

**Fourth Session - Fortieth Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
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GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
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<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, October 29, 2015**

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**

**Mr. Speaker:** Are we ready to proceed with Bill 215? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 215—The Prevention of Interpersonal and Family Violence Through Education Act (Public Schools Act and Education Administration Act Amended)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, we'll call Bill 215, The Prevention of Interpersonal and Family Violence Through Education Act (Public Schools Act and Education Administration Act Amended).

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 215, The Prevention of Interpersonal and Family Violence Through Education Act (Public Schools Act and Education Administration Act Amended); Loi sur la prévention de la violence familiale et interpersonnelle grâce à l'éducation (modification de la Loi sur les écoles publiques et de la Loi sur l'administration scolaire), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Speaker:** And also, as a reminder to the House, that as was previously agreed on June 29th of this year, there will not be a seconder required for this particular bill.

So, the honourable member for River Heights.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, it's time for all MLAs to come together to support a comprehensive approach to preventing and reducing family violence through education in our province. Bill 215 provides for such a comprehensive approach.

I will start by talking about why effective measures to reduce interpersonal and family violence are so important. Sadly, in Manitoba we continue to have one of the highest rates of family violence in all of Canada. Indeed, the rate of family violence in Manitoba is one and a half times higher than the Canadian average. I tabled this information in the House yesterday.

Furthermore, as I also tabled yesterday, while other provinces across Canada are seeing considerable reductions in the rate of family violence, Manitoba has seen little change. The ongoing high rate of family violence in Manitoba comes at a tremendous cost to families and to our province. Family violence is harmful to all involved, and is developmentally traumatic to children in the home. It is one of the root causes of very high provincial government costs leading to extraordinarily and unacceptably high numbers of children in care, now more than 10,000 in Manitoba. It is one of the reasons for Manitoba to have such a high incarceration rate, resulting in extremely high costs for our justice system and our jails.

Reducing interpersonal and family violence is very, very positive for families, for children, for our society and for the bottom line of our provincial government's budget. We must act. We need to act collectively as MLAs to address this problem in a comprehensive way across the whole province.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, when I asked the Premier (Mr. Selinger) for his support, he listed programs in the government's piecemeal approach. On Wednesday, the government announced the continuation of the breaking the silence program. While a good program, it aims to only reach 100 schools in three years. At this rate, it would take more than 25 years to reach the total of more than 850 schools in Manitoba.

Yesterday, the Premier talked about the Seeds of Empathy, the Roots of Empathy and the PAX programs. The Premier mentioned that the PAX

program is in 200 schools, and that 50 more will be added in the next year. Mr. Speaker, adding 50 schools a year will take more than 10 years until it reaches all schools in our province. Why are we missing so many of our children and youth with this inequitable approach? At this rate, we will have so many adults who will have aged out of the opportunity to learn about family dynamics and how to prevent interpersonal and family violence. This slow piece-by-piece approach is a disservice to our society. We need an approach that will reach all children in K to 12 in Manitoba.

The Seeds of Empathy and Roots of Empathy programs appear to be beneficial programs as well, and would serve to complement the comprehensive and ongoing K-to-12 education that Bill 215 will ensure is provided to all Manitoba's students. Indeed, I want to recognize the hard work of the Seine River School Division and the school board chair, Wendy Bloomfield, in introducing and championing these programs. Wendy Bloomfield was our Liberal candidate in 2007 in St. Norbert, and it's good to see Liberals contributing in this fashion. Congratulations, Wendy.

But the Seeds of Empathy and Roots of Empathy programs are only in a proportion of schools, and, once again, only those that are interested in the programs are offered only from preschool to grade 8. The programs also do not directly address the very serious problem of family violence in our society today.

Bill 215 aims not only to provide the education that is the basis for the reduction of prevention of interpersonal and family violence but to ensure that faculty, staff and students alike are aware of when and how to seek help if they or someone they know is experiencing such a trauma. These resources are not addressed in the PAX or empathy programs.

What is needed today is a comprehensive approach which includes all children up to grade 12 across all of Manitoba. Reducing interpersonal and family violence is so important for our province, for our children and for our families, that anything less than a comprehensive approach is simply not good enough.

The approach being used in Bill 215 is not only comprehensive; it involves school divisions and teachers throughout Manitoba. Involving teachers and school boards in the process of designing and implementing education about interpersonal and family violence is important to the success of efforts

to reduce interpersonal and family violence. This will allow programs to adapt to the students and to the region where they're being taught.

\* (10:10)

Bill 215 recognizes the importance of our cultural diversity and of understanding cultural differences and approaches. This is essential for success in Manitoba, for our cultural diversity is our strength. Bill 215 recognizes the importance of including the family cultures of our indigenous communities and of newcomers to our province on the advisory council, which is essential for full and comprehensive implementation of a province-wide effort to reduce interpersonal and family violence.

Passing Bill 215 will also signal to all Manitobans the priority and importance and the power of education in addressing interpersonal and family violence and the importance of reducing the level of interpersonal and family violence in our province.

James Lindsay, the mayor of Lynn Lake, on learning that I had introduced Bill 215 yesterday and having read it, he said, and I quote: As a parent, I like the idea. As a teacher, I love the idea. As a community leader, I understand how critical dealing with this issue is as family and interpersonal violence is one of the many greatest challenges our community faces. End of quote.

The related programs that Manitoba's already implemented are having an effect on positive change, but they're not mandated by legislation and are not practised fully in all school communities. I ask all MLAs today to vote using their conscience and to support Bill 215 in a united effort to have a comprehensive approach to improve our province and to improve the situation of our children, our families and our society. Let us pass it for second reading today.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there further debate on this matter? Questions, pardon me. Is there questions for the member?

The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet first.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** The question, of course, goes to the member from River Heights.

So, within the bill, you're implying that school divisions do not have any policy in regards to family violence, interpersonal violence. Is that true? What is some of the research that you've done within the province of Manitoba?

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, school divisions have taken varied approach to this issue. The problem is that there is not a comprehensive, provincially led approach throughout the province. I spoke of the Seine River School Division, which is a good example, and they've been at the forefront of introducing programs like the Roots of Empathy and Seeds of Empathy and PAX. And while these programs are important in addressing and understanding empathy and interpersonal relationships, they go only up to grade 8 and furthermore, they don't really directly address the understanding of family violence, why it happens and what can be done about it when it does happen.

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** Our NDP government works very closely with schools, teachers, parents, so when we make changes to our schools and our expectations on what teachers in schools are responsible for are well done can—and can move forward in a way that's productive and help the children.

Did the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) happen to consult with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba School Boards Association, Manitoba Association of School Superintendents or the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils on the contents of this legislation, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, we have talked to teachers and a variety of other people about this legislation, about the importance of family violence. This is an opportunity now, as we move forward, to bring this out into the open, to have a discussion in the Legislature, hopefully to move it forward to committee stage where we can have citizens representing all areas, including teachers and school boards, presenting their experience at the committee stage and hopefully we can take it there.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I would just like to thank president of Manitoba Teachers' Society, Mr. Norm Gould, who's joining us up here in the gallery.

And, of course, the member from St. Norbert took that question from me as far as which stakeholders have actually been asked, but you've already answered that question, that you're hoping to get it to committee stage so that those groups, those

associations can come and the society can come and put in their two cents.

My question—[interjection] So, my—well, that's okay. Well, he's already answered it. Thank you, the member from Dawson Trail. He's got time to ask some questions as well.

So question is: What programs are you going to be using and in which subject areas would you be implementing some of these at the school level?

**Mr. Gerrard:** I think that it's not the intention of the bill to impose specific programs. It is the intention of the bill to involve people, teachers, school boards in helping to implement and design the programs. And I think, quite frankly, that, as I've already mentioned, that there are some piecemeal approaches which have been put in place which, from what I can see, are actually very good approaches: the Seeds of Empathy and Roots of Empathy and PAX programs.

But what this bill does is to say, okay, you know, family violence is such an important issue throughout all of Manitoba that we need to make sure that every student all the way from K to 12 has some opportunity. And, of course, there are different levels of learning and understanding, and that's why it's important that this continue not just to K, but to Grade 8 but all the way to Grade 12.

**Hon. Mohinder Saran (Minister of Housing and Community Development):** I thank the member to bring this issue forward so we can have some political discussion.

Under the family violence provincial program our government supports agencies that hold public awareness, even about family violence prevention at schools and in the community. The programs had over 2,200 students in 2013 and '14.

Is the member aware of the efforts of our community service providers and has he consulted them—with them about the work they are already doing in our schools to educate children about family violence?

**Mr. Gerrard:** What this bill does is to recognize that there have been important efforts introduced in a few schools here and there, and you talk about a few thousand students so if—after—in comparison to all the students in the province.

And what I think is important here to recognize is that family violence is so important that we need to be comprehensive. We need to make sure that every student in the province is reached, and the

program and what is proposed in Bill 215 would also put teachers and school boards right at the forefront of, you know, how the programs are implemented and what programs are used in their individual school districts.

**Mr. Ewasko:** In regards to the information that you've brought forward for the bill, have you had any more luck with the current NDP government on getting any stats as far as within the school—within school divisions, within individual schools and wherever else? Have you had, you know, what are the stats showing?

This is the question to the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) and—because I know I've asked whether it's been in Estimates in the past or questions here in the House, and I've had a tough time getting some answers. So I'm just asking if you've been able to get some of those stats to help you formulate this bill.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The stats that I see as particularly important in driving this bill are the stats which show that we have a surprisingly high level of family violence in Manitoba. Indeed, the statistics show that when you compare us to other provinces we have the second highest level of family violence in all of Canada, second only to Saskatchewan, and that, on average, our level of—and extent of family violence is one and a half times what it is on the average of the other provinces.

So we're really an outlier. We're not close to the average of Canada. We have a level of family violence which is higher than the other provinces. As we all know very well, there are far too many missing and murdered women in Manitoba and this is a reflection, I believe, in part, of the high level of family violence that we have in our province.

\*(10:20)

It is an extraordinary, serious problem because it's one of the root causes of having so many children in the care of Child and Family Services. When we have more than 10,000 kids in Child and Family Services, this is an extraordinary number, an unbelievable number, if you really think about it, and we can't just sit by and do things as usual. We can't do things piecemeal.

We need to do things in a comprehensive way and—so that, you know, this—what we know very clearly is that there are, you know, some very good things happening and we need to recognize that but we need to knit those together in a comprehensive

approach which will really address this very critical issues for Manitoba.

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** I appreciate that the member bring forwards as we go into domestic violence month. I'm sure the member would agree that supporting those experiencing violence in homes is important, and that support can come in many, many different ways, and certainly financial concerns are a big thing for people considering making move to escape violence.

Maintenance Enforcement Program helps enforce child or spousal supports for single parents, mostly women, some of whom are escaping violence in the home, can buy clothing, pay rent and avoid having to go on welfare.

I'd like to give the member for River Heights a chance to comment on the view expressed by a Conservative member that the Maintenance Enforcement Program is nothing more than red tape and an unfair burden for business.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I think that where we are at the moment, there are a number of things that contribute and that—contribute to family violence, and one of those is inadequate housing and inadequate financial support to families, and that what we can do in these areas can be very helpful in reducing tensions within families.

But I think that the important thing that we're trying to recognize within this bill is that there is a possibility of doing this on a province-wide basis through our school system and improving education in this area.

**Mr. Swan:** I'm surprised the member didn't want to distance himself—

**Mr. Speaker:** Oh, pardon me. *[interjection]* The time for questions has elapsed. Thank you for pointing that out.

Now, debate on this matter.

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** I'm delighted to get up this morning and speak to the bill put forward by the member from River Heights yesterday. I want to commend him for putting this on the agenda of the House for us to get a chance to speak about it, have a dialogue about it. We hope to see that it does move forward going forward, Mr. Speaker, and so I want to commend him for his efforts on behalf of all members of the House to address what is clearly a critical issue in our community.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge Norm Gould, president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and Liam Martin, also with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, here today. It's important that they be here to hear the debate in the House this morning because as we know, and as the member just conceded, he wasn't in touch with any of our stakeholder partners. Not the Manitoba Teachers' Society, not the Manitoba Association of School Boards, not the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, and it's those—Manitoba Association of Parent Councils. We've reached out and talked to all of those organizations in the short time we've had since the member tabled the bill yesterday, to speak with them about the content of the bill and the degree to which there had been any consultation prior to tabling of the bill.

We understand from them that there was no consultation, but I believe in sort of surveying the landscape at this point. There was a relatively open mind to continuing to dialogue on this very important issue and to make sure that we do all the things we can, Mr. Speaker, not only to prevent family violence but to build a strong and public education program across Manitoba as we've done throughout our time in government. We've done it in the past, we've done it in the present and we're certainly going to continue to do so into the future.

I also want to just quickly acknowledge the member from Lac du Bonnet wearing a bright orange tie today. He can masquerade as a New Democrat but, of course, until he comes across the floor and actually votes with this side of the House on the agenda I actually know he believes in, which is building a strong public education system, well, he can wear the tie; he's not actually walking the walk. And we would like him to do so more often, to be perfectly frank about it.

I want to be—I want to say that, in addition to the consultation question that's arisen as a result of the really quite premature tabling of the bill in some way because it's, as I say, it's not quite ready for prime time, I am troubled by the member's repeated assertion that his is the comprehensive approach and everything else is piecemeal when he knows that, in fact, by simply amending The Public Schools Act through his bill this is—will be one part—one piece of the puzzle, but there are many other pieces of the puzzle that need to be addressed. So, I want, again, to commend him for putting this on the record, putting forward one piece of the puzzle. But, in fact, it takes several pieces to complete and fill out

the whole puzzle, and that's exactly what this government has been doing for quite some time.

As he himself acknowledged, we launched this week—public education program with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers that, in fact, continues an initiative that's been going on for several years now, to end violence against women and girls, which includes more than 100 school-based educational workshops, led by the Blue Bombers. And I can't thank them enough, on behalf of the government, and I know others have done so. My colleagues, in our caucus, thank the Bombers for taking this initiative, and taking it right into our classrooms. The kind of role models that they are, the kind of large, fit athletes, can make an impression on these young minds, can do a great deal to improving their attitudes about how we address such issues and, more importantly, how we understand them in our local and family context. So, I think, on behalf of all members of our caucus, I would like to thank the Blue Bombers for taking on this leadership role.

And, of course, we've continued to increase funding to our Family Violence Prevention Program, which provides education, healing and clinical resources to prevent family violence and support for victims.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the comprehensive approach is something that this government is already doing. What I would commend the member about is adding an additional piece to that puzzle, and not trying to take credit for the one who's going to solve the problem because we know it's going to take all of us in this House. It's going to take all of us as community members. It's certainly going to take our teachers, in our classrooms, most importantly, to be able to deliver the kind of messages that are required. And, so, again, I want to stress that he has put on the table one piece of the puzzle but, in fact, a comprehensive approach already exists within this government.

And, of course, we've done incredible amount of work in that regard in the Education Department over the years. I'm lucky enough to stand on the shoulders of those who came before me so I, of course, want to acknowledge my friend from St. Vital, who brought our groundbreaking antibullying legislation, not only into this House where the opposition repeatedly refused to deal with it, the opposition refused to participate, really, in any meaningful way in that they were obstructionist for many, many, many months on that most important

bill. And—but I want to commend my sister from St. Vital for having the courage and the tenacity to stay with it.

That bill was, eventually, passed by this House. It has been well received by our partners in the education sector, which I just referred to a few minutes ago. It's been warmly received in schools. It's been warmly received in classrooms. What, in effect, Mr. Speaker, the member from St. Vital did, in that regard, was to bring human rights right into the classroom. And, for that, we owe her a great deal of gratitude.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, and the member from River Heights referred to this yesterday, we actually have introduced any number of programs. I know my friend the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Ms. Wight) has been a strong voice for preventative measures in our classrooms in order to ensure that children properly understand the world around them, the nature and how conflict works and then, most importantly, how to resolve conflict. And, so, we have programs like the PAX program which is, in fact, a very effective tool. I would have liked to see the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) provide a better acknowledgement of the vast importance of that program in helping kids, as I say, not only to understand the nature of conflict, but to understand the way in which you can resolve conflict in a peaceful way, understand the nature of violence and then, hopefully, at some point in the future, put an end to violence as well.

\* (10:30)

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) also, yesterday, as you heard and the member from River Heights referred to—and, again, this just indicates the number of pieces of puzzle it takes to—pieces of the puzzle it takes to complete the whole puzzle—referred to the Roots of Empathy program, the Seeds of Empathy program. Again, Mr. Speaker, these programs speak to the good in each one of us, especially within our children when we can generate and promote and encourage empathy in our classrooms and empathy between one another as we begin to understand where each of us sits in the world. That will only make a more peaceful society. It will only make for more stable families and, certainly, it will ensure that our communities remain strong and resilient going forward into the future.

So as I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, again, I want to just summarize by saying I want to commend the member from River Heights for

putting this on the agenda of the House. I do think that there are numerous questions associated that have already been raised by our partner organizations. The Manitoba Teachers' Society, obviously, is interested in this particular issue, as their presence would attest to, and so there are—we're troubled by the absence of consultation as well. So in addition to lots of questions, we want to make sure that there's full involvement of all the partners in our education system. We do that as a matter of practice day in and day out, and we will continue to do so.

So I want to end simply by offering to the member for River Heights the opportunity to come in and discuss the bill with myself and Education staff. I'm also wanting to put on the—an invitation to him that I'm quite willing to convene a meeting of our educational partners in order that we can get together, have a strong dialogue about what—the strengths of the bill and where the bill could use some improvements in order to ensure that we end family violence, but, more important, make a stronger, more peaceful communities throughout Manitoba—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to take this opportunity to get up and put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 215, The Prevention of Interpersonal and Family Violence Through Education Act, brought forward by the member for River Heights.

This is a very serious, serious topic, Mr. Speaker, and it upsets me in a way, but it, at the same, it shows some true colours coming from the Minister of Education in regards to taking the time to comment on my Halloween tie that I'm wearing today. And the reason why I'm wearing this tie is because it is a scary orange pumpkin and it's very much bringing awareness to the rest of Manitobans that they have to be scared of the orange machine that we call the NDP government right now. And since he's brought it up—so since he brought it up, I'm not also—well, I am going to put it on the record, of how many, you know, days that he stands up in the House and wears a blue shirt and blue tie.

So, I mean, if he's lobbying for a job to come over to this side of the House just because he sees the writing on the wall and we're going to get into government this coming spring, with all the hard work, just that that opportunity has passed him on.

But let's get serious about this bill, Mr. Speaker, and, again, I commend the member from River Heights bringing it forward.

Because we've seen—I know that with the president and past president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society as well, we've had various discussions in regards to not only violence, but bullying and antibullying, cyberbullying, as well as, you know, scoring, whether it's the national, international tests. We've had those discussions and we've had those stakeholder meetings, those third-party stakeholder meetings with the superintendents with the school boards and, of course, teachers. And being a teacher for—now this would have been my 21st year if I was still in the school system. I've been witness to many of the challenges that the member from River Heights is bringing forward into this bill and trying to bring forward into this bill.

And I know that the Education Minister stands, you know, stands up and speaks of all the great things that they're hoping to do and that. I mean, they've been in government, now, for 16 years, Mr. Speaker, and we're seeing a lot of sometimes reactive steps, but as far as preventative, I know that, you know, when we've spoke about test scores, I know that the president for the Manitoba Teachers' Society spoke about, you know what, it's more than just test scores, it's what's happening outside of the school system as well. And that's what I think brings forward this bill from the member from River Heights.

I think there's a lot of great points in the bill. And when we start talking about that interpersonal and family violence, I think all of us in this House, doesn't matter on party stripes or colour of ties or whatever else, I think we all want to see that those incidents reduce. I'm not sure if we'll ever actually stop it, but it's that intent to continue to try to keep working so that you maybe break that cycle.

And I think we need to bring in initiatives to continue to educate our youth so that, as they grow up and as they go home to their families, that they can, you know, possibly learn a lot of the coping mechanisms that we do have. And there are some really good programs in place in the education system right now. And, I mean, four years ago, as a guidance counsellor, I used many of them. And I'm not going to stand here and, as the member for—or the Education Minister rattles off a bunch of programs to show that he can read his talking points, I've been there, I've used them and a lot of those programs are

good programs. But is that enough? Are we doing enough?

I mean, we take a look at this NDP's record, right? So I talk about—I've talked about the test scores, the national and international scores; we're dead last. Are they just a tool? They are just a tool. But when the NDP government took power in 1999, we were amongst the leaders in the country. Absolutely, we were in the top three in math, science and literacy. Where are we now? We're absolutely bottom of the barrel.

I know the member from Burrows is going to have an opportunity to get up and speak, possibly, to this bill this morning. And then she can talk about, you know, whatever she wants, but the facts are the facts, and I know that the test scores and that is just a tool. So what does that tell me when we're absolutely at the bottom of the list when we're talking about math, science and literacy? That tells me that we're not doing something better early enough. I know the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society—the past president, sorry, mentioned that, again, it's more than just the six and a half hours that we have them in the school system, that there's a lot of other things that have to be implemented and changed. And that's, you know, how is their home life? What is their socio-economic background? All of those things, we have to start taking some of those things into account as well. I strongly feel that over this NDP government's reign of 16 years, that those things aren't getting any better, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it's absolutely getting worse.

I wanted to bring up a couple stats, and I know that the member from River Heights had mentioned a few of them as far as, you know, the one and a half times the national average as far as being in regards to family violence. They're records that we just can't sit back and say oh, well, you know what, we're hoping it's going to get better. And they continue—the NDP government continues to roll out these programs and these promises, but there's nothing—they're not keeping any statistics to show how it's improving. So thank goodness for organizations like StatsCan. So, unfortunately, we have to rely on an outside-of-province organization to supply us with those stats, because we're not keeping them ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's children and youth make up 26 per cent of our population. This is the future of our province. When we talk about stakeholders, we talk about third parties coming in

and chiming in on this bill. We have to remember that it doesn't matter if it's the Manitoba Teachers' Society, school boards, superintendents, MLAs, parents, the No. 1 stakeholder we have to be thinking about are those kids. And what we need to do is create these programs and these initiatives so that we continue to educate these kids, not only from 9 o'clock 'til 3:30, but these are things that we start planting those seeds so that, as they grow up into adults, into taxpayers within the community, that they start to break those cycles.

\* (10:40)

Another stat: we've got daycare crisis in Manitoba. We've got a wait-list now of approximately 12,000 families, and that number's growing rapidly, several hundred more than just a couple years ago. Child-care space is in high demand in Manitoba. As I've already said, we've got approximately 12,000 families waiting to get in. We've got three out of 10 of Manitoba's children are living in poverty, and the number continues to grow each year.

We talk about the various other areas that we need to absolutely improve on. So I mentioned the test scores—we're dead last, but then, again, that's a tool. So we need to create with our partners within education, create ways on how we can make those better.

Well, how do we make those better? They're only—it's only a tool, Mr. Speaker. So we have to do things at the front lines at the early years, start building those building blocks better so that those test scores—we don't have to worry about it because they're going to take care of themselves; they will improve.

But what have we seen under this government? We have seen a steady decline, matter of fact, all the way down to the bottom, Mr. Speaker, and that's unacceptable. And the Minister for Education, I'm sure he—oh, yes, he won't have another opportunity to get up, but I'm sure somebody else will.

But the fact is that we've got over 50 per cent of the people who are accessing our food banks are children. We take a look at the post-secondary, at our post-secondary institutions, 53 per cent of the people—or 53 per cent donations towards food banks for post-secondary institutions have increased under this government as well.

So there's a lot of spin coming from that side, but you know what? Manitobans are tired of their broken

promises. Manitobans are tired of paying more and getting less, Mr. Speaker. They talk a good game. They're more reactive than preventative and it's time for a change.

With this bill, I know that I've looked through it and I'm—I see some possible amendments that we can make to strengthen that bill. I am looking forward to seeing this bill, you know, if it doesn't get passed today, get moved on in—carried over to the next session and make it to committee so that we can hear from the public.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital):** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 215.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the MLA for River Heights for bringing this legislation forward, particularly as we're facing November and its domestic violence month coming up shortly, and I think it's a time for us as legislators to have a serious discussion about what we can do in regards to policy to provide a safe and caring environment for our young people in homes. And, certainly, one of the ways that we can do that is by working with our educators and our education system.

We know from the work that we have done as a government that working with our public education system is absolutely critical. Our young people are in schools, and quite often they have relationships and connections to teachers and to TAs and to—I was in a school the other day and I watched the principal in the hallway and the incredible connection that she had with 1,100—she has 1,100 students in that school, and I watched the incredible connection that she has when she walks down that hallway. And I just think that it is just an important thing for us to really make sure that when we do any kind of legislation, that it's absolutely critical that we do that consultation with our education community and our stakeholders.

And I know in the Bill 215 that it is suggesting that we amend The Education Administration Act so that we can have an interpersonal and family violence advisory committee. Well, I want the MLA to know that in the Minister of Education's office for many years now we have worked directly with an advisory committee, an intersectoral committee of stakeholders in our education community—and the Minister of Education listed those stakeholders out for us and I don't need to do that again, and I thank him for doing that because they are the

policymakers, they are the leadership in our schools. And we also work with the Manitoba Association of Principals. A principal in a school is the leader in the organization that sets the tone for a school and makes sure that that school has a safe and caring environment for all of their students. And I commend all of our educational leaders across this province who—that have done an amazing job of that.

I believe that we—that this legislation is—has been tabled prematurely. I think it's an important discussion that we need to have as legislators, but I do believe that it has been tabled prematurely, that that consultation with the professionals in our education system is absolutely critical. And I want to thank the Minister of Education today for providing the opportunity to the MLA for River Heights to set up a meeting with not just him but with his staff in his office—we have terrific staff in our Education Department, and I miss them dearly, who are so fantastic, who have their pulse on what's happening in our schools and have fantastic relationships. And he has offered to have his staff there at the meeting as well as the stakeholders because they can provide us with such critical advice as legislators in making legislation that really works, that really makes a difference.

So I want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Education and I hope the MLA for River Heights, I hope he takes the minister up on that because I think it's an important opportunity for us to get this right.

We know education is the key for young people. We know that if they don't feel safe in their schools, if they don't feel safe in their homes, they cannot learn. And education is the equalizer. If you have an education, you can succeed in our society; it doesn't matter what your prior learning experience is, it doesn't matter what your socioeconomic status is, the most important thing for a young person to follow their dreams in our society is to have an education. And that's why I believe that this legislation is an important discussion and that further communication with our stakeholders and our—and further dialogue and how we can get it right is very, very important.

I also want to mention that another person—I mean everyone, of course, knows—we've talked about it this morning about Bill 18. Bill 18, I spent a great deal of time consulting on Bill 18 with our education stakeholders but I also talked to professionals, and one of the professionals that I spoke to was Dr. Catherine Taylor, who is a

renowned researcher in Canada on bullying and had done an incredible amount of work, written a book and was working with the Manitoba Teachers' Society at the time. The book was called in every classroom and it documented the statistics in regards to what was really, really happening in our schools every day. And I think that's very important as well in regards to how to move forward because with this legislation I think it's important that we meet with professionals that have good, solid experience in regards to interpersonal and family violence relationships, and I think that is also very critical for us in getting this legislation right.

I mean, I have to tell you that school divisions, for sure, I know they care about their students. I think trustees, superintendents, we all want to get this right; nobody wants to see this kind of thing happening in homes. And if we can—if we—and we have to rely on our schools who have deep connections to young people, teachers, the custodian, for heaven's sake, is a fabulous person in our schools who talks to students, sees them in the hallway all the time. We can pick these things up and if we can work with young people and catch a problem, it's not just about the policy because the policy is good—it's a framework for providing a safe and caring school—but we need to really talk to professionals as well in regards to how to get this legislation right. *[interjection]* Absolutely, and they also—they spend time in school and after school, in extracurricular activities and they have leadership councils and they work with students—students and staff in schools are working together all the time.

\*(10:50)

And I look forward—actually, I look forward—I was—I'm glad. I want to—it's the first time I've seen Norm Gould since he was elected president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and I knew Norm quite well. I wish he—I was as good a curler as Norm.

And, you know, I really hope that there is an opportunity for them to weigh in in regards to their advice in regards to this legislation, because I know they care deeply.

I want to congratulate Norm on his presidency and I want to thank him for his support in regards to Bill 18. They showed real leadership in getting that legislation forward.

And, you know, I heard very, very clearly when we did Bill 18 that the connection with teachers for kids is critical. And I said over and over again when

we were doing that legislation, teachers save lives. They save lives in our schools, and they are absolutely critical to this piece of legislation in regards to how we can develop programs, policies and a piece of legislation that really can make a difference.

So, you know, I do have to say the MLA across the way that just spoke for the Conservatives, he talked a lot about test scores, and he talked a lot about ties. And he talked a lot about a bunch of stuff that—you know, he criticized the minister for, you know, offering to consult with the MLA from River Heights and get his staff around the table with him. And we know he didn't support Bill 18 even though he know—he likes to talk a lot about how he cares about students, and he always talks about how he was, you know, a teacher for 21 years.

So it saddens me that he made the comments that he did this morning in this Legislature in regards to this very important discussion that we're having here in the House this morning about how we can keep our young people, and how we can have healthy families and healthy communities and how all young people in our society can really reach their potential and follow their dreams if they get an education.

So, once again, on behalf of my government and on behalf of the Minister of Education, thank you for bringing this legislation forward, and I hope you take—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable member's time on this matter has elapsed.

**Mr. Gaudreau:** I'd like to first start by thanking the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for bringing this legislation forward. I think that it's a great conversation to have, and I'm really happy to hear the minister has invited him to have that conversation and work with our stakeholders.

As we've seen before in the past with our government, we work with our stakeholders. And I heard the member opposite over there measuring up the curtains, talking about, you know, how things are so terrible and, you know—he talked about the stadium.

Well, I want to talk about my school division and one of the wonderful initiatives they did last year with—in conjunction with our new stadium—where they did the rights of a child. And they had all the students participate by laying a tile on the field. I got

to make my own, not that I have a lot of artistic talent, but I got to make my own tile and I got to lay it on the field with thousands of students from Pembina Trails School Division.

So the member opposite, you know, might want to look at what the investments have done for our city and our province and for our school division. That was such a fantastic opportunity for our students to get out and learn about what the rights of a child are and participate in a wonderful event in Manitoba and in our school divisions.

You know, it's kind of appropriate that we're talking about supports this morning. Just came across the wire that we're investing \$3 million into 50 more teachers to reduce class sizes. That just came out this morning. So, you know, that's a fantastic way that we are showing support for our students and working with our schools and our partners. You know, the teachers approached us and—about reducing class sizes, and we've answered and we literally put our money where our mouth is. Unfortunately, the members opposite have voted against all of these initiatives every time we do it.

I really wish that, you know, people would understand, you know, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) was speaking about all of his wonderful years as a teacher, but what he failed to mention is that, you know, while they're measuring up the curtains, they'd also be cutting 700 teachers like they did when they were in government. So, you know, they talk about—he said that they were leaders when they were in government. I shudder to think that 70 per cent or less for graduation rate would be considered leadership. We've brought that up to 86 per cent, and we're still not done—we're still not done.

We're investing more in schools all the time, things like early childhood education, which they vote against every time. We're putting them in schools. We've mandated that every new school has a early childhood education facility, which is going to help our students from the time they enter that to all the way through school. It's not just about in school; it's about outside of school, before school. We have 71 Lighthouse programs, which are after-school supports. So we do a lot of support programs throughout our system to help this out, and I do think the member for River Heights is on the right track, and that this can be part of a systematic approach that we've initiated with the wonderful amounts of investments that we made in

our system from early childhood education to smaller class sizes to building new schools, which, you know, the member opposite likes to talk about being a teacher. He must remember the days when they were in government where they didn't build a single school. They didn't build anything. We saw school—we saw class sizes go up. We saw the buildings be in need of desperate repair and crumbling. So that's not how you support students.

We support students by building new schools. We support them by putting early childhood education into those new schools. And then we support them outside of schools with programs like, well, PAX is another great program that we've initiated.

Just a few years ago, I was at the original announcement with Minister Chief when he was—sorry, the honourable minister of childhood, youth and—child and youth opportunities at the time. He was at the announcement at École Noël-Ritchot with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and myself, and we announced the PAX program. And that program is working fantastic with the schools, and we've expanded it and we're expanding it again. But every time that we've put these investments in place, which do have a cost in them which we think is a really well-done investment because it's investing in the future of our children, every time the members on the other side vote against it.

So I'm hoping that, maybe, you know, with the consultation with the minister that the member opposite will see the light and decide to vote for our budget, which does support a lot of these wonderful initiatives. And maybe this initiative will be included. We'll—you know, through discussions with the minister it can be included, and then the member opposite can stand up and vote alongside of us with this budget that puts in more supports for—than ever before into our school system, you know, new—more teachers, more early childhood education, more Lighthouse programs.

We've seen so many supports being put into the school system underneath our government, and I think that, you know, that it's kind of a misleader when the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) was talking about what they did while they were in government. What did they do while they were in government? Nothing. Schools were not built. The graduation rate was flat; it was flat and it was low, Mr. Speaker. The graduation rate was much lower than it is now. They just were happy with that

graduation rate and they didn't bother putting any supports in to increase it. You can see that, when we've—since we've been in government, every year that graduation rate is ticking up. And are we happy with 86 per cent? Well, we're happy that we've made progress. We're not happy with that rate, and we're going to continue working to make sure that it gets better.

Yesterday, the Minister for the Economy, he announced a great program that's giving a bursary to some women to have them become trades teachers, Mr. Speaker. There's another program in place that's going to help people in the community relate, because we'll get more women into trades because they're going to see women in leadership roles in the schools teaching students. So that's another role—that's another way that we're increasing the way that we support people and we support families. And having more women in the trades is a fantastic thing that does support families.

This is exactly what our government does. And every time we put those supports in place, every single time the members opposite vote against it. They talk about \$500 million worth of cuts. Well, where would those programs be, Mr. Speaker? Where would all those teachers be? All the extra teachers that we've hired, where would they be underneath all of the opposition's cuts?

It's very easy for them to measure up the drapes, but they sure wouldn't measure up when it comes to education in our system. They would not measure up with increasing the graduation rate like we've done. They would not measure up when it comes to early childhood education. And they would certainly not measure up when it comes to increasing the apprenticeship in Manitoba to over 10,000 apprentices, which helps women get into the trades, which helps families, and which helps the cycle—end the cycle of poverty, Mr. Speaker.

These are all of—it's a big system of support that we have put in place, and every day we hear the members opposite say that they—

\* (11:00)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) will have three minutes remaining.

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 17—Provincial Government Stifling Winnipeg Economy

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m., it is now time for private members' hour—or private—for resolutions, pardon me, and the resolution under consideration this morning is entitled provincial government stifling the Winnipeg economy, sponsored by the honourable member for Tuxedo.

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that,

WHEREAS historically, Winnipeg's economy has been a major economic driver for the province of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS under the current Premier, Winnipeg's economic growth record has fallen to the bottom of the pack out of Canada's 10 largest cities; and

WHEREAS under the current Premier, unemployment in Winnipeg has increased by over 3,000; and

WHEREAS since 2009, Winnipeg is one of only two cities among Canada's largest to see its unemployment rate increase; and

WHEREAS since 2009, Winnipeg has the second worst full-time employment record among Canada's largest cities; and

WHEREAS the tax hikes and economic mismanagement of this Premier are keeping Winnipeg from reaching its full potential.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to admit that it has failed to grow the economy of Manitoba's metropolis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to reduce their job-killing taxes and create an environment where Winnipeg's economy can thrive once again.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo, seconded by the honourable member for Steinbach,

WHEREAS historically, Winnipeg's—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense? Dispense.

The resolution is in order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I'm pleased to, having moved this resolution today, Mr. Speaker, I think this an important debate to have in the Manitoba Legislature. It's important that members opposite see the reality of their tax-and-spend government and what it is doing to our economy and in Winnipeg.

We know that prior to the last election, we have an NDP government and an NDP Premier that went door to door in the last election campaign, each and every member opposite, and they knocked on those doors, Mr. Speaker, and they told those people that they would not raise the PST. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) called that nonsense. He said it was ridiculous. But members opposite continued to go door to door and gather support for themselves for the last election by misinforming and—Manitobans on what exactly their intentions were.

And we know prior to the last election, Mr. Speaker, we know from documents that we received that they were, in fact, considering raising the PST beyond 8 per cent. In fact, they were looking at 9 and 10 per cent for the PST. And so what's really unfortunate is that what has happened to the Winnipeg economy since that PST hike. And what we have seen is that unemployment, there's been 2,000 more people out of a job as a result of this tax-and-spend policies of this NDP government.

And what's really unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, of course, not only did they go door to door and promise not to raise those taxes, the first opportunity that they had when they got into government, the first opportunity that they had not only did they expand the PST, but they added other things to it, as well. They expanded the services and they expanded the products that were subject to PST. So they expanded the scope of it, and then the next year they raised it from 7 to 8 per cent. And so now we're seeing what has happened as a result of that in the Winnipeg economy and under this Premier and his tax-and-spend policies.

*Ms. Jennifer Howard, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

What's really unfortunate is, as I've already mentioned, is that the unemployment in Winnipeg has increased by 3,300 under this NDP Premier since he became Premier, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it's increased the unemployment. So there's been 2,000 more people in Manitoba on the unemployment roll since the PST hike. And so,

clearly, this NDP Premier (Mr. Selinger), his policies are failing the people in Winnipeg, and it's unfortunate because it has a negative impact on our economy.

So, the amount of people not in the workforce has, in fact, increased in Winnipeg as well by over 10,000 since the PST hike, which was the largest tax grab, of course, in Manitoba's history, and businesses are finding it difficult, Madam Deputy Speaker, to operate under this high tax NDP government, and this is causing them to hire less people or even close up shop in some cases. And I know that I've had the opportunity to go around this wonderful province of ours and go across the city and visit many businesses across the city, including in my own constituency, and we are hearing from those businesses, and I know the Minister for Jobs and the Economy have had this discussion at Estimates. We've had a discussion in question period, and what we've been hearing from those businesses across Winnipeg and across our province is that they're very concerned about the tax-and-spend ways of this NDP government. What we're hearing from them, in particular, is the red tape associated with small businesses, and we know from the CFIB that that's one of the largest issues among small-business owners and their membership, and they're very, very concerned about that, those small businesses.

Small-business owners want to deliver the services that they offer with their businesses. That's what they want to do. That's why they get into business, Madam Deputy Speaker. What's unfortunate is that they're bogged down in the red tape as a result of this government's policies, and they're unable at many times to be able to deliver those services in a timely fashion for their clients, and that's keeping them from being able to do the job that they want to do and what they feel passionate about. I mean, people get into business because they feel passionate about what they do, and what's unfortunate is that when you have a government that prevents them or inhibits them from being able to deliver those services to their customers and to their clients, it's unfortunate because it keeps them from being able to do the job that they are passionate about doing.

But not only did we hear from those small businesses that red tape was an issue, Madam Deputy Speaker, we also heard that the taxation policies of this NDP government are having a negative impact on the businesses and the businesses here in Manitoba and in Winnipeg, and I think it's

unfortunate as Winnipeg businesses are considering expanding, which we want them to do. We want to encourage business growth within our province, but what's happening is that because of the policies of this NDP government, many of those small businesses were looking to become mid-size businesses in our province, are looking to other provinces with better taxation and with less red tape and they're looking for—to expand in other provinces rather than expanding right here at home.

So that's what we're seeing, Madam Deputy Speaker. We're seeing all of these businesses that are looking at expanding elsewhere, and that has a negative impact on jobs, and that's exactly what we're seeing. As a result of the PST, we know in Winnipeg that there's 2,000 less people working in Winnipeg as a result of that PST increase. So when it's having that kind of an impact on jobs in our economy, it's having a negative impact on our economy as a whole.

And so I think it's very unfortunate. I think we do have to go back to even when this Premier first became Premier. That was before he ran for another leadership, this is when he originally became the Premier of our province, we know from that time when he originally took over as the Leader of the NDP and became Premier of our province we know that 33—there are 3,300 less employed people here in Winnipeg as a result of his tax-and-spend policies, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And so, you know, I think it's incumbent upon this government to really have a look at what it is that they are doing and the negative impact that that is having on jobs in our economy. We know that this NDP government promised—again, they went door to door in the last election. They told those small businesses across this great city and across this great province of ours, they told those businesses that they would raise the small-business threshold to \$500,000.

\* (11:10)

And has the Premier lived up to his promise? No, in fact, he has not. He has yet to live up to that promise. And that would be so helpful for those small businesses, those small businesses where they really could use that money to expand their businesses, to grow from small businesses to mid-sized businesses in our province. When they have that ability to grow from small to mid-sized businesses, they have the ability to hire more people. I'm sure members opposite aren't opposed to that.

I'm sure they would want to try and find ways to put more money into the hands of those businesses to allow them to grow, to create those jobs that are so necessary here in Winnipeg and in the province of Manitoba.

But it's unfortunate that their actions don't—they don't correspond with that, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's unfortunate that the increase in taxes, which we know has had a negative impact on employment—and I'll just remind members opposite that Winnipeg is one of only two cities of Canada's 10 largest to have an increase in the unemployment rate at all.

And so, you know, that's a very significant issue, and I would hope that members opposite would listen to this. I hope that they will—that they were seriously consider supporting this resolution, because it's important that we move forward, that we work together to ensure that our small businesses are able to move to those mid-sized businesses to be able to create the jobs that we need to grow our economy here in Manitoba and in Winnipeg.

#### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Before recognizing the next speaker, I just want to draw honourable members' attention to the loge at my left where we welcome Mr. David Faurshou, of course, our former colleague and MLA for Portage.

Welcome here today.

\* \* \*

**Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy):** I am glad to put some words on the record for the member's resolution.

I do want to say, right off the bat, I just came from Yes! Winnipeg where there were hundreds of businesses, some of our smaller businesses, some of our start-up companies, but some of our biggest businesses and, I got to tell you, there was enthusiasm; there was an excitement about our city.

But here's what I can tell you. When I was talking to them, here's what I heard from them—and I got this sense of pride when I was talking to our business community about Winnipeg. They said that they are incredibly proud to be able to hire local people, and they understood that the best way to give back to their hometowns and our city is to give those local people good jobs so they can make a good living for themselves and their families so they can give back. Often they hire young people and that is their critical first job they get, and why does that

become important? Because when you get that critical first job, what it says to a young person is that you can have a sense of contribution to your family and your neighbourhood, and that builds that spirit of generosity. This is what I was hearing this morning.

And when people know that they're contributing, individuals, families, to their neighbourhoods and their hometowns all across Manitoba including Winnipeg, you get a sense of belonging, and when people have a sense of belonging it builds a sense of momentum. It builds a sense of excitement.

And you don't have to look any further than our downtown to see that sense of excitement. In one weekend we had Cher, Heart and Queen all performing here, and it got topped off by Bruno Mars. In fact, when Luke Bryan, country superstar, came to Winnipeg and he was performing, he paused and he said, I am so proud to perform in the loudest barn in the National Hockey League, and at that moment the MTS Centre erupted with enthusiasm, 'erupted' with excitement.

Madam Speaker, I got to tell you, when members opposite, when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting around the Cabinet table, what did we see? We saw businesses closing. We saw storefronts going dark. We saw buildings sat empty. That was the plan of the Leader of the Opposition then.

I asked the member from Tuxedo, has she asked the Leader of the Opposition? Is that the plan they have for Winnipeggers and Manitobans now? Because I'll tell you the downtown story is one example about the prosperity of our city—record amount—a record amount of people work in our downtown, over 70,000; a record amount of businesses opening in our downtown; a record amount of students going to school in the core area. In fact, there's so much momentum going on in our core area, Mayor Bowman, when he got elected, had to change the name of Adelaide Street to Innovation Alley because we are seen as leaders when it comes to start-ups.

When you see that kind of momentum we have a record amount of people now living in our downtown. In fact, Shaw Communications just announced 500 new jobs in Winnipeg. Interesting, where they announced that was right in the riding that the Leader of the Opposition represents. You would think that the member from Tuxedo would stand up and be proud of that commitment by

Shaw Communications. I could tell you I sure was. Mayor Bowman was.

What was interesting is when you talk to Shaw about why they did it, they didn't just talk about affordability. They said one of the reasons that they wanted to invest in Winnipeg is—the first thing they told me, the executives—is there is just an excitement; we want to be part of that enthusiasm. But I want to tell you, here's what else they said, they said that when you invest in workers in Winnipeg they stay with the company longer. There is this incredible amount of loyalty.

So it only makes economic sense, this is with Shaw, they could've picked anywhere, anywhere in the country to invest in and they decided to come to Winnipeg, 500 new jobs. Now, I don't expect the member from Tuxedo to take my word for it.

On October 15th, a couple of weeks ago, PROFITguide.com said this: Winnipeg one of the best places to do business in Canada.

**An Honourable Member:** Repeat that.

**Mr. Chief:** PROFITguide.com: Winnipeg is one of the best places to do business in Canada. Don't take my word for it. I don't know who the member's talking to from Tuxedo. I just talked to hundreds of businesses at the Yes! Winnipeg launch. That's what they said.

So we are seeing this level of momentum. We are seeing an incredible amount of excitement about what's going on in Winnipeg. Validator after validator, in fact, Mike Moore from the Home Builders' Association said, there's no better time to start your own business than right now; no better place to get a job than right here in our city, in our province. These are the kinds of things we're saying.

And as I said, at one time when members opposite and people talked about Adelaide Street, when the Leader of the Opposition sat around the Cabinet table, people saw and saw that street as a challenge, a difficulty and struggle. And now Mayor Bowman, the first thing he does when he gets elected, he comes in and he says, we have to rename the street. It's one of the most exciting places to be in our city. It's called Innovation Alley where we are seeing and we are emerging as leaders when it comes to start-ups in the nation.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, their message is always clear under the leadership of Dave Angus, Michael Legary, Chris Johnson. You see the good

folks at the SkipTheDishes. These guys are drawing not only attention for our city and our province, but they got international recognition for the work that they're doing there, and their message is always very simple. If you have a new product, you have a new approach, you have a new idea, come on down to Innovation Alley.

Now, I've offered the member from Tuxedo and the Leader of the Opposition any time that they want to come on down I'll provide the ride, I'll be willing to buy them lunch and they can sit first-hand and hear from our start-up companies, our aspiring entrepreneurs and what makes Winnipeg so exciting. They can spend some time with some of our more established entrepreneurs, people like Sean Barnes of PCL, and talking about the incredible work that's happening.

You know, this is all important and what I saw today at Yes! Winnipeg was a group of people who recognize the importance of telling Winnipeg's story, sharing it, showcasing it and highlighting it nationally and internationally. And that's why we're being recognized by—country superstars can't avoid it, Luke Bryan can't avoid it, people are talking about Winnipeg and the things they're seeing all over the world. That's what we saw today.

\*(11:20)

Now, it's an incredible story—incredible stories emerging, young people getting jobs, never been a better time to start your own companies than it is right now in our city, drawing attention and incredible stories of success, incredible stories of achievement, incredible stories of resiliency. These are the things that are happening right now all throughout the city of Winnipeg. And when you spend time and you get to see—you go down to Yes! Winnipeg this morning, and you get to see that excitement; you get to see that enthusiasm. I don't know what the member from Tuxedo—who she's talking to, because at the end of the day that's what we're hearing. We're hearing that there is an incredible amount to be excited about, an incredible amount to be enthusiastic about.

And, once again, I just want to say for the record, when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting around the Cabinet table—these are the facts—businesses were closing. Even the member from St. Paul is agreeing with me. Businesses were closing. Storefronts were going dark. Buildings sat empty. That was the plan that the Leader of the Opposition had then.

I ask the member again, has she talked to the 'leadier' opposition and asked the leader, is that the same plan they have for Winnipeggers and Manitobans now?

Because, I tell you, the folks I talked to this morning at Yes! Winnipeg, that plan scares them. They know what that plan looks like. They want to have a government that stands with them, that takes the time to showcase the incredible work that they're doing, that takes the time to make sure that our businesses, our communities—the best way to give back is by hiring local people because they recognize that's the best way that you can help. When you help someone get that job that's the best way they can make a good living for themselves and their families, and they are able to give back.

The kind of commitment our government has made and continue to make is making sure that no matter who you are or where you come from, you can feel generous and you can have a sense of contribution, and no matter who you are or where you come from, you belong. And that's why we're seeing so much enthusiasm and excitement, because there's a government that's standing behind those leaders who are helping us create those jobs and making sure that young people can make sure they give—get a good job and make a good living for themselves and their families.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** It's my pleasure to stand this morning and support this resolution brought by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

And it would seem that the Minister for Jobs and the Economy fashions himself as a—some kind of a cheerleader for business, and my question for the minister would then be, last night at the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce MBiz Awards, if he's such a cheerleader, why was he not in attendance to honour all of these great Manitoba businesses? And the question would be, where was he to support businesses like—oh, there are so many nominated in categories of a large business award, small business award. It was the first time that Manitoba chambers had actually given out an award for non-profit of the year. And we're very pleased to be in attendance there. The member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen) was in attendance; the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk) was in attendance, and yet, the Minister for Jobs and the Economy, despite all of his crowing in the House this morning about how much

he stands behind business, he wasn't standing behind business. He wasn't standing in the back of the room; he wasn't standing in the foyer. We were pleased to be there. The PC party was pleased to be there supporting business in the province of Manitoba, meeting with all of those businesses that have distinguished themselves, that are working hard.

And I can tell this minister for Jobs and the Economy and his colleagues that as we moved through that room and heard concerns from businesses—*[interjection]* Absolutely. They were reporting two things: No. 1, that they work hard, that they do well, that they have that drive and determination to differentiate themselves to build their brands, to invest in their people and in their products and to do great work in the province of Manitoba and around the world.

And then we heard another message by business delivered in the context of yesterday's MBiz Awards, and that message is, man, is it hard to do business in this kind of a high-tax environment. Now, these are business leaders; these are entrepreneurs; these are the movers and the shakers and, of course, they were reporting that when it comes to this high-tax environment, Madam Deputy Speaker, it creates challenge. No one can dispute this. And despite whatever the government is going to put on the record today, they cannot sit there and somehow pretend that it doesn't create a disadvantage for Manitoba companies competing with lower tax jurisdictions like their neighbours in Saskatchewan paying a number of points lower on a PST. The same business in Manitoba must factor in that additional simple cost of doing business. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is the burden that businesses carry under this NDP government. But it has gotten worse under the 16 years that they have been in power because in those 16 years, that challenge to business has increased, not decreased.

This government has presided over the most optimal conditions that a government could face: historically low interest rates over a period of 16 years, historically increasing federal transfer payments through the general transfer, through the equalization transfer, through health and education—*[interjection]* You know, I can hear the members chirping across the way, but I look at these numbers and every year, combined, that aggregate transfer to the Province of Manitoba—and the member across the way knows full well—the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak)—he knows full well that he relies on—one third of every dollar of revenue is at the good

grace of the federal government. He knows that one third of every revenue dollar comes from the federal government. I don't know how he can sit in his place and say that it's not the case. I mean, the Finance Minister would indicate that that's the case. He knows it, he sees the numbers. I'm the critic for Finance. I see that.

We understand that this government, then, sitting on that kind of opportunity, then blows every chance they have to invest in a fiscal stabilization account. They empty it. They blow every chance they have to actually reduce that burden on business in the city of Winnipeg and otherwise, and what do they do? They show year after year that they cannot and will not manage their spending. As a matter of fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I have said in this Chamber before, they are the only provincial government in Canada that has overspent their planned budget each and every year since taking power—each and every year. There is no other government in Canadian jurisdictions that can have such a record as that. Even in the years when they reported, well, we'll think we'll be on this number over here, they would blow it. They spend more. Sometimes revenues were higher. Sometimes revenues were increasingly higher. But each year, they were—they failed to constrain spending.

And when I look now at the budget brought by the new NDP leader in Alberta, and I chuckle when I see the budget that Rachel Notley has brought because in that province, I was looking over the plan that she has articulated going forward in the province, in Alberta, and I'm—I remind the members across the way, in that province, it was out with the old and in with the new. There was a real desire for change. Federal government's change would even indicate there's a tremendous desire to kick out old, tired governments that have lost their steam. So no matter how that member continues to chirp, and I encourage him to continue to do so because I find it's a motivating factor for me to continue to put accurate information on the record this morning, in that province, what was the scary plan, what was the mean, lean plan of the Notley government that came forward yesterday? Well, her mean, lean plan in that province, an NDP government, was to constrain the increase of government expenditure. That's the mean, lean plan of the Notley government, the NDP government.

Well, isn't that a surprise. Isn't that an unfortunate surprise from the members of the government here who have talked fear and doom and

gloom? They've made this a hilarious kind of dichotomy where they say, listen, if you don't take our record of perpetual overspending plus tax hikes plus a PST hike, the only other course for Manitoba is a dark and scary plan whereby government would actually spend what they said they set out to spend. Well, that's ridiculous. That's absurd. It's—and it's dishonest. It is not an intelligent, and it is not an articulate demonstration of what our options are. We have options. Manitobans have the options next spring. They can choose more of the same perpetual overspending and broken promises, or they can choose a plan just like Rachel Notley brought in where she's saying there is a way. If government spending trajectory is way up here, we can bring down the line; that line is simply matching government spending promises to performance.

\*(11:30)

Imagine, Madam Deputy Speaker, if a government in this province was actually going to spend what they said they were going to spend. There's nothing mean and lean about that. That is called prudent financial management, and I understand it would be a concept that'd be quite foreign to this NDP government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I sat at the table last night, and I would encourage the members across the way to listen to this. I sat at the table last night with an individual—I actually sat with some award nominees, as well, from my constituency, both the CFDC and SteelTech from Winkler, fantastic local businesses who talked about the high taxation of this province. But don't take it from a hard-working Winkler company, take it from the individual at my table who was from New Zealand. Now, he lived in New Zealand, then he lived in New York and now he lives here. He chooses to do business here. His comment to me at the table, unsolicited, was you guys do not even understand how disproportionately we are taxed in this province. He said, you cannot understand. And he said to me, I've lived in New Zealand. I've lived in New York. I live in Winnipeg. It is hard to do business in this kind of a high-tax environment. And he said there is a way to do better, and I agreed with him. And that is exactly the report of a newcomer to Manitoba who says, I'm here now for family reasons, but that's the challenge I have.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the—we urge this NDP high-tax, high-spend, miss-your-target-every-time government to reduce their job take—killing taxes, to take a cue from Rachel Notley, who is even saying

this NDP in Manitoba is off base. She's talking about a different way of matching expenditures to performance results.

And that's why I support this resolution.

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** I don't know where to start, Madam Speaker, the member opposite puts so much information on the record that was not factual. So I guess I'm going to start by correcting some of it because last year he stood up in this House and said how much growth was happening in the business sector in Morden. He said the business park in Morden is booming. He stood up in this House and said it, and then he says, oh, now companies aren't moving here. Well, that's a very big contradiction, and the facts don't support him because we have the second lowest unemployment rate just a tick underneath Saskatchewan's.

We have amazing growth going on here in Manitoba and in Winnipeg. And, you know, he wants to say about it, he says you got to factor in all costs—factor in all costs. Well, profit 'dide'—guide-dot-com says we have the lowest cost in western Canada and every other US city examined. KPMG says Winnipeg is the most competitive city to conduct business in. They factor in all the costs.

So the member opposite is absolutely false in any of his accusations that businesses are moving here. In fact, businesses are moving here and businesses are setting up here because it's a good place to do business, and that's why we're seeing the No. 1 growth in the country in job creation, the No. 1 economy in the country according to TD Canada Trust. I know the members opposite don't like to listen to the experts. They like to just spin the facts that suit them. But TD Canada Trust said we're the No. 1 economy. They say that we're the No. 1 economy in job growth. We have experts from all the major banks, RBC, TD, Scotiabank, all of them saying that we have the No. 1 economy in the country and that we're doing really well here in Manitoba compared to them.

The member opposite wanted to talk about transfer payments. Alberta, who has a very big natural resource underneath them, not so much right now with the oil industry, but they get larger transfer payments than Manitoba does, Madam Speaker. So, you know, his—the words he put on the record is completely false.

You know, he wants to talk about overspending on budgets. Let's look at the record of his

Conservative partners who got voted out, thankfully. But they ran deficits almost every year they were in office. Only in election years did they seem to balance the books. Biggest—one of the biggest deficits and the most amount of money put into our debt in the history of Canada was done underneath Stephen Harper and the federal Conservative government. In one year they put \$55.6 billion in deficit; in 2010-2011, \$33.4 billion in deficit; 2012, \$26.3 billion in deficit; 2013, \$18.4 billion in deficit, Madam Speaker, and then they went a little better to minus \$5.2 billion in deficit.

So the members opposite like to talk a big game of how they can manage the economy, but the facts don't hold up their argument, Madam Speaker. We met with the real estate association just the other day. They were in and we had a great discussion and they were saying how great it is to do business in Manitoba, how our economy is booming, and how Manitoba is doing really well in the real estate sector and that we're going to expect a growth between 3 and 4.6 per cent over the next year or two and that everything here is going really well and sales are fantastic.

Now, where's that in the member opposite's statement? You know, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) might want to take a drive north of Tuxedo and check out the downtown instead of just driving around. She must take the Wellington Crescent route, pick up the Leader of the Opposition on the way to work, doesn't drive through downtown maybe, but maybe she needs to go drive through downtown and check out the University of Winnipeg. The investment's gone on there.

The downtown is experiencing a renaissance; it's revitalizing. The investments in the MTS Centre, all of the new businesses going down, that Alt Hotel that was built, these—and now we're looking at the True North Square—all of these investments, billions of dollars of investment into the downtown of Winnipeg. Liquor & Lotteries—which I know the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) would see privatized and sell it off when we can have cost savings and a revenue stream to Manitobans—Liquor & Lotteries is helping revitalize the downtown by amalgamating all of their offices to a downtown building. We are seeing a difference in downtown like never before.

You want to talk about their record, Madam Speaker? What do they call the '90s when they were in? The no-growth '90s. That's not mine; that's the

Winnipeg Free Press. I'll give them credit when they called them the no-growth '90s. You know, we can just look at the Winnipeg Free Press. There's an article that says downtown is experiencing a renaissance, and they said that downtown Winnipeg is seeing a healthy growth in the economy. They said that Manitoba's economy is still outperforming others. There's another wonderful title from the Free Press.

*Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

How about that, according to One Link Mortgage & Financial institution, that we are third of 25 cities in North America to do business in. We are at the top, and you know what? All that we hear from the opposition is complaining and whining. It's the doom and gloom party over there that wants to trash Manitoba. They want us to, you know, put on the watermelons on our head and move over to Saskatchewan because it's so great there. Well, you know what? We're going to overtake Saskatchewan in growth because we're right—we're just a tick above them in unemployment and we're going to overtake them because our economy is diverse and our manufacturing sector is doing well; our agricultural sector is doing well, unlike when the members opposite were in power.

You know, they don't seem to remember all of the buildings being boarded up, Mr. Speaker. You know, in the no-growth '90s when downtown—literally collapsing and crumbling, when nobody wanted to be downtown. Now downtown is experiencing a revitalization. We have people living there, more people than ever. We've got new condos coming up. People are paying a lot of money for condos to live downtown because our downtown is revitalizing.

So, for this resolution to say that we're stifling Manitoba's or Winnipeg's economy is absolutely absurd, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Winnipeg Free Press reported that we have a bullet-proof economy here in Manitoba. The Financial Times named Winnipeg one of the best places to do business in Canada because of our affordable cost of living, vibrant art scene, and steady economic growth.

Where does the member opposite get her facts and figures from? Obviously, she needs to take a drive outside of Tuxedo and experience the rest of the city because our downtown has changed a lot since the Leader of the Opposition has been in power. Maybe they'd want to, you know, take a tour of it and check out all the wonderful things. Last year

we got a tour from the Downtown Biz, and they showed us all of the amazing initiatives going on downtown that are bringing more people to Winnipeg's downtown than ever before.

We're experiencing things the members opposite would want to vote against, like the stadium, but you know what? The stadium has brought in over \$150 million when you include the Grey Cup, which is coming in a couple weeks, in economic activity to Manitoba and to Winnipeg. So for them to say that we're stifling the growth of Winnipeg—they would watch that old stadium crumble and nobody would be coming here for Grey Cup, and all of those hotels and businesses would not be successful.

The only risk to the economy here is the members opposite and their doom and gloom and their slash and burn budgets. Over 70,000 people would be put out of work. How do you think all those small businesses would feel when all of those people were out of work and they wouldn't be spending in those stores? All of those people—all those people on hydro projects, all those people who are building new schools, all those people building our roads, all those people building our bridges, all of them out of work underneath your plan to cut and burn the budget. And all of those people would not be able to spend in our economy.

\* (11:40)

And, I mean, small businesses would be boarding up like they did in the '90s. People would be leaving the province. There was a mass exodus of people in the '90s. There was a loss of population. We now have a net gain in population here in Manitoba. In fact, more people than ever are coming back from places like Alberta now; they're coming back to Manitoba because the economy there is crashing and Manitoba's economy isn't. Manitoba's economy is outperforming every other province in the entire country. But they like to ignore that fact, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Manitoba has the fastest job creation, surpassing 2 per cent and in—next year they're likely to surpass 2 per cent over 2016-17 period, and the opposition would have—they're trying to have a false statement here and making Winnipeggers that—believe that taxes kill jobs. You know what taxes do? They invest in hospitals, roads, schools, post-secondary educations like the U of W which has seen a complete renaissance. The U of M, which is in—close to my area has seen amazing investments with Project Domino and all of their buildings going

on there. We see the new fitness centre and new gyms there, the new stadium that the Bisons get to use.

All of those investments would have been stifled underneath the members opposite. They would have stopped all of that. They would stop all of that growth; they would stop the growth of Manitoba. We saw it before when they were in. Unemployment rate hit as high as 10 per cent underneath them, Mr. Speaker. Now we're at 5.6–5.2, sorry, I stand corrected, 5.2 per cent, almost half of what it was underneath the members opposite.

So for them to claim any credibility on this resolution that we are stifling the growth of Winnipeg is absolutely the most ridiculous resolution I've ever read. The biggest threat to downtown are the Conservatives and the Leader of the Opposition and his party and all of their slash-and-burn tactics with the budget which would see our downtown crumble and people leave Manitoba again. Housing prices would drop because there would be a mass exodus of people from Manitoba.

They're the biggest threat to the economy of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and Manitobans should know that, and these false resolutions should be called out for what they are and nothing but a waste of paper.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul):** First of all, I'd like to thank the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) for bringing forward this resolution to once again highlight that we have a dysfunctional government, we have a government where Manitobans pay more and get less.

And I'd like to give two examples in the few moments that I have to speak. Last night was the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce MBiz awards. It's a great opportunity to highlight businesses not just from around the province but also the city of Winnipeg. In fact, there were businesses from the city of Winnipeg that were being recognized.

Now, there are 37 NDP MLAs, and we did have committee last night and there are other things going on, so we take five out of the 37 might have been busy elsewhere. That would have left 32 MLAs to go to the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce on behalf of the NDP. Were 32 NDP members at the banquet? Well, no. Maybe there were 15—*[interjection]* And you know what, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) had his opportunity to speak—*[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, the member for

St. Norbert had his opportunity to speak. He should now show respect and allow others to speak.

And, Mr. Speaker, of those 37 NDP, were there 10 members at the banquet? Because, you know, they get up and they talk about their business and their acumen and how they support business, but when rubber hits the road, were there five members—were there five members—at the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce dinner last night? No. Were there, out of 37, were there two? Would you save the city for two NDP members at the dinner? No, there weren't two.

There was not one NDP member, not the member of Finance, not the member responsible for Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, who was a sponsor. Not one showed up. They come here and they talk a storm and they talk about business and they talk and talk and talk, but when it comes to showing up, they are never there.

In fact, the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino)—this is my second point—got up the other day and was effervescent. In fact, he was a member that went into the federal election as a New Democrat and came out on the other side a Liberal as it seems to be, same thing with his Premier (Mr. Selinger). So the member for Tyndall Park said, we stand with everything Trudeau. He gushed about Justin Trudeau and how the Chamber should gushingly support everything that Justin Trudeau said, including, evidently, including when Justin Trudeau said that small business is where rich people hide their wealth.

So, now we have a member of the NDP, who is now masquerading as a Liberal, who believes that small business is where rich people hide their wealth. That is what the true feeling is on the other side. The member for Tyndall Park finally got up and said the truth. That's what the NDP believes about small business. And what we believe in this House is that the backbone of every economy is small business. They're the ones that hire. They're the ones that reflect what's going on in the community. They're the ones that provide great services. They're the ones that give back to their communities. They're the ones that hire the students, that hire the university students that help out in our cities and across our province, and we should be standing up for our small business and not doing like 37 NDP MLAs, and not showing up when there's an award ceremony for small business by the chamber of commerce. They're—not like the NDP, like the member for Tyndall Park, who gets up and

heralds everything that Trudeau says, including when Trudeau trash talks small business.

But, oh, there would be the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino)—yay, yay, that's the best thing ever. Mr. Speaker, when rubber hits the road it's about standing up for small business, and that's what we do as a party, and that's what this resolution is about. And that's what we're going to do when we go into the next election. We will stand up for small business and not do just talk, talk, talk and do none of the walk like members opposite.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I'm very pleased to follow the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) on his raging presentation here on the resolution. And, of course, he's fairly wrong on most of his points. He's been here long enough, you'd think he would know better by now, would know a little bit about the history of—and I want to, you know, let the member know about some of the history in this province on record of previous governments.

You know, the Schreyer government came in in 1969 and for eight years there was enormous amount of construction. There was construction going on in this province in the hydro projects like never before. And, matter of fact, never since. The Schreyer government built many hydro construction projects, in addition brought in many of the social programs that we see, the pharmacare program, Autopac, I mean, many transformational programs were brought in during the Schreyer government.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

Now, what happened after the Schreyer government was replaced by the Sterling Lyon government? And this, by the way, is indicative of the philosophy of the Conservative Party and how it impacts on the people of the province. Sterling Lyon, as well, you know, refused to tell the public what he was planning to do as the premier, and when he was elected in 1977, he immediately froze construction on hydro projects. He froze construction, matter of fact, we had a seniors home construction started in Elmwood and the basement was constructed, and he basically walked away from everything. He walked away from seniors' home construction. He left projects partially complete and that was part of his acute, protracted restraint program. And, you know, that was a Conservative government directly following an NDP government that was expanding and building the province. So, I think people got fairly well educated on the difference between the two types of government.

Now, then, the Howard Pawley government came in and it completed the Limestone project and the leader of the Liberal Party at the time called it a Lemonstone, was against it. The Conservatives were against it. They were the people that mothballed it in the first place. Sterling Lyon mothballed the project. Howard Pawley completed the project. There was a lot of construction during the Howard Pawley years. And, when that government was replaced by the Gary Filmon government, we saw the same, typical Conservative approach to government of restraint and cutbacks and privatization of projects within the province.

\* (11:50)

You know, there was literally no construction during the 11 years of Filmon government. I'd invite the members opposite to tell me what they did construct. There were no building cranes here at all. A matter of fact, the real estate market in 1999-98 was totally collapsed in the centre of Winnipeg, in northwest Winnipeg. There was no market there at all. Houses were being sold for, you know, \$20,000, \$25,000. I mean, surely the members, you know, if they look back will recognize that, that that is certainly not the case today.

We have a booming economy here, and they should know that. And you know, they could argue, well, you know, we, you know, we inherited a, you know, bad economy. The economy wasn't good, and, well, yes, a certain amount of argument could be made for that, that governments that happened to be, you know, in the right place at the right time—if you come in as a government, the best of intentions that you might have will partially be dictated by what you inherit in terms of an economy. If the economy is good, then you're probably going to end up with a fairly decent record or maybe last a little longer; economy's bad, you're going to have difficulty getting your way through that.

But the fact of the matter is that you, in spite of that, you can see—you can do a study of the NDP records versus the Conservative records, and you'll see that even the architects, the engineers, the business people in this country that we talk to as a party for donations will tell you, I'm a Conservative, I like the Conservative Party, but I can't afford the Conservative Party. I will donate money to you, the NDP, because I know that when you get elected, you people will build things. You'll build roads, you'll build hospitals so that my engineering firm and my firm, my design firm, will actually have some work

so I can, you know, I can survive and feed my family. And that's the problem that these guys have going to their base at this moment.

Now, you know, let's deal with some of the contradictions with the Conservatives. I mean, they were standing up yesterday, reading out petitions, demanding spending money on different roads. I have a list here, and I don't have enough time to go through it, but a whole page of spending demands of these Conservatives. And these Conservatives are the same people that will argue that the payroll tax should be eliminated. They don't want to see the sales tax, 1 per cent, eliminated. They want a whole—the whole thing eliminated, if they had their way.

There isn't a tax that they like and that they wouldn't eliminate completely. So the question is: How do they plan to pay for all this list of road construction that they want in their constituencies if they're going to eliminate the taxes? So even they, you know, have to think about this. The member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) was on CJOB the other day on Monday, October 1st, and I have to say I missed listening to that interview, but I bet—*[interjection]* Yes, it is recorded. And he was pressed repeatedly to outline what sort of changes the Conservatives make, what sort of cuts they would make, because they have promised a half a billion, I believe it is, in cuts. And when he was asked to give his plan, he wouldn't give it.

Well, now, there's the consistency between him and the Sterling Lyon government. You know, Sterling Lyon wouldn't tell us either what the cuts were going to be. Gary Filmon wouldn't tell us what the cuts were going to be. And neither is the member for Morden-Winkler going to tell us what the cuts are going to be.

But the public are smarter than that. They know. They know that Conservative cuts mean a decrease in economic activity, in the economy, and they are not, I don't believe, are not going to be willing to go along with this. They know that there are going to be health-care cuts, just as there were in the Filmon government when they cut back on the nurses, they cut back on the hospital. Matter of fact, they shut down a hospital; they shut down Misericordia. Matter of fact, they were on the verge of shutting down Concordia Hospital. It was on the—in their plans to shut down Concordia until locally the MLAs in our area rebelled and they saw the light and they backed down.

Now, you know, let's deal with debt-to-GDP issues because, you know, they like to talk about how, you know, a rise in the debt to GDP is a problem. The fact of the matter is that if you look at debt-to-GDP issues on a worldwide basis, you see that Canada, no matter what jurisdiction that you are looking at in Canada, debt to GDP is not a serious issue. For example, debt to GDP in Manitoba is in the, say, 30 per cent, low 30s, somewhere in there. It's a moving target. But debt to GDP in Quebec, the highest debt-to-GDP province in the country, is 50 per cent.

Now, let's look at Europe for a moment. The lowest debt to GDP of any jurisdiction in Europe is, like, 103 per cent, like, double what the highest jurisdiction is in Canada. And it goes up to, you know, Greece, 160-some per cent. Japan is the highest in the world. So we're at 30 per cent and these people are running around, you know, like Chicken Little saying the sky is falling, we're in big trouble. And they're going to justify debt-to-GDP records like that to argue for cutbacks in health care, cutbacks in education and more—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member's time on this matter has elapsed.

**Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance):** It's a great privilege to stand up today and to put a few words on the record and talk about this resolution brought forward by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), and it's a chance to talk about the two visions in this province about how our side agrees—or believes in growing the economy, Mr. Speaker; their side believes in reducing the size of government.

You know, these great captains of commerce across the way, you know, these great titans of industry, well, I remind them that when they—when we came into office the corporate tax rate was 17 per cent. It was the highest in Canada. It was one of the highest tax rates on corporations in Canada. That was their record. That was the record of the Leader of the Opposition in government. We lowered that to 12 per cent. We came into office, the small-business tax rate was 8 per cent. Now, Mr. Speaker, the small-business tax rate is zero. We're the only province in Canada that have completely eliminated the small-business tax rate.

This year in this budget we increased the threshold from four twenty-five to four hundred and fifty thousand dollars. This, Mr. Speaker, will mean an additional 2,000 small businesses will not pay any

tax to this—to our government. And when I meet with the chamber of commerce, and just this past week I did meet with the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce and they told us that if we were to lower taxes that they—businesses, small business, would take this money, they would help us grow the economy. They would invest that money back into their businesses, and they hire more Manitobans.

We have the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada right now at 5.2 per cent, just a tick above Saskatchewan, and we are moving in the right direction. Our government is moving in the right direction, and it is the goal of our government to have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. And we're doing so by working with business, as I mentioned, by lowering taxes.

We're working with our educational institutions by enhancing supports to them. We're working with our labour community. We're working with educational institutions, non-profits, and that is our

goal. The only ones who are standing—trying to stand in the way of that goal are the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party here in this province.

We have a goal to be—have the lowest unemployment rate. We're heading in that direction. I ask all Manitobans, I ask the members of the opposition, members of the Liberal Party, to join us, Mr. Speaker. Let us make that—let us that be—let us have that as our goal.

The Conference Board of Canada has predicted that Winnipeg will be one of the strongest economies in Canada. In fact, it said that Winnipeg will have the strongest economy outside of—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) will have seven minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, October 29, 2015**

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