issues not to sensationalize, and go to the facts, because the more we sensationalize issues for political means, the more cynicism it develops within our electorate and our public.

* (16:10)

Most accountability enforcers have the power to recommend, not only to corrective action, based on the belief that only bad 'puplicity' will lead to reform. Some leaders in the accountability industry play to the grandstand in terms of the content and wording of their reports. This tendency leads to the distrust and defensiveness on the part of politicians and public servants who are targets in this new regulatory regime.

When accountability process becomes all about naming, blaming and shaming, little prevention, learning or improvement will occur. Good people may not enter public life as politicians in public service when those occupations are held in low esteem, and the rules imply they cannot be trusted to serve the public interest. There is another drawback to the prevailing negative approach to the

accountability with its web of rules, and it discourages prudent risk-taking innovation, disclosure and honest dialogues about the needs, what works and what does not work and why.

He states: My conclusion is leaders in public offices who embody strong values of public service and integrity in their belief systems and behaviours are the—are more important to restoring public trust and confidence than multiple ever-expanding accountability mechanisms. In short, character and the capacity for ethical reform matter. Parties need to pay more attention to the character of the people they nominate and the people who—and the people have to act appropriately when elected.

And, Madam Speaker, I really believe that the people that are elected in this House, although we disagree on philosophical issues, I really believe that all members really do have a fundamental loyalty and support of trying to do the right thing in this House, and that applies to my colleagues of my party and my government as well as the opposition. But we have to go beyond that. We have to really, really try and ensure that, as a body, we try to set a real example.

And, Madam Speaker, may I compliment you, because one of the things—as a new member of this House, one of the things I think you've tried to bring to this House, as a Speaker, is trying to look at suggesting that there are compromises available, and there is an opportunity to see the other point of view and respect the other point of view. And I think that you've done an excellent job in certainly trying to set that tone within this House, and my compliments to you for doing that.

Manitoba is the only jurisdiction that has a code of conduct for political parties and declares their members will not do anything to bring the democratic process into disrepute. Sadly, none of the parties appear to have—excuse me—have done anything to bring this code to life. Mr.—or Professor Thomas indicates that we as the political body need to be challenged to bring that code to light.

There needs to be more education and training for politicians about the legal and ethical standards of public life. There also needs to be safe forums where public officials can hold honest dialogues about real ethical dilemmas that they are confronted as public officials.

Madam Speaker, those are the two articles that I wanted to read into the record, because I really

believe that they were valid, and I really believe that they warranted being part of this discussion on Bill 14. Again, my comments—and I reiterate, and I'm—I know I'm repeating myself, but the reality of the situation is that Bill 14 does try to address transparency and accountability in government, and I think that we, as all members, should be in a position where we really—when evaluating that bill, do take that into consideration.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I would like to put a few words on the record regarding this Bill 14. Our NDP team believes in a transparent government that is held accountable to its citizens. We take our responsibility to be open and accountable to Manitobans seriously, while being respectful of the privacy of our public servants and HR best practices.

We also believe that having a professional and fairly comprehensive political staff is an integral part of delivering quality services to Manitobans. Political staff should not be subject to partisan attacks or treated as political pawns. We should—we support transparency and would like to see the scope of the bill expanded, as the limited scope is unfortunate.

The government should also find time to address important issues for Manitobans, including creating good jobs for young people, investing in our infrastructure and schools and creating new opportunities by funding programs like child care.

We have strengthened The Elections Act, beefed up FIPPA legislation and made more government data and information available online, including ministerial travel and expense reports. We made sure the public was free to access information. We also put more information online, because most Manitobans don't file FIPPA papers; they search online. We posted our government contracts online where they can be viewed by the public. That is the most transparent system of any Canadian province.

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influencing elections, and we also restricted third-party advertising during election campaigns.

We were the first government in Canada to introduce legislation protecting whistle-blowers and we created the lobbyist registry to keep lobbying in Manitoba open and transparent.

We extended freedom of information legislation to public bodies. There, the Conservatives have specifically excluded. FIPPA now covers municipal governments, school divisions, universities and health regions. And we shortened how long Cabinet documents are sealed.

We believe that transparency and accountability should not be limited to the provincial government, but should apply to all levels of government. No matter whether elected officials and senior civil servants work for the city, the Province or the federal government, Manitobans expect that the highest standards will be met.

* (16:20)

Former Winnipeg CAO Phil Sheegl registered in October, 2013. It took more than a year and a half to reveal—reveal he received a \$250,000 severance package. Former CAO Deepak Joshi received more than \$567,000 in compensation after he registered. The City of Winnipeg recently passed a motion to reveal what portion of payments to staff earning 50,000 or more per year covers vacation pay, severance, salary and other benefits. It is unfortunate that the minister has passed up this opportunity to improve transparency at all levels. And this suggests this bill is more concerned with settling old political debts than advancing Manitobans' interests.

We take no lessons in transparency from this government. It misled Manitobans about the size of the deficit in order to try and settle a political debt. It misled Manitobans about a \$170-million difference in the deficit. This is no random error, but a clear attempt to play with Manitoba's budget for political purposes.

This government was not honest with Manitoba seniors when they cut the Seniors' School Tax Rebate. Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, this rebate was really dear to my heart, because I proposed it in the caucus and I pushed for that the seniors work their whole life and they should get this break so they can stay in their houses a longer time. And because of that, we, as a society, get so many benefits. We don't have to provide extra services which otherwise we have to. Also, seniors can have

some of their grandchildren in their houses, they can give them lives that—well, you'll experience, and so that was very important. It was not easy. I had to really push in my caucus. And I did not—that did not come from the sky. I was doing door knocking when I got elected the first time, and seniors asked about it. We need a break. We want to stay longer in our houses. Do something about it. So I said, okay, I will try my best to see what can be done. I proposed it. It was agreed with quite disagreements, but at the end, it got—but we were not able to apply immediately after the 2011 election. I had to push for again. I feel ashamed of, when go to people's houses, we promised that we have to do it. So we, the first time, came \$235 plus or whatever they can get \$700 plus another 400 because of their low income. And, again, I was not satisfied. Then, the next year, it was 470. And, again, I was not satisfied, because seniors need the full amount of the school tax rebate. So, at the end, it was agreed and promised they will get \$2,300 maximum, up to \$2,300 school tax rebate after you put 700 extra, up to 300—or \$3,000. So, in that way, 50–98 per cent of seniors could have got that break. And that was worth it. But what happened?

PCs also, during their campaign, they promised they will keep their promise. But what happened? Once the election is over, seniors got betrayed. They did not keep that promise about \$2,300. So, approximately, seniors got, immediately, \$1,830, approximately. But they were not only—the government was not only satisfied by that. They wanted to fool seniors further.

They said, if you have \$40,000 family income, you will get \$470. If you have more than that, you will get only a less amount, and I have to say I am not quite sure, above \$63,000, you will get zero. But unfortunate other clawbacks—if you have less income, because you get—for a lower income, you get a \$400 tax credit. You will save some money out of that. That will be reduced out of your \$470.

So that was another attack on the seniors. Seniors was phoning every day after this tax time, where we can pick up a form, what we can do. And I told them it's unfortunate this government did not kept their promise. And you won't get it. But you will get it when you apply for income tax. So, that income tax, when you apply at that time—but seniors are happy when they get direct cheques immediately. It looked like a gift. And this tax, we know how much we care about how we got that money and we don't really pay that much in emphasis. And I think

that enthusiasm has been taken away from seniors' lives.

The other thing I think I could not understand, if we talk about transparency, but we have to stick to some basic rules. Some basic rules—what are the rules? We are a multicultural society. And, unfortunately, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was asked about diversity, and he said, our caucus is more diverse than in the whole of Canada. That was not simply a statement; that was an attack on the multiculturalism.

Because, according to the Premier, which I can read underline, people of longer size or people of small size, people of thin size, people of wide size, are diversity. Or maybe people of different skills are diversity. But that's not diversity we have been using in multiculturalism. That diversity is also include visible minorities. But he excluded that visible minorities. And he—and in another way, I think it was made a joke of, that the notion of visible minority included in diversity.

* (16:30)

So I was really disappointed, not politically, I want to make a point; I was disappointed how, in this time, and how still their narrow-mindedness in the—some politicians' minds. They don't want to recognize. Sure, we ought and think about saving money and how much severance pay to—given to the different staffers.

But look at the—Madam Speaker, look at the two visible minority deputy ministers who are role models for their respective communities. Why? Because not having from visible minority any minister on the—in the government. Those deputy ministers are the role models, so people can look up to them. But they took away that chance.

And I know one of the deputy ministers cannot say much how qualified she was, but I know about the woman of colour—that deputy minister. She became deputy minister not because she had her colour; she became deputy minister—she was one of the most qualified persons. She was accountant by profession. She worked 26 years in the government, and she was at one point chief official officer, and she was taking care of the government accounting size. When Premier says we are fiscally—want to be fiscally responsible, he could not have a better person than her. But other thing also, we cannot discriminate people on the base of race or on the 'blase'—base of political view. But she has been

discriminated in this way on political views, because she did not have any political allies. She was replaced the person who had political allies, so, unfortunately, if she had some political alliance with the NDP, we can say okay, a new government came and he has to take her out. But that was not the case. She was there because of her qualification and because of that, to teach the lesson to people of minorities, to show the majority group that we don't care about the visible minorities. We teach them a lesson; they are getting jobs because of their colour, which was not true.

And it was really unfortunate that on the other hand if they say we want to save money on all these severance pay and all that, two deputy ministers had been removed. But the deputy minister number has not been reduced. Three assistant deputy ministers have been appointed; that will cost money—that will cost money—extra money.

Also look in the civil service—not civil, political staffers. Special assistants used to get around about—between 60 and 70,000 and 64,000 dollars per year. Now I know some special assistants that are getting close to \$90,000. Is that a way taxpayers making—saving some money? Would you believe it? The MLA who won, he makes almost as much money, the candidate who did not win. That kind of political favouritism takes away some money out of the pockets of the taxpayer.

So we should look in everything. We should look in how—and just don't look at—on a small portion of those people, how they got severance pay. I think the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) shown about \$670,000 was in severance pay given by the other side at different [*inaudible*] times.

So it's not—I think it's really an unfortunate situation the way we are trying to score political points, but taxpayer does not save any money. Seniors are not happy. Visible minorities are not happy. If they look closely, I think—okay, let me give one example. I think—I wish the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) could have been here but he's not here, but the other guy—members who belong to the agriculture industry, I come from a—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Just a reminder again to members that we are not to make reference to the presence or absence from anybody in the Chamber.

Mr. Saran: I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. I should have known better, because I—once I used to sit in that chair as well.

And—but I think there are many people who are—belong to the agriculture industry. When I was born in a farm family, and I heard one saying. That saying was that, after 12 years, even ruri's also recognized. Ruri means when you have animal waste, you will dig out the ditch, then you keep collecting that over there, and after some time that will become really good manure. Then you will take to the farm, and the farm will buy the product. It means, after 12 years that ruri become valuable. It's—that is recognized.

Sometimes the same thing happens in the political system. If the NDP had been 17 years and PC has been in a position for so many years, sometimes people said, oh, let's give them a break. But people start seeing what they are going to do, and now maybe they seniors—the way seniors thinking, the way visible minorities are thinking, and I think they realize what a mistake they made.

So don't gloat—the government should not gloat that much on winning 40 seats. And the honest—let me go to the other point. They always talk about 1 per cent PST, and how many people, ordinary people, spend more than \$2,000 per month. There is so much—there is some amount where PST's not applicable. I will say \$1,500 will be spent. I don't know; some people might have more money, but I come from an immigrant family and hard-earned money, I was not able to spend more than that, and still I'm not able to, although we—I read on Facebook how much politicians make and how much they should not make, but that's a different issue.

And 15 multiplied by 12, \$180 extra one person will—one family will pay. When the PCs was—came in power last time, they reduced school tax rebate from \$350 to \$200—\$325 to \$250. When the NDP came in power, the increased that school tax rebate \$700. So I—if you will take the difference, still are there any people are about \$300 ahead of the game. Still they are saving.

* (16:40)

So I—so, on the other hand, PST, although nobody likes to increase taxes, no, because government doesn't become popular by increasing tax. But sometimes it's a necessity; you have to do it. If you don't do it, if we had not widened that

floodway, we could have half of Winnipeg under water, and that cost \$1.2 billion.

Calgary, they were supposed to do that in 2006, I guess, and they did not do it because they tried to save money because they wanted to show that we don't want to tax the public, but we don't care about the public, let them survive or die.

So half of—so what happened two year ago? It cost Calgary about—cleaning the damage, about \$4 billion. So who was smart? This government who spent \$1.2 billion who got disreputed because they have to take their tough decision, or the—their government who spent \$4 billion that could again happen. That could again happen, because they have not done their job.

So, being a responsible government, we have to do that. Sometimes you have to take tough decisions.

Now that we know the justification by the party of Tories is without merit. Will they come clean on what their plans are? Every day, how much taxpayer money is being wasted? How? Then question is asked from the minister—from the Premier (Mr. Pallister). He does not give proper answer and therefore proper information does not go to the public. And what kind of that answer is just making joke of the, okay, their government did this, you did this. That does not make any sense.

We need proper information. We need proper question. We need proper answer. We should start doing that. Sure, they want to have fun, and one question, or two question, have fun, that is okay. But give proper answer because those proper answer, we won't—we—all of us may not be educated, even MLA on the government side, not on opposition side, not the public.

If we don't get that proper information, how—so how much money we wasted if we count every day, every MLA, how much money he makes? How much money that was wasted because we did not have real discussion. We had only cared like joking, and when people are sitting up there, what do they get? What kind of impression they get? That's why they I—were reading over there on the Facebook how much politician make, whether they deserve it or not, I will not say it one way or other, but are there many people who could be lawyer maybe making more money than that, who could be engineer maybe making more money that—I don't know how much a teacher make; many teachers are there.

But why we get that impression? Because we don't give a proper answer to the public through the question period. So—because we must have to be more serious and dig out the proper answer because we have to serve the public, and to serve the public, we are here for the betterment of the public; not for our fun. Not for putting down one person or putting down the other person.

So we have to be more serious. We have to exercise proper politics. And if we don't do that, our morale will go down, our reputation will go down, and because of that, we are neither—we are serving our self, or are we serving the public?

Thank you very much.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak this afternoon on Bill 14, the public sector compensation disclosure act. My colleague here from The Maples has asked this side of the House to be more serious about the—some of the stuff we talk about in this House, and I intend to stay pretty serious here, because I don't want the Opposition House Leader to accuse me of howling like he did for the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma). So I will try to stay on topic here on Bill 14.

I think the majority of our members on this side have made some good points of why transparency is so important, and this bill does address transparency in government.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans work hard for their money, and they want accountability for their hard-earned dollars in every facet of their life. They are smart, frugal shoppers and are among the best in Canada at stretching their dollars. They look for the flyers in their newspaper every week, and they head out to the sales every weekend to spend their hard-earned money in the best way possible.

Smart shopping became increasingly necessary under the former NDP government, who continuously dipped into Manitobans' pockets for more money. Several of my colleagues on the opposite side of the House were part of the previous government that extended the PST to more goods and services, and then the very next year, despite public assurances to the contrary, raised the PST to 8 per cent.

That forced every Manitoban to spend more on the essentials of life. And it's a particular problem in

my constituency, Madam Speaker, of Riding Mountain. We're close to the Saskatchewan border. We pay 8 per cent here in Manitoba where they pay 5 in Saskatchewan, so guess where all the cars head every weekend to shop: Saskatchewan.

Our government is taking steps to address that and we will address that. We will lower the PST in our first term and eventually get us on to an equal playing field with our province to the west. *[interjection]*

So I'm talking about Bill 14 here, as my friend from Flin Flon just reminded me, as I tend to remind him from time to time to stay on topic, and I thank him for keeping me on topic today as well.

During the last decade of debt, 'declay', and decline, the NDP party were loose with the purse strings, but then love to claw back the very same money for taxpayers with added taxes and fees. And Manitobans got tired of this year-after-year cycle.

This new government believes that all Manitobans want every dollar of their hard-earned cash accounted for. Just over six months ago, Manitobans went to the polls and elected our government with a record mandate of being open and transparent. Bill 14 that we are debating is a key component of the promise that all of us on this side of the House made during the campaign period. Manitobans want to pay their fair share of the taxes; there's no problem with that, but they don't want their money wasted. And the bottom line is, the public has a right to know how their money is being spent.

This bill will ensure that secondment contracts and severance payments for political, also known as technical officers, are disclosed in an honest, transparent and timely matter. What's wrong with that, I ask, Madam Speaker? I think that's common sense, and that's what our government is all about, common sense.

This bill addresses concerns raised when the former government let go a number of advisers after some internal squabbles within the party. Manitoba taxpayers were subsequently on the hook for hundreds of thousands of dollars in severance payments, but no disclosure was forthcoming from the government of the day as to who received this money and why. Again, I want to reiterate that Manitobans have the right to know how their government spends their money.

Government advisers, when hired, will now know, once this bill has passed, that information on

their contracts will be disclosed within 30 days after their hiring. Should they leave the employment of the government and receive a severance payment, details of that payment will be made available to the public.

* (16:50)

I've never worked for the government, but I think that's not too much to ask. You know that up front when you sign that contract, the details are going to be made public, and you know that if you leave that any severance payment you might receive is going to be made public.

Madam Speaker, our government not only talks the talk, but walks the walk as this bill will be retroactive to include current staff employed by our newly elected government. Gone are the dark days of the former NDP government where lack of disclosure and untendered contracts were real issues, to everyone except the NDP. Manitobans certainly knew that when they voted in the spring in record numbers; they made their choice on that ballot in, last April.

And our new government has begun the hard work to repair the damage caused by the NDP. We are righting the wrongs and preparing the Province to move towards fiscal balance in a responsible way.

Manitobans were tired of the former NDP; they overwhelmingly voted them out of office. Our new government has rolled up our sleeves and have started the tough work of fixing the finances, repairing our services and rebuilding our economy. Unlike our predecessors, we're not going to rely on politically motivated quick fixes that resulted in unsustainable growth and massive debt that threatens the core services that all Manitobans depend on. Our government will instill a level of trust in government that was never seen under the NDP.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I just want to say that Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act, is an important part of restoring that trust.

Thank you.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): It is my great privilege and pleasure to say a few words today. *[interjection]* Oh, okay, some members have requested I say more than a few, so I'll try and oblige all members of this House and put some words down that actually speak to the heart of the matter.

You know, we've heard some previous members vector off quite a bit and talk about this, that and the

other thing and have to be reminded to get back to what they're supposed to be talking about, which is Bill 14.

Certainly, nobody on this side of the House is opposed to suggesting that there should be some openness and some transparency in things like severance. You know, I need to correct some statements that were made previously that were comparing this government to that government, to the next government, and, you know, one of the things that a speaker prior to that pointed out was that, well, under a previous PC government, the severance payouts were actually, you know, substantially bigger than what they were under the previous NDP government.

And, you know, we talked about the potential of maybe talking about some of those people and some of the numbers, and the numbers, you know, they're substantial numbers, and maybe I'll come back to this list in a little while, Madam Speaker.

But, you know, there's a lot of things that we can talk about with this Bill 14. On the surface of it, it seems like a good bill. Who would be opposed to it? Of course, once you—[interjection]—ha, Madam Speaker, we've got the puppets back in the House. One of the concerns that we have with this bill is that the legislation leaves some details out. While the government talks a lot about open and transparent, but what's missing is the form that the disclosure should take place, how it's going to be reported. What it does is it leaves it up to the minister's discretion in every case how the disclosure of severance will be reported.

Now, if you ask me, that leaves the whole bill suspect and open to perhaps playing with the numbers or hiding the numbers or doing things that the whole premise of the bill would suggest isn't what it's about, but, by not nailing down some of the details in the bill about how those things are going to be reported, it leaves too much leeway for a minister to suggest or come up with creative accounting, if you will, or this number is reported differently than that number. What's included in the number, what's not included, depends on who you are, perhaps what the disclosure will look like. And so, you know, you need to tighten up. If we want to—not we, but if the government wants to advertise itself as open and transparent, then perhaps that's what they should do. Perhaps they should be open and transparent in all their dealings. And, in this particular bill, it leaves

too much room to be not open and not transparent because the detail in how you're supposed to report is not there. And it should be there.

You know, the—just to touch on open and transparent for a couple of minutes, Madam Speaker—this government likes to use those words—but, really, what we've seen so far is something different than that. When we talked about Bill 7, it got held off as long as possible before we were to debate it in this House. That's not really open and transparent like they would like us to think it is. I attended one of the government's budget consultation processes, where members of the public, I think there was 35, maybe 40 members of the public, that had all of five, maybe six, minutes to express their opinions. I mean, you can check the record on that; maybe it was 10 minutes. I could be corrected on that, for sure—but other than the invited guests, the consultation process was really limited.

So now we're moving along; so we're going to be open and transparent. Bill 7 is a very important piece of legislation that's before this House. And yet the debate, the committee hearings have been pushed so that there's only three days left before the House rises to have people speak on that debate. So you can't have your cake and eat it too, Madam Speaker. You can't claim to be open and transparent, you can't claim to want to be consulting, while you're doing everything in your power to limit consultation on that.

But, before I get too far off track on this, it is just really another example, Madam Speaker, of this government's words not really matching with their actions, if you will. Not so open, not so transparent. This bill wraps itself again in the words of—this bill wraps itself in the words of being something that really it misses the mark on. It had the opportunity to really be very open and tell the public about severance in all cases, but it doesn't do that. Never mind what I've previously talked about, where the disclosure is left up to the—the form of the disclosure is left up to the minister—what else is missing from this bill?

Well, some very important stuff is missing. There's criteria that have to be met before any disclosure is made on a severance, Madam Speaker. And not every political staff member will meet those criteria. So there's still ample opportunity for the government to not be open and transparent like they claim they want to be. If you do not have an employment contract, this bill doesn't apply to you.

And there's very, very highly paid political staff going forward that won't meet that criteria, and the public will never find out what their severance pay is going to be. Open and transparent? Not so much.

This bill had the opportunity for the government to back its words up about open and transparent, but, yet again, Madam Speaker, this bill fails to do that, which is too bad. It's too bad because if they'd like us to believe that they're going to be open and

transparent and listen to consultation and everybody be on side—

Madam Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 22 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, and have a good weekend, everybody.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 20, 2016

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