

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Gimli	—
<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, February 24, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.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 it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no bills, we'll move on to committee reports.

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Second Report

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- December 16, 2014 (4th Session — 40th Legislature)
- December 14, 2015 (5th Session — 40th Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014

- Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015

Committee Membership

Committee membership for the December 16, 2014 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. ALLUM
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. MARTIN
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Hon. Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)
- Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park) (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF (Chairperson)
- Mr. PIWNIUK
- Mr. SARAN
- Mr. WISHART

Committee membership for the December 14, 2015 meeting:

- Mrs. DRIEDGER
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Mr. JHA
- Hon. Mr. KOSTYSHYN
- Hon. Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)
- Mr. MARTIN
- Mrs. MITCHELSON
- Hon. Mr. SARAN
- Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WIEBE
- Mr. WISHART

Your Committee elected Mr. WIEBE as the Chairperson at the December 14, 2015 meeting

Your Committee elected Mr. JHA as the Vice-Chairperson at the December 14, 2015 meeting

Substitutions received during committee proceedings on December 14, 2015:

- Mr. PEDERSEN for Mrs. DRIEDGER

Official Speaking on Record at the December 16, 2014 meeting:

- Darlene MacDonald, Children's Advocate

Official Speaking on Record at the December 14, 2015 meeting:

- Darlene MacDonald, Children's Advocate

Report Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:

- Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014

Report Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following report but did not pass it:

Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development
First Report**

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- December 19, 2014 (4th Session – 40th Legislature)
- December 14, 2015 (5th Session – 40th Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (All Aboard) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014

- Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (All Aboard) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015

Committee Membership

Committee membership for the December 19, 2014 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Mr. ALTEMEYER (Vice-Chairperson)
- Hon. Ms. CROTHERS
- Mrs. DRIEDGER
- Ms. HOWARD
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Mr. MARTIN
- Mrs. MITCHELSON
- Mr. SARAN
- Hon. Ms. WIGHT
- Mr. WISHART

Committee membership for the December 14, 2015 meeting:

- Mrs. DRIEDGER
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Mr. JHA
- Hon. Mr. KOSTYSHYN
- Hon. Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)
- Mr. MARTIN
- Mrs. MITCHELSON
- Hon. Mr. SARAN
- Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WIEBE
- Mr. WISHART

Your Committee elected Mr. JHA as the Chairperson at the December 14, 2015 meeting

Your Committee elected Mr. WIEBE as the Vice-Chairperson at the December 14, 2015 meeting

Substitutions received during committee proceedings on December 14, 2015:

- Mr. PEDERSEN for Mrs. DRIEDGER

Report Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:

- Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (All Aboard) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

Report Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following report but did not pass it:

- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (All Aboard) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015.*

Mr. Jha: I move, seconded by the honourable member from Seine River, that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs
Third Report**

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- *June 13, 2012 (1st Session – 40th Legislature)*
- *June 17, 2013 (2nd Session – 40th Legislature)*
- *January 9, 2014 (3rd Session – 40th Legislature)*
- *January 14, 2015 (4th Session – 40th Legislature)*
- *December 16, 2015 (5th Session – 40th Legislature)*

Matters under Consideration

- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2011 including the conduct of the 40th Provincial General Election October 4, 2011*
- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2012 including the conduct of the Fort Whyte by-election September 4, 2012*
- *Permanent Voters List Study – Report dated June 2013*

- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2013*
- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2014 including the conduct of the 2014 Arthur-Virden and Morris by-elections*

Committee Membership

Committee membership for the June 13, 2012 meeting:

- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Mr. EWASKO*
- *Mr. GAUDREAU (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Hon. Ms. HOWARD*
- *Mr. MARCELINO*
- *Mr. MCFADYEN*
- *Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. SCHULER*
- *Hon. Mr. SELINGER*
- *Hon. Mr. SWAN*

Committee membership for the June 17, 2013 meeting:

- *Ms. BRAUN*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Mr. GRAYDON*
- *Mr. HELWER*
- *Hon. Ms. HOWARD*
- *Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS*
- *Mr. JHA (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. PALLISTER*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Hon. Mr. SELINGER*

Committee membership for the January 9, 2014 meeting:

- *Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK*
- *Mr. CULLEN*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Mr. HELWER*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Mr. SARAN (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Hon. Mr. SELINGER*
- *Hon. Mr. SWAN*
- *Mr. WIEBE*
- *Ms. WIGHT (Chairperson)*

Committee membership for the January 14, 2015 meeting:

- Hon. Ms. BRAUN
- Hon. Mr. CALDWELL
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. CULLEN
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Mr. MALOWAY
- Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF (Chairperson)
- Mr. SARAN (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mrs. STEFANSON
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER

Committee membership for the December 16, 2015 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. ALLUM
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. CULLEN
- Mr. EICHLER
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Ms. LATHLIN
- Hon. Mr. LEMIEUX
- Mr. MARCELINO
- Mr. PEDERSEN
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER

Your Committee elected Mr. MARCELINO as the Chairperson at the December 16, 2015 meeting

Your Committee elected Ms. LATHLIN as the Vice-Chairperson at the December 16, 2015 meeting

Officials speaking on the record at the June 13, 2012 meeting:

- Ms. Shipra Verma, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer

Officials speaking on the record at the June 17, 2013 meeting:

- Ms. Shipra Verma, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer

Officials speaking on the record at the January 9, 2014 meeting:

- Ms. Shipra Verma, Chief Electoral Officer

Officials speaking on the record at the January 14, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. Shipra Verma, Chief Electoral Officer

Officials speaking on the record at the December 16, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. Shipra Verma, Chief Electoral Officer

Report Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2011 including the conduct of the 40th Provincial General Election October 4, 2011
- Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2012 including the conduct of the Fort Whyte by-election September 4, 2012
- Permanent Voters List Study – Report dated June 2013
- Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2013

Reports Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2014 including the conduct of the 2014 Arthur-Virden and Morris by-elections

Mr. Marcelino: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Second Report

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Vice-Chairperson): I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on February 17, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 2)** – *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Small Classes for K to 3) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (faible effectif des classes)*
- **Bill (No. 7)** – *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (superficie réservée aux garderies dans les écoles)*

Committee Membership

- Hon. Mr. ALLUM
- Hon. Ms. CROTHERS
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. GAUDREAU
- Mr. MARTIN
- Hon. Mr. NAVAKSHONOFF
- Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. RONDEAU
- Mr. SCHULER
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chairperson)
- Hon. Ms. WIGHT

Your Committee elected Mr. GAUDREAU as the Chairperson

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following six presentations on **Bill (No. 2)** – *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Small Classes for K to 3)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (faible effectif des classes)*:

Norm Gould, Manitoba Teachers' Society
 Barbara Cerilli, Private Citizen
 Tracey Wylie, Private Citizen
 Deenie Lefko-Halas, Private Citizen
 Maggie Cox, Parent Council, Greenway School
 Joe Halas, Private Citizen

Your Committee heard the following five presentations on **Bill (No. 7)** – *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (superficie réservée aux garderies dans les écoles)*:

Josh Watt, Manitoba School Boards Association

Pat Wege, Manitoba Childcare Association
 Kim Perring, On The Move Incorporated
 Brianne Goertzen, Private Citizen
 Susan Prentice, Private Citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 2)** – *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Small Classes for K to 3) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (faible effectif des classes)*:

Rachelle Ladd, Private Citizen

Your Committee received the following three written submissions on **Bill (No. 7)** – *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (superficie réservée aux garderies dans les écoles)*:

David Hay, Sugar-N-Spice Kiddie Haven, Inc.
 Mihaela Mujcinovic, Private Citizen
 Lori Schroen, CUPE Local 1543

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 2)** – *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Small Classes for K to 3) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (faible effectif des classes)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 7)** – *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (superficie réservée aux garderies dans les écoles)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Wiebe: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Any further committee reports?

Standing Committee on Justice First Report

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Chairperson): I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Justice.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Justice presents the following—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on JUSTICE presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

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

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 8)** – *The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave) / Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congé pour les victimes de violence familiale, congé en cas de blessure ou de maladie grave et prolongation du congé de soignant)*
- **Bill (No. 11)** – *The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la violence familiale et le harcèlement criminel*
- **Bill (No. 33)** – *The Family Law Reform Act (Putting Children First) / Loi sur la réforme du droit de la famille (mesures pour le mieux-être des enfants)*
- **Bill (No. 300)** – *The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la « Mount Carmel Clinic »*

Committee Membership

- Hon. Ms. BRAUN
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Mr. GRAYDON
- Ms. HOWARD
- Hon. Mr. MACKINTOSH
- Hon. Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)
- Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park)
- Mr. SMOOK
- Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WISHART

Your Committee elected Ms. HOWARD as the Chairperson

Your Committee elected Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park) as the Vice-Chairperson

Motions

Your Committee agreed to the following motion:

- *That this committee recommends that the fees paid with respect to Bill (No. 300) – The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la « Mount Carmel Clinic », be refunded, less the cost of printing.*

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following ... presentations on **Bill (No. 8)** – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave) / Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congé pour les victimes de violence familiale, congé en cas de blessure ou de maladie grave et prolongation du congé de soignant):*

*Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour
Charlene Matheson, Private Citizen
Barbara Byers, Canadian Labour Congress
Michelle Gawronsky, Manitoba Government and General Employees Union
William S. Gardner, Manitoba Employers Council
Gloria Kelly, The Public Service Alliance of Canada
Dave Sauer, Private Citizen
Charlotte Cameron, Winnipeg Labour Council
Carmen Neufeld, Private Citizen
Gina Smoke, UNIFOR
Leanne Sookram, Private Citizen
Carmen LeDarney, Private Citizen
Pamela McLeod, Willow Place
Beatrice Bruske, United Food and Commercial Workers*

*Your Committee heard the following two presentations on **Bill (No. 11)** – The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la violence familiale et le harcèlement criminel:*

Jane Ursel, Private Citizen

Kim Storeshaw, A Woman's Place NorWest Co-op Community Health

*Your Committee heard the following two presentations on **Bill (No. 33)** – The Family Law Reform Act (Putting Children First) / Loi sur la*

réforme du droit de la famille (mesures pour le mieux-être des enfants):

*Lawrence Pinsky, Manitoba Bar Association
Trent Tait, Private Citizen*

*Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 300)** – The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la « Mount Carmel Clinic »:*

Chad Smith, Mount Carmel Clinic

Written Submissions

*Your Committee received the following two written submissions on **Bill (No. 11)** – The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la violence familiale et le harcèlement criminel:*

*Maddie Laberge, Private Citizen
Trudy L. Lavallee, Ikwe Widdjitiwin, Inc.*

*Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 33)** – The Family Law Reform Act (Putting Children First) / Loi sur la réforme du droit de la famille (mesures pour le mieux-être des enfants):*

Nicholas Bala, Faculty of Law – Queen’s University

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 8)** – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave) / Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congé pour les victimes de violence familiale, congé en cas de blessure ou de maladie grave et prolongation du congé de soignant)

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 11)** – The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la violence familiale et le harcèlement criminel

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 33)** – The Family Law Reform Act (Putting Children First) / Loi sur la réforme du droit de la famille (mesures pour le mieux-être des enfants)

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, with the following amendments:

THAT Clause 5(2) of Schedule A of the Bill be amended by striking out ", unless it is someone" and substituting "unless he or she conducted an earlier evaluation of them or is someone".

THAT Clause 6 of Schedule A of the Bill and the centred heading before the Clause be replaced with the following:

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Dispute resolution by the parties

6 *The parties to a dispute must act in a way that strives*

(a) to minimize conflict;

(b) to promote co-operation;

(c) to meet the best interests of any child involved in the dispute; and

(d) to the extent the parties consider it appropriate to do so, to resolve the dispute by reaching an agreement through negotiation or another dispute resolution process.

THAT Clause 33(2) of Schedule A of the Bill be replaced with the following:

Person in loco parentis may apply

33(2) *A person in loco parentis to a child may also apply for*

(a) custody of the child, if there is leave of the court; or

(b) access to the child;

if the child's parents are notified of the application.

THAT Clause 40(4) of Schedule A of the Bill be replaced with the following:

Variation of order for access

40(4) *The court may, on application, vary or terminate an order for access if the court is satisfied that the child's needs or circumstances have changed since the original order was made or last varied. The provisions of this section apply in relation to that application.*

- **Bill (No. 300)** – The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la « Mount Carmel Clinic »

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Ms. Howard: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Any further committee reports? Seeing none, we'll move on to tabling of reports. Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Pink Shirt Day

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to mark the significance of Pink Shirt Day and the impact it has had in raising awareness about bullying in Manitoba.

Pink Shirt Day was started in 2007 by a Nova Scotia student, Travis Price, and his friends who organized a high school protest to wear pink in solidarity with a grade 9 boy who was being bullied for wearing a pink shirt. Travis and his peers headed off to a clothing store and purchased 50 pink shirts and distributed them to fellow students. Since then, the movement has taken off across the country and is widely understood to be a day about what each of us can do to raise awareness and what each of us can do to challenge bullying.

Across the province, students, teachers and even members of this Legislature have painted the town pink to draw attention to the need to stand up to and end bullying against any student for any reason, Mr. Speaker.

Although Pink Shirt Day is a testament to how far we have come in terms of working together to raise awareness about the impact of bullying, there is more work to be done. Everyone has an obligation to do their part to contribute to a society free of bullying because no one deserves to be bullied.

On this Pink Shirt Day, I want to encourage all Manitobans to stand up to end bullying and especially not to be a bystander.

Thank you.

* (13:40)

Celebrating 100 Years of Women's Right to Vote

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'm so lucky to stand in this Chamber surrounded by some truly exceptional female

politicians. These women who come to the House with so many unique life experiences all bring an important and valuable perspective to the work that the Legislative Assembly does.

Our presence here is a reflection of how far the fight for women's rights has come in the last 100 years. In 1916, Nellie McClung and her fellow advocates led Manitoba's suffrage movement to victory, ushering in a new era of participation and equality. Now in 2016, my female colleagues and I are persons able to vote and build policy that makes life better for Manitoba families.

Of course, total equality is slow moving. First Nations people were not given the vote in Manitoba until 1952 and people with disabilities were either denied the vote or had no guaranteed access to a polling station until the 1990s.

These dates are astonishingly recent. And there is still more to do, across the country and all over the world. Even in this Chamber only 20 per cent of us are women, despite excellent role models like former member for St. James Bonnie Korzeniowski, who joins us in the Chamber today.

Women still face very real challenges in achieving representation in government. Gender inequality within families, inequitable division of labour within households and cultural attitudes about gender roles are still limiting the amount of women in government.

We need to implement the changes that will allow women to participate fully in public life. Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet was a single-signal to the country that the prejudices which Nellie faced no longer represent our shared Canadian values.

Here in Manitoba, with Nellie McClung as inspiration, we have so many strong, fearless women who don't hesitate to question the status quo, take on leadership roles and champion change. Let's draw on our heritage as leaders in women's suffrage to take the next steps forward towards equality for women and for all.

Care for Seniors

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to address the Assembly on the dismal care for seniors and the mistreatment of seniors by this NDP government.

With dementia and Alzheimer's on the rise, there is a pressing need to increase long-term-care beds. Too many seniors are on a lengthy wait-list

for proper long-term facilities while their family members and friends are required to help them. Some seniors are so in need for care that they're forced to rely on staying in hospitals, trying—tying up valuable hospital space better served for urgent care patients.

This Selinger government likes to claim that they've increased the number of care beds in Manitoba but we know that is a lie. While they have built facilities, they have decommissioned just as many. This—

Mr. Speaker: I know it's been a while since this House has come together, and perhaps members' memories are slipping a little bit with respect to the rules of this place, and I can understand that. I'm sometimes affected by that myself. But I want to caution the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) when he's reading out his statement please pick and choose your words very carefully to make sure we remain within the parliamentary traditions and language of this Assembly. So I'm cautioning the honourable member to please follow the rules of the House.

The honourable member for Emerson, to conclude his member's statement.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

While they have built facilities, they've decommissioned just as many. The minister will claim otherwise but as we've recently seen in ads published by the Selinger NDP, they cannot get their own statistics straight.

There has been a rise—

Mr. Speaker: I know I have cautioned the House the last time it sat, with respect to the use of a member of this Assembly in relation to a political party, and it's always been our tradition in this House to use the name of an individual if it's in reference to an era. And so I'm asking the honourable member to please—to pick and choose again. I cautioned him pick and choose your words very carefully and in keeping with the rules and practices of this Assembly.

So the honourable member for Emerson, to please quickly conclude your member's statement.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and I'll do the best I can.

They are strangers to the truth. There has been a rise in elder abuse which can be linked to an increase in dementia and Alzheimer's. And on the

Conservative side of the House, we've tried to protect seniors by putting forward Bill 213, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act. We acknowledge the right of seniors to have care and protection. We want to ensure safety for all Manitobans of all ages but this NDP government didn't agree. They voted against giving seniors care and protection.

Seniors in Manitoba deserve so much more than what this government is doing for them. The NDP preaches about being advocates for social injustices but they cause—they are the cause of many. The government has done nothing but distort the truth to Manitobans. Manitobans don't believe this government anymore with good reason. This NDP government likes to talk a huge game, but when you look at the table, it's completely bare. For too long, seniors have been mistreated by this government. That needs to change.

I say shame on the Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors (Ms. Crothers). I say shame on this government. We believe seniors should—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time for this member's statement has elapsed.

Pink Shirt Day

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, today many of us are wearing pink in the House to recognize Pink Shirt Day. The motto for Pink Shirt Day is Kindness Is One Size Fits All. I'm pleased to see so many of our members have shown their colours and taken a stand against bullying, demonstrating the kind of kindness that Pink Shirt Day is all about.

However, there are still too many people with too many stories of discrimination, harassment, and violence in their lives.

I am proud of our team of NDP MLAs from all walks of life who took a stand and passed Bill 18, the safe and inclusive schools act, to fight bullying in our schools and to ensure that every student has a safe place to learn.

One of the most important things this legislation does is it give all students the right to start anti-bullying clubs such as gay-straight alliances. These alliances help promote safe, welcoming schools that allow students to feel included and supported regardless of ethnic, cultural or sexual

identity. It's critical our schools are safe, caring and accepted places where students can feel respected.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Red Cross for all the work that they have done here in this province around Pink Shirt Day. I'd like to give a super shout-out to Rebecca Ulrich who is the mover and shaker behind Pink Shirt Day, and I know every year our Minister of Education goes out and does events with them and is wearing his pink shirt today, and I'd like to thank everyone who has worked to make Pink Shirt Day a reality. Thank you for your efforts. Days like this remind us that true kindness never goes out of style.

Provincial Budget 2016

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Why is there no budget? Mr. Speaker, this is the question that must be asked today. The NDP government in Manitoba has been unable to balance the provincial budget for seven years in a row. Is the government not bringing in a budget today because they would have to admit for the eighth time in a row that they are unable to balance the budget?

This NDP government hasn't even been able to get within \$100 million of a balanced budget in seven years. Admitting you can't get closer than this to your target should be rather embarrassing for an experienced government.

Is the NDP government not bringing in a budget to avoid embarrassment? Perhaps they're concerned that the wool they've pulled over Manitobans' eyes has gotten threadbare. While claiming to enhance services, this NDP has actually been making big cuts to Conservation, to Water Stewardship, to Agriculture, to research. Did the NDP not bring in a budget because they need to hide their deep-cut deception?

Further, this NDP government has raised taxes budget after budget. Are we not seeing a budget today because the NDP didn't want to let people know where they were going to raise taxes this year?

Just recently, the NDP government spent plenty of tax dollars consulting with Manitobans across the province about what might be in a budget. From what we see now, it was an impressive waste of money and people's time. Or perhaps the consultation will show up as a budget because the NDP were actually using it to inform their campaign promises.

Maybe it was for all these reasons. We may never know, but Manitobans will judge the lack of a budget on April 19th. Mr. Speaker, it's time to have an accountable government. It's time for a Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements, and just—[*interjection*] Order, please.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Just prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon from Twin Rivers Country School, we have 10 grades 6 to 9 students under the direction of Ms. Krista Friesen, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

* (13:50)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Election Date 2016

Official Announcement Request

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'd like to welcome back all our colleagues, Mr. Speaker, and, in particular, I would like to offer my congratulations to you and thanks to you on behalf of our party for your great work over many years and on your decision to not seek re-election, Sir. We appreciate the work that you've done here very much and—[*interjection*]

In addition, Mr. Speaker, if I might just take a moment and say a thank you to the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) for his great service over a long period of time for his constituents and for the people of this province.

And I will add, I guess, in the interest of time as well, our thanks as well to the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) for her service here, and wish her best of luck. I mentioned to her earlier that Esther and I had the chance to raise our children for much of their early years in Ottawa. It's a great—it's nothing like Winnipeg. It's not as good as Winnipeg, but it's a great city, and we wish you the best to you and your family.

And my friend from Flin Flon, as well, to say to you all the best in the future.

And to all of you, thank you very much for your service, good health and the best to your families as you embark on new challenges in your lives.

My first question, Mr. Speaker, is: When will the Premier go to the Lieutenant Governor and call the election, specifically?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that. I'm sure we'll announce the date well within the regulatory requirements.

But I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, you've announced very recently your decision not to seek office again. I want to acknowledge your service since September 11th, 1990: the work you did on graduated driver's licences; the work you did in workers' compensation to give better protection, presumptive protection for people, particularly front lines and responders; the work you've done on the transportation division for the Province of Manitoba and the broad consultations you did on that to help us formulate a transportation plan, which is strongly reflected in the infrastructure program that we've been rolling out over the last several years in this province; and, of course, your most recent service to us as the Speaker of the House.

I know you have family members here today, and I do want to take the opportunity to thank you very much for all the service you've provided and to thank your family, as well, for supporting you through those interesting and challenging 26 years of service you've provided to the people of Manitoba and the people of Transcona.

So I'd like just to give you a round of applause again, Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

And while I'm on the feet, we have seen the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) make a career decision. I want to thank that member for her tremendous service to the people of Fort Rouge but also to the people of Manitoba in many roles: minister of Labour and minister of Family Services; minister of Finance and Treasury Board; and minister responsible for disabilities and all the work that's been done there, including path-breaking legislation which makes the difference every single day.

And, of course, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) and all the work he's done over the many years: House leader; Minister of Justice once, twice, redux, of course, and as he says, a chance to sort of square the circle on all those justice

issues including restorative justice, but also minister for Family Services and Conservation, and our TomorrowNow plan which laid the foundation for the work we're doing on climate change.

And, as you know, Mr. Speaker, I've already answered the first question, so I await the second one.

Pre-Election Budget Tabling Timeline

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier has repeatedly, as has his Finance Minister, promised in months past that they would be presenting a full budget for the people of Manitoba prior to the election. There appears to be some backsliding there, not inconsistent with the Premier's previous unwillingness to keep his promises to people of Manitoba.

We know that the budget would be done. It would be prepared now, and it would be strange to keep it from the people of Manitoba prior to an election. It would be another example of a deceptive practice by this government, Mr. Speaker, that has nothing to do with being forthright, accountable or transparent and has everything to do with hiding figures from Manitobans that they deserve to see.

Other provinces, New Brunswick, BC, Ontario, tomorrow, are all putting budgets forward. Most provinces prior then—prior to the election date, most provinces in this country will have tabled a budget for their people to see, yet Manitobans are being kept in the dark by this Premier.

I'd like the Premier to explain to Manitobans why it is that he would hide the facts from Manitobans prior to this upcoming provincial election.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we indicated 20 days ago that we'd be providing a fiscal update and outlook for the province of Manitoba. It'll be very thorough. It'll give the people the numbers of how we've costed our Throne Speech commitments and how we will keep the economy growing: one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, of the best job creation rate in the country, a very significant program to continue to provide stimulus at a time when the Canadian economy is slowing down and the global economy is slowing down as well. We'll provide that all in the Legislature.

I do point out that the Leader of the Opposition has a very vigorous program of cuts to services,

privatization. He's not in any way being accountable for that. He's not demonstrating how he will make sure that we protect the core services of Manitobans. We know that program of cuts is a risky program for Manitoba. We know his program to reduce the PST will end our ability to provide good quality infrastructure, including flood protection for Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

So we'd look forward to him being accountable for the reckless decisions he's making on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: The Premier speaks about the national economy slowing down; he's been slowing down the economy in Manitoba since he became Premier, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is quite different from what he puts forward, and, of course, the Premier now says that he wants to put forward a fantasy budget. Heard of fantasy football and fantasy hockey even, but I haven't heard of a fantasy budget 'til this day. The Premier is going to put a fantasy budget before the people of Manitoba that's going to cause them to question again his willingness to keep his promises to them.

Now, the fact of the matter is that this Premier has been hiding information from Manitobans by way of blacking out reports, not making information available, forcing citizens to go through a freedom of information process when the information should be there for them to see. That's why we have an open government agenda for the future of this province because that's a closed government over there—*[interjection]* Thank you.

Does the Premier not understand that we just received our first credit downgrade in 30 years because of his secrecy, and why would he add to it by hiding the budget from Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition held a private press conference today to make—a private press conference that was not open—that was not open—to the public, very similar to his private conventions, very similar to his private leadership race.

He has not come clean to the people of Manitoba about his risky program to cuts to core services. He has talked about two-tier health care, something we need to take a look at. He has not disclosed how he's going to deal with two-tier health care. He has talked about privatizing social services and daycare in

Manitoba. He has not indicated in any way how he's going to enact those brutal policies, which will crank up fees for Manitobans, reduce wages and provide less quality services. He's indicated he's going to Uber the taxi service, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba. He has in no way been clear about how he's going to do that.

His risky program of cuts, his risky program of privatization will only put Manitoba in a tailspin and take the economy down. We—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time on this question has elapsed.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Tax Increases Government Promises

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, now we've got the Premier fantasizing about our agenda. You know, he's got a fantasy budget in mind for Manitobans; he hasn't—he claims he knows a lot about our agenda, but he won't show Manitobans his own agenda, Mr. Speaker, and that's just too bad. That's really too bad, you know.

So his agenda has 113 pronouncements, Mr. Speaker, 113 promises just in January alone, six or so a day, 113 of them. But he's not going to tell Manitobans what that's going to cost. He's not going to show them what that's going to work out to for them because he's not going to put a budget on the table.

Now, we all know, and Manitobans all know, somebody has to pay for this Premier's promises. Most Manitobans don't take his promises seriously anymore, but if he was to keep some of those promises, he would, of course, have to hike taxes.

Why doesn't the Premier tell Manitobans today which tax hikes he will invoke on an already overtaxed population so that he can try to get himself, as the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) quite accurately said, re-elected, because that's his first and only concern?

* (14:00)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Twenty days ago we said we'd provide a fiscal update and outlook on Manitoba. We'll show how the Throne Speech commitments and the subsequent

announcements are going to be costed out. It's a five-to seven-year vision in certain areas like daycare, very important that Manitobans have greater access to daycare spots, good quality daycare with good wages and the opportunity to have a career in that system with a pension plan; quality education and experiences for young people to prepare them for school with accountability to a board of parent governors. Those are the commitments we are making to the people of Manitoba. We will demonstrate how we're going to achieve them in our March 8th update and outlook.

But we won't see from the members opposite is the classic wolf-in-sheep's-clothing position that the Leader of the Opposition is presenting every single day. He—every single day he denies that he made a commitment to two-tier health care in Manitoba. He prevaricates on whether or not he's going to continue with a program of privatizing daycare, which he's already said he's going to do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, his infrastructure announcement does not have sufficient money to provide for flood protection for communities and to keep the economy going. His reckless—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable leader—First Minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Pallister: Well, serious problems in this province as a result of an incompetent government over the last close to two decades, and the Premier puts forward a fantasy plan to solve those problems and attacks an agenda for change that's real and well costed. That's a shame, kind of embarrassing for the members opposite, and I think it's part of the reason so many of them aren't running again, quite frankly.

Now, the Premier spoke and he used the word commitment a moment ago. Now, just five years ago the Premier ran on a commitment that he would not raise taxes in this province—none, he said—followed it up with the biggest tax hikes in Manitoba modern history. Now he wants Manitobans, having broken all those promises, he says I've got more; wait for more, he says. But he won't even put a budget on the table to give verification or support to the promises he's making. I expect the vast majority of his caucus doesn't even have any idea about a fraction of those hundred and thirteen or fifteen announcements that he made in January, and they don't take them seriously. Why would Manitobans take them seriously?

I want to know this, Mr. Speaker, since the Premier called the proposal that he would hike the PST ridiculous and absurd and nonsense and went ahead and did it, then I have to ask him: Which taxes will he raise to pay for his ridiculous and absurd promises just made in the last few weeks?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition.

This is an individual that promised solemnly that he would never privatize the telephone system and then promptly went ahead and did it, kept people up into the wee hours of the morning at committee, forced the bill through the House, promptly went ahead and privatized the telephone system. Many of his friends and colleagues benefited from that in terms of the shares they bought which appreciated later on. Manitobans are still paying for it with among the highest telephone rates in the country.

Mr. Speaker, this is a gentleman that has not even come clean on that even to this day, many decades later. He's never acknowledged that he broke that promise. He's never acknowledged what the impact is on Manitobans. Every time a person picks up their cellphone bill and sees the price on it, he knows that's the result of the privatization promise that he broke when he was a member of this House.

We made a difficult decision to move forward to stimulate the economy on flood protection, on infrastructure building, on creating good jobs for Manitobans. We have seen the results of that with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country and with one of the best job-creation rates in the country.

Mr. Pallister: The Premier's right on one thing, Mr. Speaker, and that is that this election is about trust; it is about who you can trust.

The Premier went to the people of Manitoba in the last election. He promised them solemnly, as did all his candidates, knocked on the doors of the people of the city of Winnipeg and all over the province, looked people in the eye and said we will not raise your taxes, and then they knew at the time that they intended to and they did—and they did. And they want to make this election about trust? Make it about trust, Mr. Speaker, because that is what it's about—that is what it's about.

The Premier wants to go back 20 years in the past; I'm going to go back five and ask him: If he can promise the people of Manitoba solemnly that it's ridiculous and absurd that he wouldn't raise taxes

five years ago, why—why—should any common-sense Manitoban believe a single thing he promises now?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition asks why anybody would believe him when he privatized the telephone system and he said he wouldn't do it. The Leader of the Opposition asks why would anybody trust him when he's on CJOB talking about two-tier health care, a system that we need to take a look at in Manitoba, and then goes into abject denial that he even mentioned it.

Mr. Speaker, this is a political party led by the Leader of the Opposition that says they want to privatize daycare in Manitoba and then runs away from it as fast as you can go. This is a member opposite who says that he wants to privatize the social services, including the child-welfare system. Did he consult anybody when he wanted to do that? Did he talk to anybody in the community? No. He says that he's going to do it, and then he goes into his wolf-in-sheep's-clothing approach and hides away from the people of Manitoba.

I know he's under tight management by his officials not to say too much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? It's going to seep out anyway. We know the truth. He's a risky proposition for the economy and for the people of Manitoba.

Pre-Election Budget Financial Accountability

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, it's a fundamental responsibility of a sitting government to demonstrate financial accountability to voters by delivering a budget; only the NDP government has decided they just don't want to.

And, Mr. Speaker, on April the 30th last year, this Finance Minister clearly stated there will be another budget before the next election. Well, now we hear he has no budget to table. He has no comprehensive disclosure financially that he wants to make to Manitobans. And he has no plausible explanation as to why that is the case.

My question for the Finance Minister: What is he hiding?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I just want to thank my critic across the way for the question. As well, Mr. Speaker, I want to just congratulate you on your announcement that you won't be seeking re-election as well and my other colleagues in this House.

Mr. Speaker, we've—we made an announcement last month that on March the 8th we'll be presenting to this House and to Manitobans a robust financial update, economic update, that'll provide a clear contrast between this government and the opposition party. We'll show to Manitobans that we are dedicated and committed to continue to invest in education, health care, of course, infrastructure. It'll contrast to the Leader of the Opposition who wants to fire 1,000 nurses, who laid off 700 teachers. It'll contrast to the Liberal leader who—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve a full, comprehensive report, and he promised them a drive-by financial snapshot. It just won't do.

Mr. Speaker, the second quarter financial update revealed that the NDP has once again failed to stick to their budget. The deficit projection is now up 30 per cent over what was planned, and spending is projected to be \$139 million more than what was budgeted.

Now, just after the Public Accounts were released and the NDP deficit was ballooning a million bucks over planned spending, the Finance Minister said, I wasn't clear whether I'd bring a budget or not.

Will the Finance Minister admit that as his financial underperformance has continued to become known, his enthusiasm to be accountable to Manitobans has increasingly waned? Will he admit that by not presenting a full budget he's failing to be accountable to Manitobans?

Mr. Dewar: Well, Mr. Speaker, I reject what the member has put forward. I'll remind the member that the Harper Conservative government, which the Leader of the Opposition said he was a very proud member of, they presented a fiscal update. In fact, they didn't even produce a fiscal update inside the House of Commons; they went outside the House of Commons to do that. The Ontario government, as well, provided the residents of Ontario a fiscal update. We're not exactly sure what Saskatchewan's going to do. They may or they may not have a budget. They may or may not have a fiscal update. They're likely not even going to have a legislative session before the next—before the next election.

As I said, we'll be presenting the update on March the 8th. It'll provide a clear contrast between this government and the opposition party. Again, we're committed to health care, education, infrastructure. They are, Mr. Speaker, want to return to balance immediately, presumably. They want to, in order to do that, they're going to fire nurses, they're going to fire teachers. The Liberal Party—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the minister should realize that the idiom, no news is good news, does not apply when you're the Finance Minister for the Province of Manitoba.

Listen, Mr. Speaker, no government hides good news. If it was good news, they would deliver it. But once again, for this NDP government, the news is not good. Deficit is up. Spending is up. So what does the NDP government do? They announce that they won't disclose financial information for Manitobans.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, it's not accountable, it's not accessible, it's not acceptable. Manitobans deserve to have access to full financial information regarding the true extent of this NDP government's financial mismanagement.

What is he hiding from Manitobans, and will he do the right thing and commit to bring a budget?

Mr. Dewar: The member is prejudging what we're going to be releasing here in the House on March the 8th.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, it's going to be a very robust update. It's going to provide, again, a contrast between this government and the opposition, a government that believes in investing the economy versus cutting jobs like the opposition want to do, and giving tax cuts to the corporate elite like the Liberal Party wants to do, fire 800 liquor workers. We reject that.

We know the Leader of the Opposition, when he's not in Costa Rica he's here plotting how he's going to fire another 1,000 nurses, fire another 700 teachers. We reject that.

Children in Care Numbers Counting Method Change

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): On February 10th the Minister responsible for Child and Family Services decided to change the way the department

counts the number of children in its care. The minister was concerned about the way children are being counted here in Manitoba. In reality, this NDP government is more concerned about, and I quote, unfairly being compared to other provinces. What are they trying to hide?

Can the minister explain to this House how her method of counting children under her care is unfair, and how changing the method will benefit any of the children here in Manitoba?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): What is important to this side of the House and this government is ensuring that we are providing adequate supports to families so they can raise their children at home in their communities in a safe environment that does not privatize the services that they need.

What we have done, we are planning to count the children in a similar way that other jurisdictions count. We are not trying to hide numbers; every child will be accounted for. We're going to continue to make those investments. We are not going to make risky cuts that slash rates to foster parents, that take children that are 16 and 17 years old off the record, put them in the streets. We're going to be there with the families every day in this province.

Mr. Wishart: I'm pretty sure this minister said she didn't want to count voluntary placements at all. The minister has been quoted as saying Saskatchewan does not count children that are in voluntary placements; that would mean that children like Tina Fontaine would not be counted by this government when they are responsible for their care, or lack of care in her case.

And I would table documentation from Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services that states very clearly that voluntary placements are included in the children-in-care category. The minister and this government may not like showing their dramatic failure on the CFS file, but misleading Manitoba on the number of children in care does nothing to help those children.

When is this minister going to do her job and focus on helping the children in care, and not spend time spinning numbers?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Every day we focus on providing good quality care for families and children in this

province whether it's through building better housing, whether it's developing and growing a strong economy, providing jobs, providing good strong education. That makes a difference.

We are accounting for all children that are in care. We are not backing away from our responsibilities. We have constantly increased the percentage of the money that we put in to support agencies in the front-line services. There is no doubt in my mind that every worker in the authorities and the agencies work every day to focus on the best interest of children. We will continue to do that. We will not put in place risky policies and cuts that are going to take away opportunities for families to grow and be supported.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, instead they have put policies in place that led us to be No. 1 on child poverty in Canada, really proud.

One of this NDP government's most colossal failures is their handling of Child and Family Services portfolio. Since 2006 the number of children in care has more than doubled. We have had multiple disasters with children in hotels, repeated administrative problems with the authorities, unauthorized travel scandals, and, of course, the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry. Desperate times lead to desperate measures like playing games with public numbers, more NDP math.

Is this minister ready to apologize to the children in CFS publicly, maybe another TV ad, for their handling and mishandling of children in care?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I need to make sure that this House knows that every child in Manitoba that is in care is being counted. What's important is our record. Our record of devolving the system to First Nations and Metis leaders, ensuring that we have—providing culturally appropriate care for their children, making sure that we're going one step further to customary care, making sure that we have an opportunity for kids in care to go and live with their family members under kinship care.

Looking and preventing children coming into care is a major priority of this government through multiple departments and multiple agencies. We're going to continue to support families in this province and ensure that they get the support that they need and their children can stay at home with them in a loving, caring environment.

Aboriginal Students Graduation Rates

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the success of all students is essential for building a strong province here in Manitoba.

Just last month the Auditor General reported that only 55 per cent of Aboriginal students graduate from high school compared to non-Aboriginal students and this gap is widening. That's a decrease of 2 per cent since 2010, obviously getting worse than better.

Will the minister apologize today for his government hiding these statistics from Manitoba?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I thank the member for the question.

Of course, we on this side of the House are the party of reconciliation and the government of reconciliation. That's why we'll—we are tabling a First Nations, Metis and Inuit education policy to provide additional supports for those children so that they can be successful in our school system, just as every other child should be successful.

In our education funding announcement, we announced new supports for the Aboriginal academic achievement award, new transition funding for kids coming off reserve into the public education system.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we stand with First Nations, we stand with Metis, and we stand with Inuit children. And it takes some temerity for this member to stand up, who's never once asked a question about indigenous education until today. Shame on him.

Mr. Ewasko: I know, Mr. Speaker, I know that the NDP government has been going through some media training and they're attempting to show some compassion, but this minister is obviously showing his angry side today again.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General himself says, and I quote: That is the lack of leadership to guide governmental departments in achieving educational outcomes for K-to-12 Aboriginal students set out in the Aboriginal Education and Employment Action Plan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Education: When the AG mentions the lack of leadership, is the AG speaking about the minister, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) or both?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I just finished saying, we believe in providing supports for indigenous children so they are successful in our public education system.

But when the leader of the—when the opposition critic talks about leadership, he might look at the federal government and 10 years of the Harper government, which abandoned indigenous people in this country and in this province. They wouldn't call an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, even though that's happening and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) will be chairing a very important conference on that tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

We're the party of reconciliation. We're the government of reconciliation. We stand on that record, and I'm ashamed of the member for getting up and talking about this question today.

Mr. Ewasko: Holy smokes, Mr. Speaker, it looks like we're getting a bag of Snickers bars for this session.

Mr. Speaker, under the Selinger government, only 55 per cent of Aboriginal students graduate from high school, which is a 2 per cent decrease from 2010. We know that the Auditor General himself blames the lack of leadership. We now know why the Education Minister and his government has been hiding these stats for years.

How can Manitobans possibly trust this broken-promise government? What else is this Minister of Education hiding?

Mr. Allum: But, Mr. Speaker, the member's quite wrong as usual. We're not hiding anything. And, in fact, we've posted information on indigenous outcomes before the Auditor General came out, and we'll continue to be data driven in our department.

But let's remember the Truth and Reconciliation Commission said that indigenous outcomes across this country were lagging. And, in fact, Manitoba's actually doing better than they—we are in—than they are in Saskatchewan or Alberta when it comes to outcomes for indigenous children.

* (14:20)

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we can do better. Of course, we need to work together on it. But we're not going to take lessons from the opposition who supported Mr. Harper all these years and who continually abandon indigenous people in this country. The fact of the matter is the Leader of the

Opposition won't be Harper-light; if he ever gets into government, he'll be Harper on steroids.

NDP Leadership Race Chief of Staff Investigation

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the Premier hired a union activist, Heather Grant-Jury, as his chief of staff solely to help him survive the leadership, and then after that as a reward he appointed her to the board of Manitoba Public Insurance.

Now his former chief of staff is being investigated for money that's gone missing from her employer. She's now gone from the union, she's gone from MPI and she is apparently gone from the many, many positions she held within the NDP.

This is an example of problems that happen when you use taxpayers' dollars to reward your friends, and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) can provide other examples.

Mr. Speaker, since the Premier is on a bit of an apology tour, would he today apologize for using taxpayers' dollars to help him survive the leadership and then to reward his friends?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): I thank the member for Steinbach who came up through the offices of the opposition leadership to his job, and does a fine job, Mr. Speaker, or the member for—the member who was a previous researcher who ended up working and being in this Legislature.

An individual who has had some difficulties in a separate job and separate occupation and has been investigated but has worked for the government, you can't drag that person through the mud for something that they did in terms of their job, and then say because they were hired by the government, by implication there's something wrong with them.

Mr. Speaker, basic human kindness, basic human justice, basic human understanding would say these are two different things. Notwithstanding they want to make this a political football, I think it's below the level of the member for Steinbach—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm hopeful that the member will use basic common sense, Mr. Speaker.

Now, it seems that the Premier's apology tour has ended. His former chief of staff, who is now

under investigation for missing funds, had access to many government files.

Now, I understand that when the Premier brought Ms. Grant-Jury into his office, he told his staff that she was just here to get him through the leadership crisis. So it's possible that she didn't actually work on any government jobs. She may have just been doing leadership stuff for the Premier.

But he does have a responsibility to tell us whether or not he's investigated any files that she had access to and whether or not there was anything that was inappropriate that was done on the files that he allowed her to have access to because he hired her as his chief of staff to save his leadership.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think it's below members of this Chamber to make allegations of anyone who is investigated on their private job of which there—and what there—of which there is an ongoing investigation that has nothing to relate to their personality, nothing that relates to criminal activities, but is a dispute in terms of their private job, works for a government and then is smeared by the member for Steinbach by allegations that (a) access to information or something untoward has been done on something that happened perhaps when they were privately employed.

By that count, Mr. Speaker, everybody who is responsible for the terrible funding scandal of the 1990s when the Conservative campaign tried to run First Nation candidates and which the judge said he'd never seen more liars in his life than the Conservative Party, most of those members shouldn't be sitting there based on that member's accusation.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, the NDP removed Ms. Grant-Jury from all sorts of positions, so presumably they must have had some concerns as well, Mr. Speaker, but maybe not the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

Now, Mr. Speaker, the former chief of staff to the Premier is under investigation, and there was a good deal of government money, taxpayers' money, that went to the union to the training centre where there is now, apparently, missing funds.

Now, union spokesperson Blake Crothers said that there's nothing to see here, that none of the money is missing, and Mr. Crothers said to the Premier that he shouldn't worry, that there was no government money that is missing. But, apparently, there is an audit that is being done but hasn't been completed.

Can the Premier, who hasn't proven to be a particularly good defender of public money, can he provide any evidence, perhaps an audit that shows that no government money, no taxpayers' money is missing because of these very, very serious allegations?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I understand that there's no connection whatsoever between government funding and the activities of that particular individual.

By definition, Mr. Speaker, what the member for Steinbach is saying is the Leader of the Opposition, because he was part of a Cabinet—it was found to be responsible for the worst vote-rigging scandal in the history of Manitoba and criminal charges should have been laid—by implication that member, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), is not capable of being leader because he was in a Cabinet that was found to be improperly doing a scandal. Is he saying that? Is he saying his own leader is incapable of leading his party?

Now, maybe it's because his leader had no competition for leadership. Maybe that's why as the leader had no guests invited to his throne speech, Mr. Speaker. Maybe that's why he's hiding now with the new Mulroney assistant that he has to keep him below in the public expectation. I think it's deplorable to smear people by virtue of that. Doing that implicates his own—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Pre-Election Budget Government Transparency

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the NDP have been found to be one of the most closed and least transparent governments in Canada, as we've seen recently in published reports and in reports from the Auditor General and the Ombudsman. The NDP have hidden cut after cut after cut. And their fiscal update won't come out until the final week of this sitting, so Manitobans may not even know where the cuts are going to be because we're not even going to get a budget.

I ask the Premier: Did he decide not to table a budget because he was afraid to tell Manitobans at the—about the cuts he will be making to jobs and services?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we've made it very clear on February 4th that we'd provide

a fiscal update and outlook for the people of Manitoba. It will be a thorough update. It'll have departmental spending identified within it. It'll give an indication of what our program is to grow the economy and to keep one of the lower unemployment rates in the country and one of the best job creation records. It'll project out over the next few years to let people know where we're taking the economy and how we're fulfilling some of the very significant commitments we made in our Throne Speech.

We have a very solid plan to keep Manitoba on a steady course of economic growth, low unemployment and job creation. We have a plan to increase the opportunities for families to have access to quality, non-profit, well paid daycare with well trained staff and safe children in a good learning environment, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to reduce class sizes so the young people can get off to a good start in school. And we'll have very significant investments in training, apprenticeship, college and university programs, all of which are at risk if the leader of the Liberal Party is able to impose on the member from River Heights her plan to eliminate the health and education levy: \$471 million will disappear in a single year. That's close to \$2 billion over—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Liberals will create a positive situation for entrepreneurs who will then create jobs and wealth and improve government revenue. I don't see what the problem is.

It's likely that the NDP will not release a budget because they don't want to let Manitobans know where they will be cutting. Over the last few years we've been seeing big cuts in funding and jobs in Conservation, in Agriculture, in Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and in research.

Where will the Premier cut this year, or did he choose not to deliver a budget because he wanted to hide details of what he is cutting from the services provided to Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Appreciate the question from the member opposite. He will know that we've added over 300 teachers to the public school system, not the 700 that were laid off when the Leader of the Opposition was last in government, Mr. Speaker. He will see that we've more than fulfilled our election promise on health care with over 220 more doctors

working in Manitoban now, and a graduate—and a record number of people graduating from the medical school. All of those things are in our budget.

The member opposite, his political party is promising to eliminate the health and education levy; that's \$471 million every single year. How can the member from River Heights possibly get up here and ask a question about cuts when the single biggest tax cut in the history of Manitoba is being proposed by the Liberal Party of Manitoba, \$471 million eliminated from health and education? That means less nurses by the bedside, less doctors in the community, less teachers in the classroom, less daycare workers in the neighbourhoods. That means severe hardship for the families of Manitoba.

* (14:30)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, Liberals will create a positive situation for entrepreneurs who'll create jobs and wealth and improve government revenue so services can be preserved.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the Premier appears to be far more impressionable than Manitobans would like. He's clearly been influenced by the Stephen Harper playbook. His NDP government has decided on numerous occasions to avoid accountability and transparency and this is reflected in his decision to avoid tabling a budget.

Why has the Premier chosen this page from the Stephen Harper playbook to avoid accountability and transparency to Manitobans at this critical time?

Mr. Selinger: We will provide a clear road map to a future of prosperity in Manitoba. His plan to eliminate the health and education levy gives a tax break to the big banks. How did they do last year, Mr. Speaker? Thirty-five billion dollars profits; why do they need a tax cut from the Liberal Party of Manitoba? Why do the largest corporations in Manitoba need a tax cut which will take money out of health and education? How does privatizing liquor make life safer and better for Manitobans? Higher prices, lower social responsibility, lower wages for the people there and less quality of service.

The program for the Liberal Party of Manitoba makes no sense fiscally. It makes no sense in terms of policy. The member from River Heights knows that. When will he separate himself from the makes-no-sense policies of the Liberal Party?

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has elapsed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: And just prior to petitions I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my right where we have Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, the former member for St. James.

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Now we'll move on to petitions.

Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles that have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for the safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by S. Welsh, G. Korell, J. Tulford and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: In keeping with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to have been received by the House.

Applied Behavioural Analysis Services

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government broke a commitment to support families of children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, including timely diagnosis and access to necessary treatment such as applied behavioural analysis, also known as ABA services.

The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services, which notes the importance of early intervention of ABA for children with autism.

School learning services has a highest ever waiting list which started with 45 children. The waiting list is projected to keep growing and to be excess of 80 children by September of 2016. Therefore, these children go through the biggest transition of their lives without receiving ABA services that has helped other children achieve huge gains.

The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5, despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as other Manitoba children.

The current provincial government policy now imposed on ABA service providers will now decrease the scientifically proven, empirically based and local proven five-year program to a consultive model that will allow for over 200 children wait-list and only a small portion of children to access these new services.

Waiting lists, decreased services and denials of treatment of our—are unacceptable. No child should be deemed access or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their diagnosis still remains and their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services, maintain the current successful program and fund true ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder until they reach age 21.

This petition is submitted on behalf of G. Mercier, K. Koop, D. Roncadin and many other fine Manitobans.

Manitoba Interlake—Request to Repair and Reopen Provincial Roads 415 and 416

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Interlake region is an important transportation corridor for Manitoba but, unfortunately, is still dealing with serious underinvestment in infrastructure under this provincial government.

Provincial roads 415 and 416 are vital to the region but have still not been repaired or reopened since sustaining damages during the 2010 flood.

Residents and businesses in Manitoba Interlake are seriously impacted and inconvenienced by having no adequate east-west travel routes over an area of 525 square miles.

This lack of east-west travel routes is also a major public safety concern, as emergency response vehicles are impeded from arriving in a timely manner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government repair and reopen the provincial roads 415 and 416 to allow adequate east-west travel in the Interlake.

And this petition is signed by J. Mankewich, D. Johnson, J. Johnson and many more fine Manitobans.

Proposed Lac du Bonnet Marina—Request for Research into Benefits and Costs

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Lac du Bonnet is a recreational area with great natural beauty.

(2) The Winnipeg River is one of the greatest distinguishing cultural and recreational resources in that area.

(3) Manitoba marinas increase recreational access and increase the desirability of properties in their host communities.

(4) The people of Lac du Bonnet overwhelmingly support a public harbourfront marina in Lac du Bonnet.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider collaborating with all—with other levels of government to research the economic benefits and construction costs of a marina in Lac du Bonnet.

This petition is signed by R. St. Hilaire, B. St. Hilaire, T. Scott and many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route—Information Request

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 500-kilowatt alternative-current transmission line set to locate southeastern Manitoba and will cross the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

(2) The line has an in-service date of 2020 and run approximately 150 kilowatts with tower heights expected to reach between 40 to 60 metres and located every 400 to 500 metres.

(3) The preferred route designated to this line will see hydro towers come across approximately to the community of La Broquerie and many other communities in Manitoba southeast rather than the alternative route that was also considered.

* (14:40)

(4) The alternative route was—has seen that the line run further east, avoiding densely populated areas and alternately terminate at the same spot at the US border.

And (5) the Progressive Conservative caucus was repeatedly asked for information about the routing of this line and its proximity to densely populated areas and has yet to be received any response.

And (6) landowners across Manitoba are concerned about the impact hydro line routing could have on their land values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation to all members of the Legislative Assembly regarding the criteria that was used and the reasons for selecting the preferred routing of the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represents at least intrusive options to residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

And this petition is signed by W. Chabot, J. Schultz-Jeffery, R. Stelmack and many other fine Manitobans.

Applied Behavioural Analysis Services

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for the petition:

(1) The provincial government broke a commitment to support families of children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, including timely diagnosis and access to necessary treatment such as applied behavioural analysis, also known as ABA services.

(2) The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes the importance of early intervention and ABA therapy for children with autism.

(3) The preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 68 children waiting for services. That number is expected to exceed 148 children by September 2016 despite commitments to reduce the waiting list and to provide timely access to services.

(4) The current provincial government policy now imposed on the APA service provider will decrease the scientifically proven, empirically based and locally proven program and force children to go to school at age five before they are ready, and thus not allowing them full access to ABA services promised them as they wait on their wait-list.

(5) Waiting lists, forced decrease in service and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No children should be denied access to or age out of eligibility for ABA services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the ministers of Family Services, Education and Advanced Learning, and Health consider making funding available to address the current waiting list for ABA services.

And this petition is signed by M. Funk, S. Seibel, C. Peters and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route— Information Request

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 500-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located in southeastern Manitoba that will cross into the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

(2) The line has an in-service date of 2020 and will run approximately 150 kilometres with tower heights expected to reach between 20 and 60 metres and be located every four to five hundred metres.

(3) The preferred route designated for the line will see hydro towers come in close proximity to the community of La Broquerie and many other communities in Manitoba's southeast rather than an alternate route that was also considered.

(4) The alternate route would have seen the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and eventually terminate at the same spot at the US border.

(5) The Progressive Conservative caucus has repeatedly asked for information about the routing of the line and its proximity to densely populated areas, and has yet to receive any response.

(6) Landowners all across Manitoba are concerned about the impact hydro line routing could have on land values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation to all members of the Legislative Assembly regarding what criteria were used and the reasons for selecting the preferred routing for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represented the least intrusive option to residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

This petition is signed by G. Giesbrecht, G. Benitez, D. Rudy and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 500-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located in southeastern Manitoba that will cross into the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

(2) The line has an in-service date of 2020 and will run approximately 150 kilometres with tower heights expected to reach between 40 and 60 metres and be located every four to five hundred metres.

(3) The preferred route designated for the line will see hydro towers come in close proximity to the community of La Broquerie and many other communities in Manitoba's southeast rather than an alternate route that was also considered.

(4) The alternate route would have seen the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and eventually terminate at the same spot at the US border.

(5) The Progressive Conservative caucus has repeatedly asked for information about the routing of the line and its proximity to densely populated areas and has yet to receive any response.

(6) Landowners all across Manitoba are concerned about the impact hydro line routing could have on land values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation to all members of the Legislative Assembly regarding what criteria were used and the reasons for selecting the preferred routing for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represented the least intrusive option to residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

This petition is signed by M. Tellier, F. Yelinek, F. Clichke and many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes petitions.

And then now move on to grievances.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances, we move on to orders of the day, government business.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call for second reading of the following bills: Bill 13, Bill 15 and Bill 3. And after that, we'd like to call debate on second reading of Bill 4, then second reading on bills 5, 6 and 17.

Mr. Speaker: As has been announced, we'll be calling bills in the following order, starting with second readings of Bill 13, Bill 15 followed by Bill 3. And then we'll move on to debate on second readings of Bill 4 followed by second readings of Bill 5, Bill 6 and Bill 17.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 13—The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call for second reading, Bill 13.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that Bill 13, The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Education, seconded by the honourable Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, that Bill 13, The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework), be now read for a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

And the message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been tabled.

* (14:50)

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill 13, an important piece of legislation that puts in place a First Nations, Metis and Inuit

education policy framework to make sure that all of our schools and all our students learn about our shared history with indigenous Manitobans.

The NDP and our government is listening to the call for reconciliation, and this policy framework is one small but significant part of our plan to make sure that indigenous perspectives are in our classrooms and on our curriculum.

I'm pleased to report that the draft policy framework, available on the Education website, has been developed in consultation with indigenous elders, Metis and Inuit leadership, teachers and education experts. Our educators are working hard to get this right, because we know that we need to do more to make sure that all students learn about the histories, values, knowledge and culture of Manitoba's indigenous peoples.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission gave a call to action that I feel strongly, as Education Minister, we need to heed. TRC made clear—the TRC made clear that indigenous peoples and children across the country have been wronged and have not gotten the appropriate supports they deserve. We are working hard to do our part here in Manitoba.

This framework is also an important part of our strategy to make sure that indigenous students get the education supports they need to succeed. New Democrats believe that all students deserve to get a high-quality education and the skills they need to get a good job here in Manitoba. We are following the recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and we'll be more transparent about academic achievement for indigenous students.

The TRC was also clear that the achievement gap for indigenous Canadians is a nationwide problem. Manitoba's indigenous students graduate 55 per cent of the time, which, quite simply, is not good enough. Alberta's indigenous graduation rate is 43 per cent and Saskatchewan's is a mere 32 per cent. We all need to do better, provincially and nationally.

While the results may show that some of our efforts are working, we know that we need to do more to make sure that First Nations, Metis and Inuit children in our public schools are getting the supports they need to succeed.

I find it unfortunate that the Conservatives would rather leave some children behind and make reckless cuts to education. The Opposition Leader and his Conservatives only represent wealthy and well-connected insiders and big business. They don't

seem to care about whether First Nation, Metis or Inuit children are given the chance to succeed.

Conservatives' plan to cut education means that teachers will be fired, classes will be larger and indigenous students will not get the supports they need to succeed. We know that's what we—he would do because that's what he did the last time. Families remember having to fight just to be allowed to keep their community scoop—school open, while kids went without proper supplies and teachers struggled with larger and larger classrooms.

When our NDP government rose in this Legislature to offer a historic apology for the '60s scoop, the Opposition Leader couldn't be bothered to say anything. That action alone shows just how little Conservatives care about reconciliation. They're out of touch with the realities of our province and have no interest in reconciliation or in addressing the challenges of our First Peoples.

Unlike the Conservatives, we're committed to working with First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples to make sure that all children in our schools get the best education possible. For example, we know that many First Nation students will enter into the provincial school system at some point, particularly those that come from First Nations that do not offer high school programming. These children can often face issues adjusting to life away from home. Chronic federal underfunding means that despite the tireless efforts of Manitoba teachers, they often struggle to provide the support that some students need.

We need to do our part to help these students when they come into our schools. That's why we're providing new funding to help First Nation students transition from First Nation schools into Manitoba schools. This is just one example of how we're acting to make sure indigenous students also see steady progress and get the skills they need to get good jobs.

We're also increasing the Aboriginal Academic Achievement Grant to over \$9 million in order to support indigenous students with literacy, numeracy and culturally appropriate learning. We also increased funding for the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative to \$375,000 in order to incorporate traditional languages and targeted supports.

We know that these investments are only a start. We want every student in Manitoba to have the opportunity to excel, and we are committed to

working with teachers, parents, schools and First Nation partners to see this happen.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a very important part of our plan to move Manitoba forward in the spirit of reconciliation. Enshrining this policy framework into law makes clear that all of our students need to learn about our shared history with indigenous Manitobans. The NDP and our government will continue to work with First Nation, Metis and Inuit peoples in the spirit of reconciliation and we call on the Conservatives to drop their extreme ideological opposition to reconciliation and support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any questions of the mover of this motion?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, to the Education Minister, what exactly does policy framework mean and who develops it?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Lac du Bonnet for the question.

The First Nation—[interjection]—oh, well, he is my friend whether—through high waters and low, Mr. Speaker.

The First Nation meeting in Inuit education policy framework and, in fact, my friend has actually been briefed on this matter, is our attempt to work with indigenous peoples, with First Nation, Metis and Inuit peoples, to work with indigenous educators, to work with experts in the field and to work with students themselves in order that we can ensure that those children get a first-rate education as we would want for any child in our education system.

The member knows that the framework is online. If he needs to know what it is, he can visit the—visit it on the website. Of course, we gave him a copy as well. He will find in that a very comprehensive and complete approach to ensuring successful outcomes for indigenous students in our public education system.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure if the minister exactly answered that question. Yes, I do have a copy of the draft framework.

Will there be changes made to the curriculum, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Allum: Well, the member knows that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended

quite strongly to provincial governments all across Canada that changes to the curriculum to ensure and highlight the treaty relationship, the terrible consequences of residential schools, the intergenerational impact of intergenerational schools, also need to be highlighted in curriculum. In fact, in Manitoba we were already doing that. And we're placing that in the framework but the difference is that we're expanding it, enhancing it. It will now include subjects related to the '60s scoop on the one hand, to Freedom Road on the other, and so there will be changes to the curriculum to enhance outcomes for indigenous children and so that all children, indigenous and non-indigenous, understand the very important relationship between us both.

Mr. Ewasko: To the minister: How will teachers be guided and supported with these sensitive issues, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, again, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission indicated that not only do we need to work on enhancing curriculum, making sure there are targeted supports for First Nation children coming off reserve, ensuring that there are supports for Inuit and Metis children in their particular environments, but it also suggested that we needed to enhance teacher training in this regard as well. We're doing just that already in the teacher training program, which the member well knows there's three credit hours devoted to indigenous perspectives. We'll continue to work on that. We met with the deans of education to talk about these very kind of important subjects. They were very responsive. It was a very good dialogue, and the member will know that either pre-service teachers or teachers currently teaching in our classrooms today will have access to increased supports to ensure that they can provide the best education possible.

Mr. Ewasko: What First Nations, Metis, or Inuit groups or organizations are we consulting with to ensure that the framework is established by the 2016 school year, and will those groups also be consulted to ensure it's updated every three years?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that there was an extensive consultation done, both in the development of the draft framework and in the development of the legislation. The department itself has done extensive consultations within the education community.

* (15:00)

And, Mr. Speaker, if the member, as I know he did, looked at the policy framework he would note that the consultations have occurred with: elders; the education director advisory council; the Advanced Education Training and Literacy Aboriginal Advisory Council; as well as education stakeholders like MTS and MSPA; First Nation, Metis and Inuit education partners; MFNERC; and the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol; First Nation, Metis and Inuit Education Council.

So the framework has been developed in very, very extensive consultation with all of our partners in the education system, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, as the—as it's renewed every three years, consultation dialogue—the heart of reconciliation—will certainly occur as long as this government's in power.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I—just following that up, I wonder if the minister would table some of the consultation documents and the inputs that was received.

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, that input, that consultation is reflected in the framework itself, and I invite the member for River Heights to go online—although, I know, I think we've given it to him as well—but to go online, have a look at the framework, the essence of consultation is frankly reflected in the document itself. He needs to read it very closely, come to terms with what it is that we're—what we're working on, the things we're going to be doing to produce—to promote better outcomes for indigenous children in our education system. And I hope with that we'll have his support on this bill.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I would ask the minister whether he would tell us in a little bit more detail the process for establishing the curriculum moving forward, what sort of partnerships with individuals in the First Nation, Metis and Inuit community are present and will be used in terms of building the curriculum and making sure that it's relevant and appropriate and substantial for First Nation, Metis and Inuit people.

Mr. Allum: Well, I thank the member for River Heights for that question.

As I just indicated to the member from Lac du Bonnet, the consultations have been quite extensive in this regard. As I that said that—there have been consultations with elders, with the Aboriginal Education Directorate Advisory Council, the Advanced Education Training and Literacy Aboriginal Advisory Council, as well as Education

stakeholders like MGS, MSBA, First Nation, Metis and Inuit education partners, as well as others.

And then in my own office, we've met with Fred Ford and Rachel Duchon-Dutton of the Manitoba Inuit Association; the deans of education at the U of M, U of W, Brandon University and UCM; Daman Johnson of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg; the Treaty Relations Commissioner of Manitoba Jamie Wilson, I refer to him as the big Jamie, Mr. Speaker; President Chartrand and Minister Joan Ledoux of the Manitoba Metis Federation; Grand Chief Nepinak, Dennis White Bird and Louis Harper from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs; Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson from MKO; and Grand Chief Terry Nelson, along with Dolores Day and Lorne Keeper from the Southern Chiefs' Organization.

So I—just to suggest to the member that we've done very extensive consultations on the framework, on developing the curriculum, on continuing to ensure indigenous children get the supports they need so that they can be successful learners.

Mr. Ewasko: So is that—the curriculum that you're developing is that going to be mandatory across all K-to-12 grades? And what types of checks and balances is the minister putting in place to make sure that it is actually getting implemented?

Mr. Allum: Well, I think the member knows that the Truth and Reconciliation was very prescriptive on this manner—matter. There had to be mandatory elements of whether it's the treaty relationship, whether it's residential schools, whether it's just really, Mr. Speaker, and the historian in me needs to say this, whether this is the history and culture of indigenous peoples going back over multiple generations in this part of the continent.

So I would say to the member that, of course, there will be elements that will be mandatory. But, in the first instance, in the spirit of reconciliation, we know and expect that educators across Manitoba will embrace this bill, embrace the framework and do the work of reconciliation that needs to be done in our communities.

Mr. Ewasko: And being an educator myself, during a few years of this NDP government's rule, I've often seen a lot of talk and not a whole lot of action, Mr. Speaker. So, in regards to this curriculum and he's saying how, you know, in the spirit of reconciliation I see a lot of possible intent on getting something done, but then dropping the ball as they continue to roll it out. So I'm not having a whole lot

of faith in this government, and I ask the minister if he has heard of the curriculum document, Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into the curriculum?

Mr. Allum: Well, gee, Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed to hear that the member doesn't have any faith in this government when it comes to these issues. In fact, this side of the House are leaders when it comes to the spirit of reconciliation and whether—and when it comes to the acts of reconciliation. Not so long ago the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stood up and apologized for the '60 scoop and, in fact, the Leader of the Opposition didn't stand up and offer his same apology for that particular and terrible event in our own collective history.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that he ought to have confidence in what we're doing in the sense that not only will it be built into school division planning, but also into school division reporting as well. We'll be holding a very tight rein on this matter when it comes to ensuring that both the spirit and intent of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Manitoba is taken to the ultimate limit in order to ensure there's peace in our time.

Mr. Ewasko: Since the minister failed to answer my question, I'll ask him again: Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into the curriculum is a curriculum document which was delivered to the K-to-12 secondary—or education world, and just wondering if he has read the document.

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly sure what the member's question is in all of that. That was a little unclear to me.

I want to remind him what we're talking about here is the First Nation, Metis and Inuit education framework, which will enhance the relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples going forward because we'll begin the process of education right from the very early years, right on through the K-to-12 system.

And I'll also remind him, as well, that our post-secondary institutions have also been leaders when it comes to indigenous education. Not so long ago—I think it was in December—all of our institutions in addition to the school boards signed the indigenous education blueprint, which showed their good faith in ensuring that the spirit and intent of reconciliation is followed in this—and followed in

this province from cradle all the way through to career.

Mr. Ewasko: The document I'm speaking about was actually published in 2003 and, as you know, I'm hoping that this intent does move forward. But being an educator within the education system that this government is—has had the reins on, that particular document has actually had the Cellophane on the curriculum document for many, many years, and with no guidelines or implications to any teachers or any advice on how to deliver the document. It basically was printed, put out there as—in Cellophane.

And so with that, I would like to know that—what's the minister's budgetary item in the so-called budget that they're not going to table, but some sort of draft financial statement that they're going to put, for the implementation of this framework document?

Mr. Allum: It's interesting that the member seems to have no indication of what we're doing in terms of our investments in indigenous education. In fact, at the beginning of January, we had a very comprehensive education announcement from not only kindergarten all the way through to our post-secondary institutions. Within that there was, Mr. Speaker, a considerable increase to the Aboriginal Academic Achievement Grant, over \$9 million now. As I told the member during question period, and perhaps he wasn't listening, \$500,000 has been dedicated to transitional services for kids coming off reserve into the public education system, \$375,000 being invested in the Martin education initiative, which has shown to have good outcomes in other places.

Mr. Speaker, we not only walk the walk, we talk the talk on this side of the House. Every time that we've put forward these kinds of investments, the members voted against it.

Mr. Ewasko: So I straightforwardly asked what the budget line number or item was going to be on this framework. I know that there is no technical budget, and the minister stands up and says that there is a budget or there isn't a budget, and maybe he should have a sidebar conversation with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) to find out exactly what that is or what he should be staying.

*(15:10)

So, Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to ask the minister is if he could be clearer on that point, on—specifically, could the implementation of this bill, Bill 13, working with the framework committee and

the various organizations, making sure that the framework is established by the 2016 school year and making sure that it's updated every three years, what's the allotted estimated budget for this process?

Mr. Allum: This side of the House and this government has made incredible investments in education in the K-to-12 sector, in the post-secondary sector as well. We want to be sure that kids get a great education here in Manitoba, and that includes indigenous education. That's why we're—have put together this framework. That's why we're making sure that indigenous students feel comfortable, included and have the kind of supports they need. That's why I referred to the academic achievement award that's upwards over \$9 million. That's why I referred to the \$500,000 for transition services. That's why I referred to the \$375,000 to support the Martin Aboriginal indigenous education achievement process.

But, Mr. Speaker, really, what does it matter for this member? Every time we do these kinds of investments, he votes against it. The member from Steinbach votes against it. In fact, the member from Fort Whyte votes against it. They don't support any of this stuff. Let's be honest about that.

Mr. Speaker: Time for questions on this second reading of this bill has elapsed.

Is there any further debate?

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today and put a few words on the record regarding Bill 13, The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework).

I know that the minister stood up and crowed a little bit, patted himself on the back for coming forward with this bill and standing on his soapbox and pretending that he's an advocate and a voice of reason for our Aboriginal education and for our Manitoba students.

And what I see, Mr. Speaker, is, again, a whole lot of talk and not a whole lot of action. And results—when we talk about results, I know that the minister feels that he doesn't care about results. Well, when you don't care about results, you actually don't show that you're actually caring.

He talks about the Triple A, the Aboriginal Academic Achievement Grant, and, you know, I just can look back in January's Auditor General's report on the Triple A, and, basically, the Auditor General

says that there are gaps in the department's support for the delivery of the Aboriginal education initiatives in school divisions.

How—the department allocated 33 per cent of its 2014-15 Triple A funding to six divisions, with plans that it considered noncompliant, with stated requirements, Mr. Speaker. So, to me, this is showing that, again, as the Auditor General, as I mentioned in question period today, stated that there does—that there seems to be a lack of leadership on the government side when it comes to Aboriginal education and for making sure that we've got our checks and balances and the results are getting accomplished.

Before I go further into this bill, I would like to just mention that because it is February and it was I Love to Read Month, I had the pleasure of, as many of my colleagues on this side of the House, had the pleasure of going around to various K-to-12 institutions around the province and doing—and reading to the various youth I Love to Read Month. I had the pleasure of going to a few schools in my own constituency, and all within the school division that I had taught in just—it's coming up to five years ago already, Mr. Speaker. How time flies when we're having fun.

But the days of opposition is shortly coming to an end here before April 19th, and then we'll be—we've got a lot of work to do yet, Mr. Speaker, but it's something that we're definitely looking forward to. And I know that many Manitobans are going around the province. I know that many Manitobans are also tired of the NDP way of, you know, paying more and getting less for their hard-earned tax dollars, and they're looking for a change. And that is encouraging. But, again, I'm hesitant to, and I often tell people that we cannot become complacent and we have to continue working hard and delivering a new plan, a new plan for this great province of ours in regards to education, health care and many other of the streams within the government's purview.

I know that the hard work of teachers and the students and our administration, parents being involved in the education world, I know that they're also looking for a change, because, Mr. Speaker, I know that within the last 16, 17 years of NDP government, it is time for a change. And we've seen the tired ways of this government. They're no longer working as a team, as an effective unit. And you need to have that effective team and cohesion within the group to be able to work, especially in this great

province of ours in Manitoba. And there's obviously a lot of work that has to be done.

What First Nations and Metis and Inuit groups and organizations that have been consulted on this framework, Mr. Speaker? We—I asked a few questions just a few minutes ago in regards to some of the budget and some of the consultations, and I know the member from River Heights had also asked for some evidence in regards to how those consultation processes had happened and asked for some anecdotal notes from those meetings. And I know the minister stood up and basically said, well, read the framework document, read the framework document.

Well, we know, you know, being involved in various other sectors within the province, we've seen plans come forward, draft plans come forward, and then they've had public consultations, and within those public consultations, you know, they take down the notes and then they go back, and sometimes that draft document comes back to the groups that they've actually had consultations with, and sometimes it hasn't, Mr. Speaker.

And so I think what the member from River Heights was basically asking was how do we know that this government is actually listening to what those people have had to say. We won't actually know. We'll just see a framework document, and we're—and what are we supposed to do? We're supposed to take the minister at his word for saying, well, believe me, this is what people wanted and asked for and we put it into the framework document?

Well, we know how that's worked in the past for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. We just can rewind the clock a mere four and a half years ago in regards to the 2011 election when this Minister of Education and 56 of his friends on the NDP side went door to door and, basically, asking people for their support and their vote in the 2011 election. And they promised, he promised, as well as many of his other colleagues, promised to not raise taxes, not raise the PST. And the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is on record on even that, you know, maybe one of his so-called candid or in camera type of media consultations, as they were saying earlier today, that a confidential and invite-only media press or whatever else—it was sort of interesting today. And so the Premier actually mentioned that it was ludicrous to think that his government was going to raise taxes. And we know for a fact that in a mere six short months after the

election, they actually went and they expanded the PST on various goods and services that each and every hard-working Manitoban cannot do without.

But they didn't stop there. They didn't bring in enough money that—in 2012—to cover their spending addiction, Mr. Speaker. What they ended up doing was they went—in 2013 they decided to ignore the legislation that basically had Manitobans vote on any type of a provincial sales tax increase, and they decided to do away with that, ignore it. They kyboshed it, and by doing so they went ahead and raised the PST by 1 point or, actually, 14 per cent.

* (15:20)

And I know to them, the NDP MLAs and their Cabinet ministers and the Premier, they felt that that 14 per cent increase or that 1 point on the PST was not going to—not too many people was going to see, but is actually hurting people right in their back pocket. And, with that, we've committed, as the Progressive Conservative Party, and after the April 19th upcoming provincial election that we're going to roll back the PST to 7 per cent within the first term.

Now, back to Bill 13, in regards to The Education Administration Amendment Act, we know that they've had 16 years of—16 and going on 17 years of failed policies under this current government. And, as I've mentioned many times before, we've seen the evidence of their talking without any type of action and any type of accountability and transparency on exactly some of the things that they've promising to deliver.

Earlier this year, as I mentioned in question period today, the—Manitoba's Auditor General released a scathing report of the Selinger government's record on graduation rates among our Aboriginal population. The report found that only 55 per cent of Aboriginals are graduating from high school, nowhere near the rate among non-Aboriginals, Mr. Speaker. That's a 2 per cent decrease since 2010. Not only is this a problem and how it's getting worse, it has been on the steady decline.

So I don't quite understand when the minister stands up once again, as he did a mere 11, 12 minutes ago, and pat himself on the back for the great work that he feels that his government is doing. I beg to question, what have they been doing in the last 17 years? He talks about this bill will develop and encourage his government to be more transparent. Well, why does he need this bill to do

that? That's telling me that he is 'mitting'—admitting some guilt, and he's having some feelings of maybe not being all that—his government not being all that truthful to Manitobans. So it is discouraging that now, after all these years of inaction, we're supposed to believe him that they're actually going to get some results done.

I know that the minister decided to go on a fear-mongering rant during his speech and, instead of speaking about the good things and that, he's speaking about some of the fallacies that our government and our plan for a better Manitoba that we're rolling out, you know, maybe not, you know, as vibrantly and with taxpayers' dollars as they are. And they don't have a plan to show for it, but yet they're going out on their soapboxes and touring around the province promising the world and hoping that—they're hoping that Manitobans are going to forget a lot of the broken promises that were done in the last election. And I don't think that Manitobans are going to be fooled again, Mr. Speaker.

We know that since 2004, that the Auditor General found the NDP government has bragged about the amount of money it spends on education, yet the results are simply not there. According to the AG, the implementation plan was weak, quote, unquote. If you care about people, if you care about their future, you have to care about the results. And we're not seeing that with this government or this minister. But it's a typical approach by this current government: spend without action. We continue—hard-working Manitobans continue to pay more and get less. They continue to put their head in the sand and hope that the problems will just go away.

We believe that education is critical to finding success, but yet this government has shown minimal effort and action in addressing this issue for our indigenous community.

For a government that claims to have not always gotten it right and have had your interests and the interests of our Aboriginal community at heart, this government sure has a dismal record of action on ensuring our province's indigenous people are getting the education they deserve. If you care, and if you truly care, you have to care about the results, again, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Jennifer Howard, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

But failure in education is nothing new for this current government. I know that in the last few years that we've been watching the PISA and PCAP scores

in—within not only Manitoba, but also in Canada and international results. And we're finding in Canada that Manitoba, once a leader—once a leader—in this great country of ours, in Canada, we actually have dropped from a leader in Canada. Manitoba was—it was in the top three to absolutely dead last. And this last report they've actually gone even worse than that. They've gotten even worse in math and literacy and also in science. And it's a record that I believe that this government is going to see, come April 19th, that Manitobans are tired of exactly their tax-and-spend policies without any results. *[interjection]*

And I know the member from Selkirk is saying that this is arrogance saying it. But, in fact, into various doors across this great province of ours, and what the arrogance is is the fact that the NDP government and their members feel that it's okay to go to door to door and make various promises all across this great province of ours without really having a plan to be able to accomplish any of them.

I know that, as I had mentioned, the PISA and PCAP scores, they're only a tool, and we know that if you're doing the right things, you know, as something like our leader, the member from Fort Whyte, has mentioned on more than one occasion, we're going to drive a read-to-succeed policy. And, basically, what that's going to do is create the environment and the foundation so that we can see those test scores later on with PISA and PCAP actually start to turn around, so that maybe we could once again see Manitoba as a leader in the country.

And I know that the members across the way had mentioned that, you know, PISA and PCAP, I mean, they only started testing them in 2002, but the fact is, Madam Acting Speaker, is that our results on those scores in 2002 were actually students who had seen their entire education delivered to them by the Filmon government. And so we were an actual leader at that point in time, and then the dark 16 going on 17 years and hopefully coming to an abrupt halt this coming April, we've seen an absolute steady decrease, decline in those results. And we've seen us go—drop to absolutely 10th and, in fact, we've gotten further away from ninth as we move on.

So I know that Manitobans are screaming for change, and we're going to be seeing that, again, in the next couple months. And I know that the member from Morden-Winkler had asked the Finance Minister in regards to tabling a budget or which way he's basically going to go with that, and I know that

it's a little bit of a lack. I—maybe somebody needs a hand with some kind—*[interjection]*—of cell service in—issue in the House today, Madam Acting Speaker; I'm hearing things from the government side.

So to just carry on with the fact that our scores have declined and when the Canadian average has actually gone up. The Canadian average has gone up, but our reading scores in this province have gone down, and so we need to focus and help our—not only our Aboriginal students in this great province of ours, but absolutely all of our Manitoba students.

* (15:30)

I know that the Minister of Education doesn't entirely understand how the PISA and PCAP tests are administered and what basically it means when they're talking how the minister pats himself on the back stating that 86 per cent of our students are achieving at their grade level, and that's what he says but it's not really grade level. In fact, it's on a certain scale that basically shows that 86 per cent of our students are meeting a certain level and that certain level is where the bar really isn't very high, Madam Acting Speaker. It really, in fact, is basically able to take—students are able to take three sets of numbers in the numeracy part of it and add them together with a calculator. So to me that's not really something to be jumping up and down about and, in fact, even at that we're still sitting tenth overall.

We, on this side of the House, have consistently called for action by this NDP government on the most pressing issues that impact our children and youth. We believe in a brighter future for our children. We understand that all youth in all parts of Manitoba and no matter where they live or their race, sex, gender, sexual orientation or culture must be given equal opportunities for the best quality education in early years and later; cradle to career, Madam Acting Speaker.

Manitoba's Progressive Conservatives are focused on ensuring our students score better on national and international tests, and we want all of our youth to know there are meaningful opportunities in Manitoba for them. We know that we rank and we are leaders in the country again for out-migration of people from this province, of our youth.

I had a conversation with a gentleman as early as this morning and he is in his early 80s and he was talking about how—he was bragging to me about his kids and how he had seven kids, boys and girls,

obviously not an equal mix but three boys and four girls. And he was telling me on how and where they all—what are they are doing for their careers and where they're living. And of his seven children—and one, unfortunately, has passed—but of the six that are still remaining with us on this earth, four are actually practising their careers or living and raising their families and having their careers outside of Manitoba.

And to me, Madam Acting Speaker, that is part of our problem here in this province. We are seeing the fact that people are seeing opportunities for them outside of this province, and I think that is another really good example for us to step in as the government-in-waiting, to come in with our various policies and ideas to put Manitoba back on the right track.

We want to see more children graduating from high school and able to find the supports they need to be able to do so. We want to see all of our young people enabled to access post-secondary education. That is why, in partnership with Manitobans, we will strengthen scholarship and bursary programs with special attention to low-income, rural and northern students. The Progressive Conservatives want all of our young people to fully participate in shaping a better future for themselves because in doing so they will shape a better future for all of us.

This is why we have committed to work in partnership with the federal government to ensure that Canada makes the necessary funding investments to provide educational resources to First Nations communities at an equivalent level to those enjoyed by non-Aboriginal communities. We've seen time and time again this Minister of Education and his members on his side of the House stand up and point fingers at the past federal government, the Harper government, when I really don't feel that those relationships were ever built, Madam Acting Speaker. I don't see why, if it was a Conservative government at the federal level, a Liberal government or an NDP government—I mean, heaven help us I guess if we ever see an NDP government at the federal level, but it could happen.

But have they ever picked up the phone and spoken to the minister in charge of funding education from the federal level? And have they had that conversation in regards to increasing the funding and the checks and balances to our Aboriginal communities? I don't think so.

They say now that, you know, now that there's a Liberal federal government that they're going to have the door wide open and they're going to actually make those connections. But it's a little too late, Madam Acting Speaker.

They—we have committed that we are going to be working with the federal government, again, to ensure that our First Nations communities have the resources they need, the education resources they need to help them out with their graduation rates and also just a plethora of additional challenges that they encounter each and every day.

We've also committed to partner with the City of Winnipeg, local governments, community groups and First Nations and Metis leaders to expand economic and social opportunities.

Manitoba's Progressive Conservatives are looking out for our children and youth, and are the—and for the public servants who are so critical in educating and shaping the minds of our children and youth. Our front-line teachers face more challenges today in our school systems than they ever have. The tasks teachers have are as important to our future as they ever were. That is why the PCs are committed to creating a confident work environment for all front-line workers, including our teachers.

Again, Madam Acting Speaker, we support the education success of First Nations, Metis and Inuit students. We believe in the importance that all Manitoba students learn about the histories of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples. That is why, Madam Acting Speaker, when I brought up in the first set of questions that we can bring forward to this bill, Bill 13, today, I had asked the minister in regards to integrating Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum, which was a document which was published in 2003, and, with my many years of working on the Aboriginal Academic Achievement committee for Sunrise School Division, I feel that this government really has not done its due diligence.

And, as we've heard from the Auditor General—what did we hear from the Auditor General? We had heard that this government is actually lacking the leadership when it comes to the delivery of the K-to-12 Aboriginal perspectives and education.

So, and this is why we feel that this bill really speaks to the admission by this minister and his government of the last 17 years of failures and should be building on successes, but, in fact, this bill is there to try and build some of those bridges that I

really strongly feel have been broken by this government with our various indigenous, Metis and Aboriginal and First Nations, Inuit peoples communities to the degree where I know that with a new plan, a better plan come April 19th, that we can work together with all stakeholders and all the communities and make educating not only our Aboriginal students but also all Manitoba students within Manitoba better, and that's what we strive for.

So we are going to see this bill proceed to committee, and I know that there's a few members still in the—within the Chamber that would like to put a few words on the record.

So, with that, I thank you for your time, Madam Acting Speaker, and I'll turn the floor over to other members.

Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: I'd like to speak, actually, fairly briefly on this legislation. It is important legislation.

I want to begin by thanking all those who contributed to bringing this legislation to the point where it is and to have contributed and will be contributing to the policy framework which has been put together, and which will now see the curriculum itself and the teaching, including in a much more active fashion, understanding of First Nation, Metis and Inuit peoples.

* (15:40)

The history of the importance of education goes back many, many, many years, centuries. The establishment or the recognition that education was a fundamental human right in the United Nations in the late 1940s clearly set the stage for what we have today. And, clearly, as part of that fundamental human right to an education it's essential to have an education that incorporates the knowledge, teaching experience, understandings and history of the people of our country, Canada, and nowhere is that more important than when we're talking about the First Nation and Metis and Inuit people who have lived in territory that is now Canada for thousands of years.

Certainly, in the last year the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has emphasized, once again, the importance of education which respects and which teaches the history of indigenous people in Canada and includes things like a reference to and understanding of what happened in the residential schools and the '60s scoop and at other periods of our history, but also it's important to have

education which provides an understanding of the many, many positive contributions that have been made by indigenous people to Canada.

I want to just mention a couple of things in talking about this bill. The United Nation declaration on the rights of indigenous people emphasized, and I quote, that indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, providing education in their own languages in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

I am pleased that this will include reference to languages. I look forward to understanding the extent to which Aboriginal languages will be used in the schools and learned and taught as vibrant and active languages as they should be.

I think it is good that we are proceeding with this bill now. Clearly, things have been slow in many ways in getting us to this point. I remember, for example, in the late 1960s being at a First Nation school. It was in northern Saskatchewan, and the teacher there was telling me that they didn't have material which adequately reflected the lived experience of young people growing up in the community. They had books on skyscrapers and cows and things like that, but neither of those were present anywhere near their community, and since then there has been considerable improvement in the availability of material which is relevant to the lived experience of kids growing up in communities throughout Manitoba, and, hopefully, this will continue and encourage the development of more materials on this curriculum.

So, even though this is now being presented in the 17th year of this government, it is good that we are here. It is good that many have been involved and I look forward to this bill going forward to committee and becoming law as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Seeing no other—oh, the member for Morden-Winkler.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and have the opportunity to put some words on the record with respect to Bill 13.

I thank the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) for his comments and I listened carefully to the exchange between he and the Education Minister earlier on this bill, and I have

also had the opportunity to, of course, read the bill and familiarize myself with the content, but also to go through the Auditor General's recent chapter that that office released improving educational outcomes for kindergarten to grade 12 Aboriginal students.

And it's compelling the work that has been done by the Auditor General's office. It's important work for our entire province, both for Aboriginal communities and for all Manitobans.

I can recall being at a Business Council of Manitoba, the Manitoba Business Council, which actually was started by Jim Carr, who is now an MP in Ottawa. I believe that was Jim Carr at the helm in the earliest days of that Winnipeg-based business group, about a year and a half ago, and I don't know, Madam Acting Speaker, you may have also been at this same set of lectures that took place here in Winnipeg at the Fort Garry Hotel. I believe that the title of that seminar was called: Manitoba—something like—looking back now and looking forward. That might not be the exact title.

But I remember during the course of that two-day set of meetings, we had a chance to meet and hear from leaders from all over Canada on various issues important to Manitoba. I can recall Jean Charest coming to speak about education. I can recall hearing Chief Justice Murray Sinclair coming to speak on educational issues for Aboriginal students in Manitoba, Aboriginal, indigenous, Metis and Inuit. And he made a comment that stuck with me at the time. It was his comment. It might not have been one that he—a phrase he coined, but it was a phrase he used, and he said that education is the new buffalo. And that stuck with me. I hadn't heard the phrase before. And more recently, after that time, I believe it was the treaty commissioner, Jamie Wilson, here in the province of Manitoba, who commented on that and said, he challenged that and said, perhaps education is the new arrow. And both of those comments were interesting to me.

When you think back to what we understand before the arrival of western Europeans, before the arrival of some of those first explorers, before the arrival of those first trappers and those traders who entered into business and trade agreements with First Nations and Inuit communities here on these very prairies, on these plains, on these treaty lands where we are today, and, when you think back to that time, and that the—those communities, those first communities were reliant on the buffalo or the bison—we called them the great, you know, the plains

bison, of course, their main source of food, main source of clothing, and the main source for all of what they needed—and how, right now, in this context, you have the chief justice and the individual who led the truth and justice commission, that individual referring to education as that new chief resource for First Nations communities. And I couldn't agree more. When I heard the comment, it stuck with me. There was—that comment resonated in the room at that conference I attended. And it continues to resonate with me now.

Mistress—Madam Acting Speaker, this bill that comes today, as I was reading through it previous to today, it strikes me that this is not a bill that should be on the Order Paper in the dying days of a 12-day mini-session following 17 years of continuous NDP government. It strikes me that, if this was something that was at the heart of their ideology, if this was something that was at the heart of their policy, if this was something that was at the centre of their thinking about ways to improve Aboriginal education and, indeed, to improve what we all know and understand about our shared history, that this should have been on an Order Paper in 2000 or 2001 or 2002. And I grow impatient when I hear members of this government say that somehow now everything has become the priority, and it is up to the PC Party to make sure that everything passes without any kind of reasonable debate.

Well, Madam Acting Speaker, I would say to you that we have a responsibility as an opposition party, and it is a responsibility not to this government but to the people of Manitoba, to provide the context for debate and discussion in this Chamber, to connect with the same third-party groups that the Minister of Education says that he has connected with.

* (15:50)

And I would say to that minister that he owes more than just lip service to members like the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), when he says, can we also have access to the full amount of information contained in the public consultation? And he essentially says, no, but trust us; we have your best interest at heart. We've heard that before from these government members.

What—Madam Deputy Speaker, if this was a bill that the NDP thought was a bill of substance, they should have brought it far sooner because I can guarantee you we've had lots of opportunities since I was elected in 2011 to be able to give our full attention to a bill like this. The problem is right now

there are 17 bills on this Order Paper, 17 bills and 12 days of sitting before the law would provide the opportunity for the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to dissolve this Legislature and proceed to an election. And I would say that time is not our friend on this matter. These are substantive matters.

And I'm sorry if I'm being impassioned, but I can recall having a conversation with—well, many people on this topic, but one that stands in my mind right now is a conversation that I had with a former MLA in this place. And you will know the name: Mr. David Newman. And Mr. Newman has worked, like so many others in this province, hard on this issue for many, many years, championing various causes pertaining to education in our province, pertaining to the disparity in graduation rates and trying to address these matters within our communities in Manitoba. And I remember him saying, you know, you can never get at substantive repairs to the status quo, when in the Indian Act there is about one page that is designated to the delivery of education on reserve, and we know that we have an entire—we have sets of acts in Manitoba for students who are not on reserve. And I would say, Madam Acting Speaker, we can't get at the heart of the matter until we begin to address some of these most substantive issues underlying this disparity.

I remember when I was first elected in this place, one of the first roles that I held as a critic was—well, I believe it was the first role I had. It was the Education critic. And one day as I was talking to a policy analyst trying to familiarize myself with this file, and we all have those moments when we're cast into a new role and we're meeting with officials and we're meeting with special assistants. We're trying to get our head around what it means, and we're also trying to understand where the ditches are. We're trying to understand what is within our responsibility and what somebody else's responsibility is. And I asked a question, I guess naïve now, about Aboriginal graduation rates in the province of Manitoba. And my assistant turned to me and said, there's no available information on that subject. And I'm looking at the data that shows that we have a significant part of our population that is First Nations, Metis, Inuit. I'm looking at the decline in educational graduation rates, and there's no information available on the subject.

We can't begin to have an honest debate, an honest exchange about the disparity in graduation rates while we don't even have the framework. We don't even have a commitment to address the

fundamental lack of connectivity between what we do on reserve for education and what we do off reserve for education, and it frustrates me. It has frustrated me for four years.

And what frustrates me more is when I look at the Auditor General's report, this report, improving educational outcomes for kindergarten to grade 12—I was a teacher for 12 years. I taught in three school divisions. I taught primarily music: concert band, jazz band, big band styles. But I also taught French; I taught English; I taught some social studies. And I recall all of my courses in education that stressed assessment, evaluation and outcomes. There's no more important topic—there are many topics when you study education—but no more important topic when it comes to how to understand, how to assess individuals. We have criteria. We have curriculum. We have methods that we use to approach this curriculum. We have lesson plans that make up unit plans. We take all of this and we put it in practice in a classroom. We proceed with our learners from this position. We used to call it—in French classes we used to call it the *champ d'expérience*.

We would proceed from the field of experience of the learner, and then we would try to bridge into what they do not know, always revisiting what they know and then, at the end, assessing how did they do, how did they do with the material we presented. How are we going to know how they did if we're not assessing these learners? And we learn a myriad of ways of how to assess, how to measure, how to quantify and to do so with a great degree of fairness and openness and transparency, and then, as teachers, we are called upon to make public those tools of assessment. We do that to the students in our classroom. We make those things public to our administrators and to the school division. We, of course, make them public to the parents and to the school board officials and we do so for everyone's benefit. It is because there is a fundamental belief that this will—that they have a right to know how they did against these measured criteria.

And it frustrates me when I look at the Auditor General's report that there seems to be so little commitment coming back from the minister to get into it, to roll up his sleeves and seek to understand, to call this something other than success first of all. But then to actually get into it and say these are huge challenges facing us. None of us will succeed as a province if so many of us are not succeeding individually. And I'm seeing reasonable recommendations by the AG office for things like

leadership and to develop mechanisms to ensure a greater focus on planning and implementing initiatives, and the department says we'll continue to do this.

And the next recommendation is that all of these methods we're implementing will be based on comprehensive understanding of what's under way and what's not yet being done. The response is we're regularly meeting. And it talks about addressing specifically this gap in graduation rates—55 per cent graduation rate in the Aboriginal communities, First Nation, Metis, Inuit communities, and I'm not seeing anywhere in the document, nor have I heard from this minister a frank honesty, a willingness to really wrestle with the scope and size of this challenge that faces all of us as Manitobans and say our methods have been insufficient. Our resolve to address these things has been lacking. Those tests that we have put out to see how we're doing have been insufficient. None of this is occurring, and, Madam Acting Speaker, I would say it needs to occur.

Indeed, that is the lesson if any lesson is to be learned from the Auditor General's report. It's clear in this report we should be setting the standard for what works in education. We should be setting the standard—oh, and I can hear the minister chirping in the background, but I'm reading right now from an editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and, really, the premise is this: If we have the greatest percentage of our population in Manitoba that is First Nation, indigenous population, and if we have the greatest percentage of students who are not graduating from high school, we should have the greatest number of commitments, of initiatives, of projects that all proceed in the same direction of narrowing and closing the gap, but we don't.

We get language from the minister, and we get, you know, a kind of a willingness to consult, which is great; it's all good. But what is needed in this case is honesty, probably an apology as well. We've heard some half-hearted apologies in the last week or so from the Premier (Mr. Selinger), but we need an apology that says what we have been doing has not been working.

* (16:00)

Madam Acting Speaker, this editorial from the *Winnipeg Free Press* in January talks about how to attack the embarrassing gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal graduation rates, and I would stress, like my colleague from Lac du Bonnet did, that these are graduation rates that are going in the wrong

direction. At least, if we could show some measure of progress, we could say, listen, we just need to accelerate. We need to torque our methods. We need to double down; we need to do more.

But we can't say that because while Saskatchewan and Alberta and, I believe, BC are actually making progress, we are going in the wrong direction. And that's why I become frustrated when I read the response of departmental officials who will have their opinion informed in large part by the Minister of Education over there.

The minister is fundamentally responsible. He will be responsible—I'm sure that from a nuts-and-bolts perspective he reviews all of the departmental responses to the AG office. I'm sure that his office is primarily involved in this. So please understand when I talk about my disappointment. I'm not talking about disappointment with civil servants who are working hard in the Department of Education, many of whom I know. I'm talking about a fundamental disappointment right there with the minister who guides and writes and creates these responses, responses that say we're working, we're trying, we're continuing to do this.

I would suggest that—wasn't it Albert Einstein who said that the definition of insanity is to continue to do the same thing over and over with failing results and believe that somehow you will get a different result? The Auditor General goes here. The Auditor General is not silent on this matter because what he says in the report—and if the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), he would listen, he'd actually find this interesting—the Auditor General says you don't have to reinvent the wheel. He says that other jurisdictions are getting this right. He says that there is marked progress being made in other provinces.

I always say as a policy maker, and we are all legislators here, the first place we should go looking is other jurisdictions. I guess we could say the first place we go looking is our own backyard, of course.

We say, what are we doing here? Because there is no one-size-fits-all, we know that. We understand that any policies that work in Quebec may not work here. Policies that work in BC may not work here. We ask ourselves what we're doing here. But, hopefully, we then look around to our neighbours and say, hey, what are you doing?

I enjoy my opportunities to go to conferences or to meet with legislators from other jurisdictions,

Canadian, American, from Commonwealth nations all over the world, whenever we get those opportunities, online and reading articles in journals because usually we're here. But, in any case, it's exciting to see when ideas are implemented—you say we could do this here. We could do this.

Or we're proud to share something that we're doing and we'll all believe that there are areas in which we're making progress and we can say to other jurisdictions, would you like some help with that because we have some expertise in this area?

My goodness, Madam Deputy Speaker, you and I would agree that one of the areas, and you've seen it in your area of Fort Rouge, I've seen it in my area of Morden-Winkler, one of the areas we'd agree is the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, a program that has been largely responsible for not just bringing cheap, short-term labour to Manitoba but for welcoming newcomers to our communities here and saying we want you to be citizens. We want you, sure, to work at these jobs, but we want you to settle here. We want you to come here with our families. We want to learn about you. We want you to learn about us.

I had the opportunity at Morden's Winterfest last week to meet one of the newest Syrian refugee families in Morden-Winkler, and we had no conversation because they had forgotten their interpreter and I don't speak their language and they don't speak mine. And yet it's always amazing what you can share with an iPad or what you can share with just gestures. They're so happy to be here and we're so happy to have them here. And it is so humbling to think that we, in the richness of this western nation with all the blessings we enjoy in this nation, we have this opportunity right now to be able to help a few, and we should avail ourselves of that opportunity. That's exciting to me.

We're getting it right on MPNP in many respects. Is there more we can do? Absolutely. That program has changed a lot since it was introduced by people like our own—oh, I can't say their name but the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) and other former members of this Legislature who brought that program in the late '90s—I was pleased to see the NDP party see the value in that program and continue it.

In the same way, far more is needed here. It's why the Auditor General says we haven't even done the basic work in identifying the barriers that face First Nations Aboriginal children, Metis children, in

schools. We haven't done the basics, and really the criticism here, from the AG's office, we must receive it and we must seek to understand it. He says that the plans that this government has brought through this Education Minister, but primarily his predecessors, have been vague and poorly thought out, programs that lacked direction, programs with no short-term targets.

Oh, my goodness, as educators, we would never have been able to defend any lesson plan that did not include how are you going to measure student achievement? How are you going to measure student knowledge in this area? It's the basic part of the lesson plan. For our departments not to be doing this work is unthinkable, and this is what the Auditor General sets out: no specific budgets for overall efforts to boost graduation rates. You know, the leader of our party has a few stock phrases that he uses, and one of them I really like is when he says that you—if you aim at nothing, you will hit your target every time. If you aim at nothing, you'll hit your target. Sometimes, he says, it's like shooting the arrow and then going—running up and painting the bull's eye around wherever it hits.

But, you know, as funny as that sounds, it sounds a lot like our approach on this file. This is important work. So, when I read the Auditor General's report, yes, I was interested to see Bill 13 emerge out the other side, but we must understand that education of Manitobans about our shared history is only part of what the Auditor General recommends.

The other large, substantive part of this body of work is the principal exercise we must now take up to address the gap in educational achievement because I believe, just as I heard at that Manitoba Business Council gathering two years ago, I really believe that when it comes to First Nations populations, as it is true for everyone, as it is true for the new Canadians and the new residents to our province who are settling increasingly in my area and in the area that you represent, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is true that education is the way up. It's not a way up; it is the way up. Where I am, I can't think about where I would be today had teachers not believed in me and invested in me and given me opportunity. Each of us can point to educators. I'm thinking about our pages who are here in the Chamber today. I'm sure they could point to key educators who have gone that extra mile with them and said, hey, you know what? I believe in you.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you're going to soon be gone from this Chamber. I'm going to share a short story with you about an educator friend of mine. She since—she went on from Morden Collegiate where she had taught at the time. I was in a debating club in high school. She took me aside in grade 9 and said, you should join the debating club. And I was—you won't believe it; I was a very shy and inward grade 9er. I was not an extrovert. I was very self-conscious. I was very shy. And she said, you should join the debating team, and I was horrified. I joined the team, and we went to our very first debate in Portage la Prairie. And I know that's kind of stomping grounds because you're from Brandon.

We were at Portage. There was 80 debaters. The results came in at the end of the day, and they actually shared the results in those days. You actually put the results up. And I ranked 80th, bottom of the barrel. I was 80 out of 80, the very last debater. I still don't know what I did wrong, but it must've been terrible. I don't think I really understood what debating was all about. Maybe it was the tone. Maybe it was the content. Maybe it was the delivery. And who knows? You might argue that maybe I don't know very much about it, even now. But I always remember because on the ride home as a typical grade 9 morose, inward student, I said to my coach, I'm quitting the debating team. And she didn't 'hesitashe.' Her eyes were straight ahead, a bunch of us kids in the car. And she says, no, you aren't, and I'll see you Monday at practice.

Well, I'm stubborn. I didn't come to practice on Monday. And by Monday afternoon she had tracked me down, and she said, you're better than this. I don't care how you ranked; you've joined the debating club.

She was a great coach. In the course of four years, we went on to participate and debate, took on great schools with great programs: St. John's-Ravenscourt, Balmoral Hall, St. Mary's Academy, some—Kelvin High School. Just some great schools: St. Paul's High School, and there's so many more great high schools in Manitoba with great teams.

* (16:10)

For us from Morden Collegiate to be even in the same room with teams like this with coaches like John Robinson from St. John's, we were thrilled. Never would've been where I was at that point if it wasn't for a coach who had believed in me. And I

think we owe this now to all students in Manitoba. We've got to get this right. It's too important not to.

I'll say just a few brief comments about this because I would be remiss if I didn't say about Bill 13—is it important for all Manitobans to know about our shared history? It is indeed. This bill, it seeks to do a lot. And, as I said, Madam Deputy Speaker, I really believe that in a short session that will be marked with 17 bills that are supposed to be debated, we will not get—we will not get—to this in its entirety. We need to make good use of our time in here. And, of course, it will be up to the House leader for the government to decide what the priority will be. I am pleased to see this bill up to date. I am pleased to have discussed with the Education critic for my side and to have known that important conversations have taken place with stakeholder groups, with chiefs and First Nations communities, with council members, with educators on reserve and in Winnipeg, with school divisions, with school board officials, with parents, with students. This work is ongoing. But we need to get this right.

So the questions that have been asked today are all very, very pertinent. They are all very important. What does the framework mean? How often will it be revisited? How will this content be taught in classrooms? In which classrooms will it be taught? What additional training will teachers receive to teach the content? What is the responsibility that we have to apply these same things to advanced education? And I know that we have—we now have a framework agreement in place where five major post-secondary institutions have come on and said, we are expressing a fidelity to these same principles. This is good in principle. But we need much more education about how this is going to work out.

I don't want to say, too little, too late, because it's never too late. But I want to say that it is time that we got this right for the benefit of all the students in Manitoba. It is too important for us to leave any longer. It's time to take a good, hard look at the results of the Auditor General report. It's time to read between the lines. It's time to set meaningful criteria. It's time to tackle this challenge with all of the tenacity and ability that I know Manitobans have and get this right for the sake of all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It's a pleasure to say a few words this afternoon regarding this particular bill. I want to start by acknowledging you, Madam Deputy Speaker, as the MLA for Fort

Rouge, and I understand—I know you made your announcement that you won't be seeking re-election. Sometimes we have a bad habit as politicians to only say nice things about each other as opponents when we either are retiring or we've passed away, and that's not a good thing for us to do as politicians. You know that I've—have said in previous times, specific things—I think it was either in the law journal or the—under the Golden Boy publication that happens out of Robson Hall at the university—that I have great respect for you and particularly coming out of the summer of 2013, which I know many here don't want to recall. But it was certainly a difficult time for everyone. There's nobody here who didn't put in a sacrifice, including those who work here.

But, as House leaders, we had a unique role to be going through that summer. And people don't always realize that we spoke and met almost every day, not always about trying to resolve it to the exact end; sometimes it was just about what would be happening the next day. But, over that period of time, I grew in respect for you. I had respect for you before, but I really grew in respect for you, and I was glad that at the end of that sitting, which was September, October—the clerks don't want to remember either—I think that we came out with a good relationship. And I think it speaks to you in particular that that could happen over the course of a very, very difficult Legislative session.

I've told people in the past that I enjoy debates and I enjoy debating, and I think I can hold my own in most debates, but, in debating you, I always felt that I was in trouble and—because you're very, very skilled; you're very quick with a response, and I've always known that you know the issues well. And that speaks well of you. So I wish you well as you go on to Ottawa. I imagine if you'd have asked this Chamber three years ago what the odds are of you going to Ottawa now and me being in Manitoba, we might've had some good—it might've been—the odds would have been pretty good. But I really do wish you well. It's a beautiful city. They'll be better for you being there. And I know that we'll see you around sometime. I'm sure you'll visit Manitobans and maybe even visit the Legislature at some point. So I just want to acknowledge that, and I wish you well in all that you do in the future.

Now, turning back to this particular bill and the bill that we have before us, Madam Deputy Speaker. It was acknowledged by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) that we are celebrating I Love to Read Month in February. And we don't sit very

often in February. In fact, I think I asked one of the table officers at one point how, when was the last time that we'd sat in February as a Chamber. And it was at least 50 years ago, I believe. It's been a long, long time since this Chamber has sat in February. It's unusual. So to acknowledge I Love to Read Month in the month that we're actually sitting is special.

I know that many members of the Assembly have gone around to their constituency and gone into the schools and had the opportunity to read within their schools, and that is a great opportunity that we have. I've always enjoyed doing that over the years. I've had the chance to read to my son in his class, and that was special both for me but, I think, also for him, and that's a unique thing that we have the opportunity to do as MLAs.

And, more recently, I've taken up the habit of donating books to the elementary schools that I have in my constituency, and they certainly have been appreciative of that, and I appreciate the fact that they allow me to do that and provide me with suggestions in terms of the books to buy, because I'm not always—I don't always know what they don't have in their libraries and I'm not always sure what would be popular in their libraries, and so I've appreciated going and visiting the librarians in those schools and providing them with books during I Love to Read Month and just hearing a little bit about how kids are interacting with books these days.

We know that the world is changing. How people consume information is very different than it was even 10 years ago when many of us got elected. The interaction that people have with books is different. And I think that there always is going to be a unique place for that. But many people now, of course, read things electronically and read, consume books electronically and not in paper form. So it's interesting to me, with the different librarians, and here, how things have changed and how they are changing in the schools. And, of course, many of the schools are not unrecognizable, but quite different than when I would have attended high school and elementary in the public school system, and they'll be quite different, I know, in 20 years from now. So that's always something that is worth doing. And, for those members who haven't had the opportunity to do that, it certainly is a unique thing that we get to do.

This is going to be an interesting session because it—not just because it is immediately before the election, although that makes it both interesting and

unique as well, but because it's going to be a relatively short session with 12 days and, after today, I suppose, only 11, to debate legislation and to have a question period. It is a particularly short session.

Now, I know, in talking to government members, that they have their own agenda and they have bills that they are bringing forward and they have bills that they want to have passed, and I understand that government always wants to have their bills passed, that is certainly something that one would expect from any government, but there's also a reality of only having 12 days to debate legislation. And I always say that legislation is there, if not for eternity, then generally for a generation at least, and it is there to impact people. And every piece of legislation somehow impacts somebody. We wouldn't pass a piece of legislation in this Assembly if it didn't impact somebody. And it can impact generations of people. And so it's incumbent upon us—and I think we've had a bit of a culture change in this Chamber over the last couple of years—that we take the time, and a respectful amount of time, to debate legislation and to have it before the Assembly.

I know, as I've made mistakes sometimes as an MLA, where bills have passed, I know that comes as a surprise to some of my colleagues, they're just thinking of the mistakes I made this morning, not even just, you know, over the longer career, but, I mean, there's times when we've passed bills quite quickly in this Assembly, and then I've received calls from constituents six or eight months later, and they've said, well, you know, this bill is now impacting me, and when did it pass and how come I didn't know about it. And I had to, you know, admit that the bill passed really quickly, and I didn't stop it from passing really quickly.

And I think we do a disservice to us as legislators when we don't allow bills to be before the Assembly for at least a respectful amount of time, and so that not only that we can debate it, and we are, of course, the voice of our constituents in this Chamber, but also that people can hear about it and have input, because every bill, no matter how innocuous or how inoffensive a bill might seem, does, in some way, impact somebody. And it might not impact them negatively, but it might impact them in a way where they want input. They may want to be able to say: How can we improve a particular piece of legislation?

* (16:20)

So my message to the government and to ministers who have come and spoken to me about their bills, and, of course, to the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), is we are not going to obstruct legislation. We know that there are bills that are going to pass this session. I think I've already indicated to the government that the domestic violence bill, for example, that is being sponsored by the member for St. Johns, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), is a bill that we'd like to see certainly passed. There's a private member's bill, I know, by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), and I've made a commitment that we'd like to see that bill pass. So, I mean, there are bills that are going to pass this session.

But what we are not going to do is we're not going to rush through dozens of bills and then find out, six months later, who's ever in government, and I don't presume who's going to win the election in April. Manitobans will decide. They'll go to the ballot box, and it's a democratic system, and whatever the results of that will be the government will form, and they'll come back into this Assembly, at some point, after the election. But we don't intend to pass bills at abnormal speed and then have to, as MLAs who's ever re-elected, explain to constituents why bills that may impact them in some way or the other went through an extraordinary process to be passed.

And so we look forward to hearing from the government, the different bills that they intend to bring forward and bills that we have not only just concerns with, because some bills we don't necessarily have concerns with, but there are ways we think they can be made better by amendment. Well, we're going to do that. Just because we're before an assembly—or just before an election—I'm sorry, I mean, Madam Deputy Speaker, doesn't mean we're not going to do our job as an opposition to try to make bills better.

So you will see some report stage amendments on bills that we think can improve the bill. It doesn't mean that the bill, on a whole, is a bad bill, but we've been elected in opposition until the election. That is still our job: to try to hold the government to account and try to improve pieces of legislation that the government brings forward and to bring alternatives ourselves. And we will be tabling legislation again this session, as we have in the past sessions, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, you know, I want to make it clear to the government that we are here to debate. We, of course, were very strong in asking for this particular session. We wanted longer, actually. I think we, in negotiations, talked about being here for six weeks, maybe even longer, maybe 10 weeks prior to the election, and so we were prepared to be here longer so that bills could be debated for even a longer period of time, but also more bills could have been passed, then.

With only 12, and, after today, potentially 11 days left, and I've said this publicly, all the bills are not going to pass that the government either has on the docket today or that they might be bringing forward in the next few days, but, certainly, some are going to pass. But we would do what opposition should do, and give them a respectful airing, a respectable airing here in the Assembly so that not only are we representing our constituents in the form and manner that they have elected us to, but that also the public has the opportunity to hear about bills, and, if they are impacted in some fashion or the other, they either have had the opportunity to speak to them or to learn about them, or they will know when it passes, when it does impact them that it had the proper—went through the proper channels here in the Legislature.

So now this particular bill, I'm not sure how it will fit within that. Certainly, our Education critic has said that he, certainly, supports the continued and the enhanced education as it relates to First Nations, Métis, and the Inuit people, and he's spoken passionately about that within our caucus and I believe around the province, and so what he says here in the Assembly is no different than what he has said in other places, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I know that he says that with great conviction and with a passion.

As with any bill, though, that becomes before the Legislature during this particular session, there's going to be a couple of immediate questions that come up. One of the questions is going to be: What has it taken 17 years for the bill to get here?

Now that is not just true for this bill, but that would be true for all of the bills that will appear before the Assembly. Why is it that this bill, which the government now considers to be a top priority, hasn't been a top priority for 17 years?

Now I know that this Minister of Education, I think he's in his second iteration as the Minister of Education, and there have been previous ministers

before him—I've lost count, but it's probably six or so. They've all had the opportunity at one point of their time in that office to bring forward this particular piece of legislation, but they've chosen not to.

So it's not as though it's just been one year that's gone by or a couple of years. Seventeen years, more than a decade, more than a decade and a half, have gone by and the government has chosen not to bring forward not just this bill, but any bill that we're going to be debating before the Legislature over the next 11 days, Madam Deputy Speaker. And so it is natural to ask: Why is it that the bills haven't been brought forward sooner than that? Is it truly a priority?

Now, the ministers, of course, will go into the hallways and talk to whatever media exists in the hallways, and they will say to them that these are priority issues and these are priority bills and they need to be passed. And I hope that my friends in the media, as I know they will, will have in the back of their minds that question. Well, if it was a priority, why is it that it's coming up now on the eve of an election, an election where, again, never to presume the outcome because Manitobans will ultimately decide, but I don't think that there's anybody in Manitoba who doesn't realize that the current government is under some degree of electoral stress, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And so those are the questions that need to be asked when it comes to their agenda that they are bringing forward and how truly dedicated they are to a particular issue and how truly important it is.

Now, this bill, I believe, will pass on to committee prior to the end of this day or be eligible for committee prior to the end of this day. It'll pass second reading, Madam Deputy Speaker, and we look forward to hearing people at committee, whenever that committee is scheduled, presuming it'll be scheduled prior to the end of this particular sitting of the Legislature, and to hearing input from people. And as Manitobans who come to committee, they can, of course, speak specifically to the bill, but as often happens they often speak more generally to the topic that is before that particular committee. And I hope that we will hear representatives of the community come and speak about education more generally, come and speak about education and their experiences within the education system more generally, about how things can be improved.

So I look forward to those committee hearings whenever they are scheduled and to hearing those

presenters and to reading their presentations in terms of how they feel things can be improved and how they feel things can be better. It is one of—I think it's often said that we're the only province, Manitoba—I think we're one of two provinces in Canada, sorry, in Canada, Madam Deputy Speaker, that have this particular process, where you have public input at hearings and we have found it to be beneficial. We have found it to—many good amendments come forward from the public hearings, and sometimes you hear the passion of Manitobans at these hearings, and you realize that what we are doing here is important and the changes that we are making are important.

So that'll be one of the questions that we have with every bill that comes before the Assembly during this sitting: Why has it taken the government 17 years to bring forward the bill? How can it truly be a priority when they've chosen for 17 years, 17 long years, not to bring forward the bill previously? And I think that it is one of the questions that Manitobans will have for the government, for the NDP. But why is it that none of these things were a priority over the last 17 years?

And even more generally in an election when the NDP are making commitments, of course, I'm sure that they'll hear this at the door. I don't expect members to confirm this here to me, but I think that they know, as they're going door to door within their individual constituencies, for those who are running for re-election, they'll be hearing that from their—from people at the door, saying, well, you know, you've said these sort of things before, they never really happen, we have a difficult time believing you and your leader now.

And so—[interjection]—well, and I—apparently, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) doesn't feel that he's hearing those things at the door in Brandon East, and I'm glad for him that he feels so self-assured, that he feels so self-assured and so confident in his own position. And I look forward, as I do, on election night, looking forward to all the results around Manitoba, and we'll see if the confidence that he displays in the House was warranted in his community, and I won't prejudge that outcome. That'll be for the good folks of Brandon East to make a decision, Madam Deputy Speaker. I look forward to hearing the results in Brandon East.

But that question will have to be asked. As it's being asked at the door, it would have to be asked

about every piece of legislation here in the Assembly.

The other question that needs to be asked when we're debating any particular bill that's going to come up in the next 11 days is how are these things going to be paid for. Now, this was part of a discussion that happened in question period earlier today. It was part of a news conference, I believe, that happened earlier this morning. And it's been part of a discussion ever since the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), the MLA for Selkirk, decided that they were not—that—not going to release the budget, that they were going to hide the budget from Manitobans and not let Manitobans know what the true state of the finances are or how things are going to be paid for, which, of course, you know, as was mentioned earlier on, generally, when government has good news, they're more than willing to share it with the public. In fact, they're eager to share it with the public, and when there is bad news, typically they are resistant to sharing it with the public.

* (16:30)

So the fact that the NDP are not going to release the budget to Manitobans leads Manitobans to believe that things must be very bad. Now I think they already know, given the high deficits, the high debt, the high taxes that they are paying, that things are not good in terms of the economy of the province and certainly they know things could be much better. But the fact that the budget isn't going to be released leads them to wonder how bad are things really, and is the government's intending to increase the PST now from 8 per cent perhaps to 10 per cent. Are they looking to cut things, Madam Deputy Speaker? Well, we don't know because they're not releasing the budget. But we certainly know if things were good they would be releasing the budget, and I think Manitobans have a right to be concerned. So, on this particular piece of legislation, there's an economic impact. There's always an economic impact.

So even a bill that we agree with in principle, and I think this bill would fit into that category, one has to wonder whether or not it has actually been budgeted. Is there actually any money behind this particular bill? The other bills that are going to come forward before the Assembly in the next 11 days we're going to have the same question: Is there actually money that's backing up these initiatives? It's one thing to say that we're going to do it, but, if there's not actually a budget that supports it, one wonders.

I remember the former leader of the NDP, Gary Doer, used to use a Latin phrase in this House that was *factum non verba*, which means deeds not words, and he used to use it in the Assembly. And I think that he was right to use it, that it's actually the deeds that happen and not words. Well, this government is giving us a lot of words, but they're not actually showing us that it's going to be done, that it's not actually going to happen, Madam Deputy Speaker, and they could do that by releasing the budget.

Now I know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) is going to go to great lengths and he's going to do whatever he can to convince Manitobans that this is just like a budget. Well, if it was just like a budget, then just release the budget. If it's the same thing as a budget, then just release the budget. The fact is it's not the same thing. But we're going to see within an economic statement we're not going to be able to see directly where the money is coming from on a line item basis. We're not going to see directly where the money is going on a line item basis. So, on bills like these or other bills that are going to come before the Assembly, we won't know if there is actually money behind these commitments and these promises.

And I think Manitobans deserve to know. They deserve to know how things are actually going to be paid for, Madam Deputy Speaker, because there is a concern among Manitobans and MLAs, every MLA, regardless of the party they represent, they have been hearing this at the door, there is a concern that the NDP are going to raise taxes again.

Now I know when I raise this sometime with my friends across the way, I see the Minister of Education smirking as though this is an impossibility. Well, he will remember in 2011—in fact, I think there's been some pretty good TV ads that show the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the current Premier, the Leader of the NDP saying explicitly that he would not raise the PST, those are ridiculous ideas, that it was nonsense. And I'm glad that those TV ads are running because I think that you have to remind people about the commitments that were made and I hope that those TV ads continue to run to continue to remind people about that commitment.

So, when the Minister of Education smirks and says, you know, well, of course, we're not going to raise taxes, what was said only four or five years ago, and why would people believe him? Now it's not a—it doesn't matter if we as Conservatives—

Progressive Conservatives don't agree and don't believe the NDP, that makes no difference. It doesn't matter if the independent member, the Liberal member for this House, doesn't agree or doesn't believe with the NDP, that makes no difference. What matters is what Manitobans believe, and every member of this House who's been door knocking, who's gone in their community understands clearly that there is a concern.

So, when we look at pieces of legislation like this bill, we have to wonder: Where is the funds coming from? Will it be because there's a tax increase? And, if it's not, then we should have the budget released.

Specifically on the issue of education results, and this was spoken to by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), we've seen the steady decline over time of the PSAC [*phonetic*] and the PISA results, the studies that come out nationally and internationally, where we used to be—our students used to be at No. 3 in the rankings, they've now dropped to last, unfortunately, and they are falling further and further behind.

Now I want to make this clear, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are lucky and we are fortunate in Manitoba to have professional teachers, to have teachers who go to work and to their classrooms every day with the intention of making their students' lives better by ensuring that they are learning the things that are going to make them successful in the future. I believe that strongly. I've seen that with my own son who's had tremendous teachers within the public school system. They've been absolutely outstanding. And so I have no doubt that that is what our teachers want to do every day and that is what they are trained to do every day, and we're lucky to have them as professionals within our province.

The fact is it's not teachers that are the issue here. The fact is it's the education system that's been set up by this NDP government that is failing our students and, in fact, failing the education system more generally and failing those who are working within the education system. So while we applaud those who are our professionals within our schools, we know that how this government has been operating and running the education system has been resulting in us doing worse and worse every year essentially since they've come into government.

Now, it seems that the Minister of Education dismisses those issues. He doesn't find them particularly relevant. He has a lot of different

excuses for them. But I think that for parents that makes a big difference. The Minister of Education will stand up, as he did today in question period, and say, well, look at all the money that we're putting into education.

I can tell you that on the days that I'm fortunate enough to be able to pick up my son from school—and that doesn't happen as often as I would like—but on the days that I'm able to pick him up from school, the very first thing that I ask him when he gets into car is: What did you learn in school today?

And my guess is that many parents have the same experience. They go to their—to the school, they pick up their son or daughter and they say: What did you learn in school today? What I don't ask my son is: How much did the government spend on you in school today? Not that that isn't something that's important, but as for parents, the relevance isn't what is the government spending on you; the relevance for parents is what are the results. What are—what is my son or daughter learning in school today? That is the results that we as parents want to see for our children. The by-product, sometimes, is the investment.

And we understand that there has to be strong, consistent and predictable investment in the education system. That is entirely true and that is entirely reasonable. But there are two sides of the equation. You can't simply just focus on how much money is going into the system without talking about what the results are, because as parents who want the best for our children, each of us want to know that our kids are getting the best education that's possible so that when they graduate from the education system, they'll have the best opportunity to succeed in the world and hopefully here in Manitoba.

So I get concerned, somewhat frustrated, when the government fails to see the importance of the results portion of education because if you eliminate the issue of results in education, what do you have left? What is it, then, that you are talking about, if you are not trying to ensure that young people are the most prepared that they could possibly be?

Now, there's been mention made for—about the Auditor General's report that's come out recently indicating the 55 per cent graduation rate among Aboriginal youth, Madam Deputy Speaker, and this is particularly concerning. It's been said in this Chamber many times, not just by members of Progressive Conservatives, it's been said by every party in this House that the—a great part of the future

success of Manitoba has to be from our Aboriginal, our Metis and our Inuit population, has to be driven by ensuring and engaging those portions of our population, not just because they form a significant number of our population but because they certainly are an important part of Manitoba. And this report, the Auditor General's report, shows that this government, who's been in government now for 16 years, has been failing on that particular end.

Now, the minister will talk about—and he's talked about—not just this Minister of Education—every NDP minister of Education has stood up and talked about graduation rates, excluding, of course, the difficulty that they're having with Aboriginal education rates. And I don't know why they seem to think that that is separate and they should be ignoring that portion of it. These are Manitobans. These are Manitobans who have a right to have as bright of a future as every Manitoban does. These are Manitobans who have the right to be able to succeed in our province and to be able to realize their dreams as much as anybody's dreams here in this Assembly or in our constituencies, Madam Deputy Speaker. And to ignore that, I think, is a failing of the government.

Now, we will continue, as Progressive Conservatives, to bring forward ideas in a whole host of areas. You've seen many of them already over the last several months. The Minister of Education laughs. I'm glad he's laughing. He can be laughing all the way to the election for all I'm concerned. But I do hope, Madam Deputy Speaker, that he'll be listening to many of the different positive ideas that are coming from Manitoba Progressive Conservatives. I can tell him that if he's not listening, his constituents will be listening, and they probably are listening even as we speak.

* (16:40)

And I certainly hope that when he's confronted with that, when he's confronted with a positive vision that Manitoba Progressive Conservatives and our leader have for this party, that he won't be as dismissive as he is in this House, because, ultimately, we are all Manitobans, and we all want what's best, I believe, for our province. And to simply dismiss ideas and to dismiss a discourse, I think, speaks of a government that has grown arrogant, speaks of a government that has grown tired, speaks of a government that needs to find its way into a different part of this Assembly.

But again, and we'll leave that for the people to decide. We'll leave that for Manitobans to decide on

April 19th. And, ultimately, we always believe in the wisdom of Manitobans. And we always believe that they will determine what is best in terms of the province of Manitoba.

But in terms of this particular bill, as it goes to committee later on today or be eligible to go to committee later on today, we certainly hope that we'll engage a number of Manitobans to come and speak about how we can ensure that our education system for those who are Aboriginal and others will be able to be improved, will be able to be bettered, and so that we can see better results, because results actually do matter. Even if the Education Minister laughs at it, even if he thinks that it's not important, even if he's only concerned about the size of the cheque that he writes, the results that our kids get, all of our kids in Manitoba, regardless of where they live and regardless of their background, matters, because it matters towards their individual future and it matters towards our collective future as Manitoba and as Manitobans. And so I would hope that he would consider that, not be so dismissive of ideas when we talk about trying to better results for our kids within our school system. And I think that if he would talk to teachers, he would find that teachers also believe very strongly that they want what's best in terms of results for the kids that they are entrusted to teach, because, ultimately, I believe that's why they got into the education field, because they wanted to better the lives of young people, they wanted to better the lives of those that they had in the classroom.

So I look forward to hearing any other speakers who may want to speak to this particular piece of legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I do believe that we'll see it move on to committee before the end of the day.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): I'd first of all like to start by just reflecting a moment or two on our Speaker who's indicated that he is not going to be running again in the next election. I would like to thank him for the years that he's put in.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I've known him for many years and really appreciate his leadership here as a Speaker in this Legislature. And I know we're going to miss him after the session ends. And we do wish him all the best in whatever it is he's going to do from here on forward, and I'm sure he—if he doesn't have plans, if he hasn't got plans, I have a feeling there are plans being drawn up for him as we speak. So whatever it's

going to be, I'm sure it's going to be great, and we wish him all the best in that.

Mr. Speaker, I do wish to put a few comments on the record in regards to Bill 13. As a former school trustee, and that's how I got to know Mr. Speaker in my role as a school trustee in river—it used to be called River East School Division at the time. I was chair of the board, in fact, for a period of time, and then the whole amalgamation issue, and had a chance to work with Mr. Speaker on those issues. He wasn't the Speaker at that time but he was the member of the Legislature for Transcona.

And education has always been a great love of mine. I had the opportunity to go and do a lot of I Love to Read in various schools. And I always point out to students that I grew up in a more rural setting in a country school and grandma didn't believe that a TV was a good thing, so we were raised without a TV in the house. And she said, you know what, go read a book. And that's what we did. And reading was just one of the passions of mine.

I point out to students that in grade 4 and grade 5, I read a very well-known author, I know to members of this Chamber, he was a Soviet dissident by the name of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. And Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn read—you know, very light reading stuff, like *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and *Cancer Ward*, and those are the kinds of things I read in grade 4 and grade 5. So I think I'm going to try to find those two volumes and take them to one of the schools one time and show the kids the kinds of things that I read, Mr. Speaker.

But reading was always one of my passions. Education was always something that I loved. I loved going to school. I loved going to university. In fact, if I would have had the financial 'whereforall,' I—for all I know, I'd still be there. I loved to learn. In fact, if there's one thing about this job that I tell most people, is that every day is an education. Sometimes it's a real positive education, and sometimes it's not so positive of an education. But it's always, always a learning experience.

And Bill 13 speaks about a group of individuals who are underrepresented, certainly when it comes to graduation rates, and how we're going to encourage them to finish their education. In fact, not that I'm a big follower of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic leadership contest, but he made a point in one of his debates. He said, you know, about 130 years ago in the United States, there was a decision made to go

from K—that time, it was probably from kindergarten to grade 6—that it would be free, and slowly, that was moved to grade 9 and then grade 12. And his point was that a grade 12 degree, 60, 70 and 100 years ago, are—is the equivalence of what a university degree would be today. And he indicated that he felt that there should be a lot more emphasis made on making sure that individuals got a university degree.

And Bill 13 is one of those pieces of legislation. We want to make sure that students who go into the school system stick with their education and at least come out with a grade 12 or a grade 12 equivalent, and then if they so decide—and certainly we would want them to—to move on and go to a university education. So this is very important legislation. I am very surprised on the bitter, bitter last moments of the 40th Legislative Session that we have this bill now first in front of us. This bill could have—one of my colleagues, I believe it was the—my colleague from Winkler-Morden, said, you know, was this a bill that came up in 2003? No, no. Was it a bill that came up in 2007? No. Was it a bill that came up in 2011? Nowhere. About 2014? You know, here we are on the eve—in fact, you could make the argument, we're already in the pre-writ period—now this legislation comes forward. Where has the NDP been for 16 years if this is such an important issue?

And that's why we are debating this piece of legislation today. That's why it's important that it go to committee and we hear what Manitobans have to say. One of the most beautiful things about the Manitoba Legislature is that anyone has the right to come, and we do not restrict just to Manitobans. We do not restrict just to Canadians. I don't think we've ever done a test on who it is that comes. If somebody wishes to come and speak to a legislation and give input and give advice, positive or negative, they are given time to come forward and make a presentation. And, in fact, if they can't even keep themselves to that time restriction of approximately 15 to 20 minutes, they can even present documentation and ask that it be put into Hansard, that it be included. So it's important that legislation go forward. We certainly look forward to hearing what individuals have to say at committee.

Education is the way that we move our societies upwards. You are judged, often, as a nation, by and large, by your education rates. It's very important that we give everyone in our nation the opportunity to get a wholesome, a fulsome education. And certainly look forward to this going to committee. I

know there are a few other members that like to put a few words on the record.

Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise to put a few words on this. And the acting—or the Deputy Speaker was in the Chair; I had a few words of thanks to her. I've known her for quite a while when we were both on the board of governors of Brandon University. We learned a great deal about that organization there, and she served well there, as she has well in the House here, obviously.

And Brandon University, of course, has a long history of Native studies programs and has been an integral part of the university. The BUNTEP programs, the PENT programs that were very good programs for Native teachers, unfortunately, were taken away by this government and moved on. But they were a tremendous success for the many years that they were a part of that university and educated a great number of teachers that moved out into the community to forward that education on.

*(16:50)

So, you know, it's an interesting legislation that I see here, and I'll be interested to listening to people when it does indeed go to committee because what I see in here is a good intent, but then there's the concept of, well, who has the government actually talked to and consulted with in this regard and who will they listen to, how will they move things along. It'll be interesting to hear the comments at committee and, after the fact, how will the program be put into place.

You know, as I learn more and more about First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, it's been an interesting experience as I've gone to many different organizations as I've been an MLA here. It certainly has opened my eyes, Mr. Speaker, and I think many of my colleagues as well. I know the MLA for Portage la Prairie and I were up in Selkirk at the institution up there and meeting several people and learning how the process works, and we were struck, I know, by the number of Inuit on the streets of Winnipeg, homeless people that were mainly Inuit, and we didn't know why that would be the case because we don't tend to have Inuit in Manitoba. Of course, they are in the territories mainly, but we have a large population here, and what we found has actually happened is when someone in the territories has a mental health issue and they may come to Selkirk for some treatment there to learn how to

work with their process and their illness, after they go through that process, they are released to the largest urban centre which, of course, to Selkirk, the largest urban centre is Winnipeg.

But here there are no supports for them and it is not familiar to them. It is not familiar to how they grew up, and all of a sudden they're in an urban centre with little or no support learning, trying how to make their way and still dealing with their mental health, and that is a dilemma for them. And lots of it, obviously, doesn't work very well for them, and then we find them homeless on the streets.

So that's, I guess, why that's happening. It's not necessarily a great solution and it needs to be a better solution found for that, Mr. Speaker, but education of the public on how that would work and how this would work in the education system will certainly go a long ways to making people, you would think, more compassionate and there would be aid and assistance for that type of a community.

So, again, the question that we're going to have here is, how will this all work? Where will it be funded? How will it be funded? Where will you get the teachers for it? Lots of questions, Mr. Speaker, that I'm sure the minister has tried to answer some of those, but we'll see more of that at committee on what actually the structure might be. And even if that, as we see things come through committee, we don't always get a clear idea of the process of how this will actually be put in place, how it will be put in practice and what resources are going to be made available to the education system to make sure that it functions and, indeed, does function well, because it's something that could be very costly or it's something that could work very well, and obviously you need the resources in the education system to make sure that it will work properly.

You know, as I see things come to committee, Mr. Speaker, sometimes I think the committees work well, and we listen to the people that make the presentations and the amendments come forward and sometimes they're considered, sometimes added. I wonder if there's not, perhaps, a better way to deal with some of those amendments that they are given more depth and more impact at the committee level so that we can consider an amendment better at committee as opposed to some of what I see the government doing, is just discounting it out of hand. The amendment is presented by the opposition and immediately defeated without any consideration. I've seen many what I consider to be good amendments

that should be considered and, perhaps with some fine tuning, could be palatable to the government of the day and, indeed, would make the legislation better.

So I do hope, Mr. Speaker, that's something that we can see coming forward in the committee process that would make it work better. We got a pretty good start there with our committee process, and we want to make sure that it is engaging to Manitobans, that they are heard and, indeed, in hearing them, we'll see their wishes reflected in the legislation that they do come to present on.

So I do have a bit of a concern with our committee structure there, although it is very encouraging to see Manitobans come—they're often very nervous—at the committee level and to make their presentations, often heartfelt presentations, but with great content on all sides of the debate, and I do believe that there needs to be a little bit better process on how that content is considered and how the amendments would be considered to improve legislation before that legislation comes back to the House so that we have a better working committee and perhaps not just one that seems like a rubber stamp at some times. But that's all challenges that governments have to deal with and how they use the committees and how the committee process works and how do you include people from other areas.

So, indeed, Mr. Speaker, I do believe in Manitoba that we have a very bright future for our children. All four of our children have gone through the education process in Manitoba, and it has been under this NDP government, and I'm not extremely happy with the process. I have to say that in my view the NDP has experimented with children's education in Manitoba, and, as we've seen, it's been a failed experiment as we're falling further and further behind other provinces. Our family, indeed, has spent thousands and thousands of dollars with tutors and with other assistants for our children to make sure that they can be at the university level and above when they enter university so that they are capable and educated to get to that level because the education system under this NDP has failed them. It's not the teachers' fault; they're just working with the tools that the minister gives them, and those tools, obviously, haven't been up to the challenge. The teachers try; they try hard and generally they work very well, but they are working with something that the minister has failed at, I think. So that's one of the challenges. So this is just—it's another issue that we see that the education system's going to have deal

with, and I'm sure they'll find a way to make it fit in their current framework, but there is a lot of questions there on what that framework is going to look like.

So I'll leave that to see if there are anyone else to wish to address the legislation, and we can see if it wishes to go to committee at all. But I think that, you know, as I, yes, as I see this, it's likely going to make it to committee, I assume it's going to be during the legislative session. I know I do have people that want to come and watch a committee here, see how it all works. So I do hope that we're going to have some committee sessions here. *[interjection]* Well, and that's true, but it's been a very important—I—my colleague says why did it take 17 years to be an important issue and actually come to legislation; we've seen that with many of the government's legislation that's come forward, and 'absoluchey'—absolutely urgent that this be dealt with today, but, apparently, it wasn't urgent 17 years ago. I mentioned the Native Studies program at Brandon University, the BUNTEP and PENT programs, and they have been in existence for much longer than that 17 years, and could've set an example for this government, but, apparently, they didn't always pay attention to that. And we know that they had full funding from universities and cut it in half here, even though they promised to have stable funding for many years.

So you kind of wonder how this government really pays any attention to the education process when they cut funding of that nature, when they promise time and time again that they're going to make sure that the universities have stable funding. They've promised education stable funding for school divisions, but, again, the school divisions don't know from year to year what their funding's going to be or where it's going to come from, how much they'll have to tax the local taxpayers, Mr. Speaker.

So, with that, I think we'll leave it to see if there are other speakers on this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this matter?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 13, The Education Administration

Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework).

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

**Bill 15—The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act (Recognition of Customary Care
of Indigenous Children)**

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to call Bill 15, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Recognition of Customary Care of Indigenous Children).

The honourable Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross). *[interjection]*

Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned—*[interjection]*—yes.

Just to ensure that the record is clear that while I recognize the honourable Minister of Family Services, the matter will be remaining standing in her name, as it appears on the Order Paper, to commence the debate on second reading of Bill 15.

The hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, February 24, 2016

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