

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 1, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of Bills? Committee Reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I wish to table the Healthy Child Manitoba Office report for 2015-2016.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Second Quarter Report for 2016-2017, month ending September 30th, 2016.

Also, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation annual report for 2015-2016.

Madam Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I rise today to talk about an important issue that cuts through nearly all facets of our society and affects innumerable lives in its devastating wake.

Today is the start of Domestic Violence Prevention Month. It is important for all of us to be aware and to recognize that incidents of domestic abuse happen every day in this province. All social, cultural and economic demographics are affected, including women, men, youth and seniors. The effects of domestic violence are long-lasting and intergenerational.

It takes great courage for survivors of domestic violence to reach out for help. It takes even greater courage to accept the fact that the very person who says, I love you, is also the same person causing you pain, making you fearful, controlling your movements and hurting your family. That is one of

the reasons why domestic violence continues to be an under-reported issue. And while both men and women experience domestic violence, we know that women are more likely to suffer more extreme forms of violence resulting in physical injuries. In fact, in Canada, every four days a woman is killed by a family member. Women are also more likely to report symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder from living in abusive relationships.

While domestic violence is an unresolved issue, we are seeing progress. Today, we have many men and boys proudly speaking out against violence against women and girls, including our Winnipeg football club, the Blue Bombers. We have resources such as Alpha House and numerous other shelters for women seeking refuge when escaping violence. Many of these didn't even exist 20 years ago.

Society is beginning to grasp the reality that domestic violence is not a private matter, but an urgent public policy issue. I am pleased to see the federal government take nationwide action on this issue and I look forward to partnering with them to prevent domestic violence.

More work needs to be done, Madam Speaker, and our government is working hard to find ways to make that happen. And I am proud to be part of a government committed to making domestic violence a thing of the past.

Thank you.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Today marks the first day of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, a month devoted to courageously speaking out, raising awareness and taking definitive action in respect of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of women and/or children.

In Canada we know that one in four women will experience domestic violence in their life. A woman is killed by her partner every four days. Indigenous women make up 16 per cent of all murdered women on record and 11.3 per cent of all missing women on record in Canada.

I'm proud to stand with a team who believes in the right and critical need for women and their children to be safe and who have taken concrete measures to address domestic violence in Manitoba.

Under our administration we partnered with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers on the Be More Than a Bystander and with community leaders in the Aboriginal men's anti-violence public awareness campaigns. Both campaigns created allies with men in the fight to end violence against women and girls.

Earlier this year, we passed groundbreaking legislation ensuring victims of domestic violence have financial security, job protection and flexibility to take the time away from work.

I know we all agree in this House more work needs to be done to end violence. The reality is that physical, sexual and emotional violence thrives in silence, and so courageously and honestly talking about domestic violence and its insidious and harmful impacts on the lives of women and children, we break its power.

Finally, today, Madam Speaker, I honour all the women who have survived domestic violence and are courageously—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

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

Ms. Lamoureux: I rise today to speak to Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Domestic violence is a far-reaching form of abuse that is, unfortunately, worldwide. Here in Manitoba we are consistent in having the second highest rate of domestic violence among all the provinces. This is a sad reality, that 70 per cent of victims never report domestic violence.

We need to be reminded of what domestic violence entails. Awareness of this issue is its greatest weakness and education is key to proactively preventing violence.

Domestic violence is physical, sexual or emotional abuse or a combination of the three being used in an intimate relationship. Physical abuse can include aggressive acts or less severe acts such as throwing, shoving or slapping. Emotional abuse is conducted through humiliation and put-downs through verbal insults, accusations and threats.

One fact that we know for sure is that once violence begins it will typically continue to worsen

over time. Because of this it is critical that people report domestic violence to ensure it doesn't continue to happen and worsen.

Now, how do you report domestic violence? There are the local police, hotlines you can call; counselling and support services; hospitals; groups for women, men, teens and children. There are many avenues, and if you need help in direction to which avenue is right for you, you can call 1-877-977-0007.

We in this House have the power to change this trend. We have made progress, but there's much more work to be done. We need to begin thinking outside the box to help better the lives of Manitobans.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Darren Boryskavich

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): The accomplishments of world Special Olympics gold medallist Darren Boryskavich at Russell are now displayed along two other Olympic gold medallists on a sign along the Yellowhead Highway at Russell.

In a ceremony on October 8th, the Special Olympian was recognized by his community for winning a gold medal in bowling at the 2014 World Summer Games. His name and photo were added to the sign that honours Russell's two other Olympic gold medallists, hockey player Theoren Fleury and skeleton competitor Jon Montgomery.

The campaign to have Darren added to the sign was started by Travis Rice, a student at Major Pratt School. Travis wondered why Darren wasn't being recognized for his accomplishments. After quickly gathering many signatures on a petition, he presented it to the Russell-Binscarth council. To their credit, Mayor Len Derkach and his councillors listened, and the wheels were put in motion to make it happen.

Darren has won 30 gold, 18 silver and seven bronze medals at the local, provincial and national levels. He has two Order of Sport Excellence medals and more than 40 trophies and ribbons that are a testament to his athletic ability.

This determined young man is hoping to bring home another medal when he represents Canada in snowshoeing at the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games this March in Austria.

Darren and his mom—proud mom Tina wanted so much to be here in the Legislature today but just

couldn't make it work. However, Darren's uncle, Harry Bergman, is joining us in the gallery today.

Madam Speaker, I ask all honourable members to join me in saluting Olympic gold medallist Darren Boryskavich and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Thank you.

Nihad Ademi

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Today I would like to honour Nihad Ademi, who is a familiar face to many in Fort Rouge and a fixture at cafes on Corydon Avenue. He is with us in the gallery today. Nihad is a photographer, a filmmaker and a survivor of Omarska, one of the worst concentration camps operated during the Bosnian War.

* (13:40)

This past summer, Nihad shared his story in his powerful documentary, *White Balloon*. The film tells the story of Nihad's return to the former Yugoslavia for the first time in 20 years. Nihad visited the former concentration camp, where he was held for over 200 days. While he was imprisoned there, he witnessed unspeakable atrocities on a daily basis. On his return, Nihad and the other survivors each released a white balloon with a tag in it that had the name of someone who did not survive.

Nihad's story brought together many individuals from Winnipeg's art communities, including filmmaker Guy Maddin, WSO conductor Alexander Mickelthwate and Dr. Frank Albo, who's also with us. They all had a hand in producing the documentary.

For Nihad, his photography and filmmaking is a way for him to heal. Though it was difficult, painful, Nihad felt it was his responsibility to speak out against the horrors he witnessed and to give a voice to the people, including his friends and families, who were lost during the Bosnian war and genocide. It was also a way to keep their memory alive. Nihad's story is a reminder to all of us that the first step towards reconciliation is confronting the truth, a timely message in our own country. The real power of his documentary is that he broadens these life lessons out to all of us, even if we've never experienced something as horrific as a concentration camp.

Next week, *White Balloon* will have its Winnipeg premiere to the public at the Park Theatre. I strongly encourage everyone to see it.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in recognizing Nihad and to thank him for his courage and for sharing his gifts with us.

Miigwech.

MBiz Awards Gala

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): This past Friday, October the 28th, I was pleased to attend the 33rd Annual MBiz Awards Gala hosted by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. Fifteen businesses and not-for-profit groups were declared finalists in five different categories and were all eligible for awards.

Two of those nominated businesses were from the constituency of Brandon East, one in the Outstanding Small Business category and one in the Outstanding Medium Business category.

Madam Speaker, it was exciting to witness Spencer and Riley Day, owners of Progressive Sanitation, take to the stage to accept the award for Outstanding Small Business. Along with their dedicated staff, these young entrepreneurs started their business in 2009 as Busy Bee Sanitary Supplies. This growing business recently moved to a new location in Brandon to accommodate Progressive Sanitation and a new mats and uniforms division. Their foundation is built on the belief of putting customers first, no matter what the circumstances may be.

Later in the evening, Madam Speaker, everyone in the room watched as Charlie Clarke, Tami-Rae Rourke Clements and the executive team of NetSet Communications took to the stage to accept the award Outstanding Medium Business. This privately held telecommunications company provides next-generation broadband services throughout the province of Manitoba. Their network provides over 500 rural Manitoba communities with connectivity to the rest of the world.

Both of these local Brandon businesses provide not only important products and services to their customers, but are true community-minded employers who provide top-quality employment and opportunities to their community.

Madam Speaker, I ask everyone here today to please join me in congratulating both Progressive Sanitation and NetSet Communications on their awards and also to congratulate all other award

winner and all nominees for doing what they do to make Manitoba the greatest province in Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

National 4-H Month

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, November 2nd marks the beginning of National 4-H Month.

4-H is an international youth and volunteer organization which provides members with the resources and activities to build self-confidence, communication and leadership skills that will help our kids succeed in today's society.

4-H is one of Canada's longest running and most respected youth organizations, which owes its roots to Manitoba. The original 4-H chapter was formed in Roland, Manitoba in 1913, and in 2013, 4-H Manitoba was recognized by the Manitoba Historical Society as a centennial organization.

Today, 4-H clubs in Manitoba are driven by thousands of 4-H members and volunteers along with a strong partnership with Manitoba Agriculture. There are over 60 interesting, hands-on projects relating to agriculture, photography, outdoor living, mechanics and others.

Kids are taught responsibility and governance by running their own meetings, by public speaking, by learning about community service, all in a fun, inclusive learning environment.

We know that having our kids participate in active social programs will boost their self-confidence and foster lifelong skills. That is why the 4-H program is made affordable and financially accessible for families of all income levels.

The 4-H slogan is an excellent message for all Manitobans: learn to do by doing, using your head, heart, hands and health. I know that the next generation of young Manitoba 4-H'ers will continue to do so.

I encourage all members of this House to put on something green this month in support of National 4-H month.

Thank you very much.

Signing of CETA and Supporting First Nations

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize two important steps forward in the last week which have occurred at the national level in Canada.

The first is the signing of CETA. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union is a bright spot in a world that's becoming more protectionist. It will open up important markets for Manitoba's agricultural produce and for Manitoba-made products like the moccasins made by Manitobah Mukluks. Indeed, our Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland gave European Union Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom a pair of these moccasins to celebrate the signing of CETA. Europe has long been an important trading partner for Canada, and this will support and enhance this partnership.

CETA also marks a major step forward for Canada in getting better access to one of the most important markets in the world. It's a step in helping the world see a better, more co-operative approach to solving economic issues and it may provide an incentive for Manitobans to get rolling on restoring the Port of Churchill to activity to give us a quicker more direct trade route to Europe.

The second step is the federal decision to support providing the \$155 million additional funding needed this year for First Nations children. Taken together with actions to implement change and improvement in the way First Nations children are supported should bring Canada into compliance with the ruling of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. This ruling arose out of the efforts of Cindy Blackstock who was in Winnipeg last week. Changes are also needed so that families are much better supported and far fewer children are taken into the care of Child and Family Services. The passing, here in Manitoba, of a resolution put forward by the MLA for Kewatinook is an example of the effort and the push for this change.

I congratulate our Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his impressive team, particularly Chrystia Freeland and the—the Minister of Trade, and Dr. Carolyn Bennett, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

Introduction of Guests

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

Seated in the Speaker's Gallery we have with us today Ambassador Abrahamsen, the Ambassador of Denmark, and also the Honorary Consul of Denmark, Helle Wilson.

On behalf of all of us here, we'd like to welcome you to our Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

University of Manitoba Contract Collective Bargaining Negotiations

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier's eleventh-hour interference has imperilled negotiations at the University of Manitoba. Yesterday the Premier said direction was given by his government to the university, quote, a long time ago. I expect the university may clear that up at some point. End of quote.

But, Madam Speaker, the university made an offer to the faculty on September 13th. Reports from the university and the Winnipeg Free Press confirm new direction came on October 6.

Why did the Premier interfere and undermine negotiations at the University of Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The preamble—and I thank the member for raising the topic—but the preamble contains a number of inaccuracies.

Madam Speaker, I want to be clear, and I think there's a confusion on the part of members opposite, which is surprising given the fact that, for example, it was reported today in one of the notable publications that is released in our province that—and I'll read a quote from it, if I might. It says: A freeze on public sector wages isn't new.

* (13:50)

In 2010 and '12, the Selinger NDP government drew a line in the sand and called for a two-year wage freeze. This edict meant several groups of public service workers, including doctors, saw their wages frozen for two years.

Madam Speaker, I think that the member misrepresents the reality of the situation where they attempted to get a handle on their spending and kept it rising at rates unsustainable.

We will succeed in getting our finances in order, fixing the finances of this province after a decade of debt.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim leader, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Marcelino: Governments outline their general funding mandate to public bodies well in advance of formal contract negotiations, but it is unprecedented

for a provincial government to intervene with new, last-minute orders that undermine negotiations.

The University of Manitoba's own press release says that they are, quote, challenged by these circumstances, end of quote, that they will have a, quote, profound impact, end of quote, on the negotiations.

Why did the Premier interfere and undermine negotiations at the University of Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Actually, Madam Speaker, the member misrepresents the reality of the situation yet again in her preamble, because the intervening and interference she alleges happened didn't happen at all. What happened was there was a provincial election.

And so, Madam Speaker, what happened was that the previous government's alleged mandate, which we never saw any fruition on, disappeared, and a new government came in with the permission of the people of Manitoba to fix the finances of the province, and that's what we'll do.

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

Ms. Marcelino: I wish the Premier would specifically say those words to the students of the University of Manitoba.

The Premier points his fingers at everyone else but is unwilling to accept responsibility for his own actions. It was his choice to upend negotiations when offers were already on the table and mediation was ongoing, and it was his choice yesterday to cover up when he gave this direction.

I ask the Premier: Will he come clean about why he is risking students' education by intervening in ongoing negotiations?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, the choice to accept the responsibility is mine, is ours, all of us when we stand for election. The other choice we make if we are—happen to be honoured by being selected to serve in this place is whether we keep our word or not.

The preceding government chose to break their word; we are going to keep ours.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Yesterday, when the Premier was asked about his interfering after an offer was put on

the table, the Premier denied that it was true and then suggested the University of Manitoba needs to clear up what was actually happened.

The Premier needs to come clean about what orders have been given to the University of Manitoba. Will he admit that his actions have undermined negotiations and put students in jeopardy?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, our actions reflect our commitment to keep our word. That is exactly what we will do; that is what we are doing. As a new government, we had the opportunity to provide direction in respect of many things, and we are doing that very clearly, very openly and, in fact, we will continue to.

As a matter of contrast, Madam Speaker, when the previous government was asked questions during not one but two strikes at Brandon University, they dodged the media, ministers refused to do interviews, the premier refused to do interviews. They ran down the hall to get exercise and dodged the media, and I have been out and answering all the media's questions as have all my ministers every day, always being open, forthright and transparent. We will continue to do that because we believe in these things, and we will demonstrate them not as the previous government did, simply mouth platitudes about them and fail to demonstrate a proper tone at the top, we will demonstrate that on an ongoing basis.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Marcelino: An offer for a contract was put on the table, but instead of honouring that offer and that process, the Premier is demanding the offer be ripped up and replaced. This is not the Premier's decision, and he should remove himself from these negotiations.

The Premier is now covering up his actions, suggesting the university needs to explain why he interfered with bargaining at the eleventh hour.

Will the Premier reveal when he provided new instructions to the University of Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, as with so many things, the member has it wrong.

There were just now some comments made prior to question period by members opposite and by

members on this side in respect of keeping women safe.

I'm going to table for members opposite a picture, a photograph, of one of the constituency offices of one of the members of this Chamber whose office was vandalized on the weekend—spray painted. It was spray painted and it said something along the lines of, attacking unions is attacking the working class. That was the spray-painted symbol on the door of that office.

Now, this is vandalism and an attempt to harass and bully and intimidate. It is wrong. It is the type of behaviour that was condoned and encouraged by the members opposite during the day when the Unifor members up at the top, some of them—some—

An Honourable Member: Ridiculous.

Mr. Pallister: —the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) says that's ridiculous. The member for Minto, a former Justice minister in the province of Manitoba, is deliberately condoning such actions. This is fundamentally flawed and another example of the members of the other side talking about protecting women, but condoning attacks on women at the same time.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Instability and uncertainty are the hallmarks of this government. They refuse to be open with Manitobans about their plans. They refuse to define front-line workers or offer real protections to them.

And now the Premier won't take responsibility for undermining negotiations under way at the University of Manitoba; he expects others to take responsibility for his actions.

When will he finally take responsibility for his actions?

Mr. Pallister: I'm all about taking responsibility for my actions, Madam Speaker, but the members opposite were so disinterested in taking responsibility for their decision to raise the PST they actually ran over to court to fight for the right for 35 NDP members of this Legislature to take away the rights of a million Manitobans to vote. That's how interested the previous government was in protecting the freedoms and rights of Manitobans.

So I don't need a little lecture from the member opposite on how to protect the rights of Manitobans. I'll do that, my colleagues will do that. We're doing it now, and we'll keep doing it.

University of Manitoba Contract Collective Bargaining Negotiations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): The University of Manitoba is on strike today, thanks in no small part to the actions of the Premier (Mr. Pallister). There's lots of confusion amongst students, many classes have been cancelled, traffic has slowed down, the faculty are on picket lines.

Now, the faculty are on strike because they want to be able to deliver a higher quality education. They're talking about class sizes. They're talking about tenure. But then the Premier scuttled the talks with his demand for a wage freeze.

Will the Premier refrain from further interference and allow the university administration and the faculty association to continue their process and get back to the goal of improving education for the students?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, we've been clear as a government that government is not at the table in this negotiation. This is between an employer and an employee. We have been very clear in terms of being—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —a new government and having a mandate, a mandate given to us by—

Madam Speaker: Order.

* (14:00)

Mr. Friesen: —Manitobans, a mandate that we have been clear: in Manitoba there must be recognition of the ability of Manitoba to pay on an ongoing basis. This is the instruction that we have communicated and we continue to watch. We are concerned, as the member is concerned, and we look forward to that negotiation keeping ongoing and we have in effect supported that by appointing a conciliator.

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

Mr. Kinew: Again, the issues that are being dealt with have to do with delivering a quality education, and yet over and over again the members opposite

keep raising a wage freeze. It's as though the Premier handed in his English homework to a science prof; it's an unforced error.

Thanks to his actions there are practically more media on campus today than there are students. To review, this has to do with the political interference coming out of the Premier's office. The students are paying the price.

Will the Premier take his restrictions off the table and allow the faculty and administration to focus on what really counts: delivery of good quality education to students?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I want to be clear for the member: government has a role and it is to set a mandate. It is to provide parameters.

But I want to refer this member's attention to Budget 2010 wherein the government at that time indicated that they were going to pause public sector wage increases. So, Madam Speaker, that is the direction that the previous government gave. Now, they could not achieve it, but they obviously recognized that there were fiscal conditions that demanded attention.

Where they failed, we will succeed.

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

Mr. Kinew: The good news is that today is the first time I can go to the University of Manitoba and find parking on campus. The bad news is that it's because there is a strike. The halls are empty. Students are on campus, are doing what they can, they're studying in the libraries, but it's clear the strike is having a huge impact on them.

The Premier's solution to every problem is a wage freeze. The faculty wants to negotiate for better quality education; he says wage freeze. The faculty wants smaller class sizes, more sections, better tenure; he responds wage freeze, wage freeze, wage freeze.

It's one thing to interfere if you knew the issues being discussed, but it's another thing to interfere without knowing the priorities of students and faculty.

Will the government withdraw these restrictions and allow—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Perhaps due to ignorance or wilful blindness, the member opposite seems to demonstrate no research capabilities in his preamble.

Madam Speaker, there were two strikes, not one. There were two in three years at Brandon University, not a word expressed along the lines of what the member expresses today in that preamble about concerns for those students, not a word expressed about the concerns for the quality of education, about the working conditions for the staff—not a word, not one—and not one word expressed by me blaming the NDP for the strike. Yet today and in previous days, the members opposite choose to try to place blame on this government for a situation that was under negotiation for a year and remains under negotiation today, and that all of us should consciously want to have resolved in a fair and reasonable way.

That will be our goal going forward and that is how we will behave, Madam Speaker. I'd encourage the member to do some research before he asks another question.

University of Manitoba Contract Collective Bargaining Negotiations

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, when a government disrespects labour, it has consequences. It hurts workers and it erodes confidence. It undermines negotiations and damages the collective bargaining process. But disrespect for labour also hurts families. It hurts students when this government causes an unnecessary strike. It hurts families who support students by helping with their tuition.

When will this government take responsibility for the damage that they are causing?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I appreciate the member's question.

I know he comes across doom and gloom. We don't think it's doom and gloom in Manitoba. We think there's great things are going to happen.

I know the opposition members want to paint this ugly picture and I think they're bringing it on upon themselves. You know, we're hearing positive things from Manitobans. Manitobans have given us a mandate to move this province forward. We are going to be respectful of workers as we move Manitoba forward.

The opposition doesn't believe in workers' rights, Madam Speaker; we do.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Disrespect for labour brings instability and uncertainty. Hundreds of instructors don't know when they will get back to work. University administrators don't know if the government will undermine their negotiating position at the eleventh hour, and, most importantly, tens of thousands of students today don't know when their semesters will continue.

Will this government recognize the damage that it is causing with its harmful actions and reverse those decisions right now, today?

Mr. Cullen: Obviously, we are respectful of workers' rights. We're also respectful of process. There's an—a process that has to be undertaken between employees, employers.

You know, I reflect back when we had the Brandon University strike—in fact, Madam Speaker, two strikes—two strikes at a time that affected thousands of students. Not a word when this party was in government.

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

Labour Relations Act Withdrawal Request

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): It's time this government stops the spin and misdirection and takes responsibility for the damage it's causing. The government can't be bothered to respect the collective bargaining process, and thousands of students will now pay the price for their reckless actions.

When will this government start to show some real respect for workers? When will they withdraw Bill 7?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, Bill 7 gives rights to Manitoba workers that they had taken away by the NDP previously.

The members opposite need to understand that a working woman in British Columbia has the right to a secret ballot, and that a working man in Alberta under an NDP government has the right to a secret ballot, and that a working family has the protections in Saskatchewan of a secret ballot, and that a working family in Ontario has the right to a secret ballot, and that the working family in Newfoundland has the right to a secret ballot and that a working

man or woman in Nova Scotia has the right to a secret ballot.

So maybe the member'd like to explain how it is that all those governments, of all different political stripes, are being disrespectful to workers when they're giving them a right that we're fighting for, for Manitoba workers to have.

Judicial System Management Concerns

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): During Estimates on June 9th the Department of Justice advised that the Manitoba adult jail population was 2,373, almost identical to the population more than two years before. But yesterday in the Public Accounts Committee, the Department of Justice advised that the Manitoba adult jail population is now 2,555.

The number of adults in Manitoba jails has increased by 182 in less than five months. That's more than the capacity of the new Dauphin jail which had been planned. It represents a 50 per cent increase in the level of overcrowding in just five months.

Why has this minister failed to take any steps to solve this problem?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm glad the member opposite mentioned the Dauphin jail and, of course, this issue goes back as far as 2005 when the previous government made commitments back then. In fact, this—in fact, they made promises about the Dauphin jail in 2012, 2013, 2014.

I ask members: Do they know who the Minister responsible for Justice was at the time? It was, in fact, the member for Minto.

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

Mr. Swan: So build it, Madam Minister.

Yesterday the department confirmed that not a single extra—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —position has been added to—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —deal with the additional 122–182 people in Manitoba's jails. The department is not recruiting any new full-time correctional officers;

the department is not adding any Crown attorneys to deal with an additional workload, and this government has paused any addition to jail capacity.

* (14:10)

Last week we learned the government postponed the department's plan to fill 16 vacant sheriff's officers positions. In just six months this minister has managed, or mismanaged, to lead corrections into crisis, and it's not surprising Manitobans have serious concerns about the deaths in custody under this minister's watch.

Will the minister today reveal any plan to deal with this crisis?

Mrs. Stefanson: And of course this crisis didn't happen overnight. It's happened as a result of NDP mismanagement for the last 17 years.

Madam Speaker, we respect the fact that there is much that needs to be done within our justice system. It's why I have called on the department to conduct a review from the beginning and to the end of the justice system to ensure that we create the efficiencies within the system to ensure that we can reduce the number of people waiting on remand within our correctional facilities to help alleviate some of the populations within our system.

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

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, one answer to relieving pressure on the correctional system would be the diversion of appropriate cases, but yesterday at Public Accounts Committee the department confirmed they have no mandate at present to expand mental health courts, nor drug courts, nor bail supervision in Manitoba.

The only action taking place in the promising area of restorative justice is compiling an inventory—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —of community partners—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —which appears to have taken half a year and is still not complete.

Inmates' families and correctional officers are frustrated and angry and worried there is no answer from this minister on dealing with serious pressures in our jails.

This minister has failed to give Manitobans any confidence in her ability to manage the justice system. When will she provide a plan to deal with this crisis in our correctional system?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, after—or, Madam Speaker, sorry.

After a decade of decay within our justice system in Manitoba there is significant work that needs to be done, and I'm working with—my department has developed ways that we can move forward and we can develop solutions to some of the problems that we're facing as a result of 17 years of mismanagement in the justice system.

This is what we're working towards. We are working towards making sure that we create those efficiencies, unlike the member opposite, who had the opportunity at the time. He made a promise to build the Dauphin jail; he never got it done.

We will move forward to make sure that we correct the problems that our justice system is faced with today as a result of their mismanagement.

Immigrant Population Contribution to Economy

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): If it were not for the Provincial Nominee Program, over the last 10 years the population of Manitoba would have decreased. It is clear how important immigration is to our province, and new immigrants contribute to our competitive economy. This is now, more than ever, based on creativity and innovation.

I would like to hear from this government on what role they believe immigration plays here in Manitoba's economy.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): The other day I was asked a question on immigration related to numbers, and we count immigrants, of course, from—during the calendar year. So I had indicated to the member in answer to her previous question that we would exceed the 4,000 by September the 1st. We, in fact, exceed 4,400, which is nearly 500 more than the previous year. So we are certainly moving forward. We believe in immigration. We're an inclusive government.

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

Provincial Nominee Program Application Wait Times

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, that was not my question asked, but I'm not going to waste my time playing the blame game.

I am happy that the minister acknowledges, I would hope, the importance of immigration here in Manitoba, but it's hard to believe, because this government, for one, abolished the ministry of labour and immigration; two, refrained from including it in their last Throne Speech; and three, failed to include immigration in the mandate letter responsible for the minister—or for the minister responsible.

Will this government make a commitment today that no applicant applying for the Provincial Nominee Program will wait more than three months for a decision to be made?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Well, certainly, as Minister of Education and Training, which includes the department of immigration, we all know that it's very important for new immigrants to this province to get into the workplace, and we are finding all kinds of great advantages to actually including immigration in a department that is focused on training and jobs.

So, I'm certainly very proud to be part—to represent Manitobans regarding to that. We are working very hard. We do have a lot of interest by immigrants in coming to Manitoba. That's a good thing.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the minister didn't answer my two previous questions.

I have written Manitoba's provincial auditor and requested that he look into the issues that I have raised in the House regarding the mismanagement of the Provincial Nominee Program.

If the government believes, as they claim to, in the importance of immigration, will they support me in this call for action?

Mr. Wishart: I believe I indicated in the answer to the first question that we are doing more in terms of processing immigrants. In fact, we're much—moving much more quickly than the previous government did.

But we have a backlog. In fact, we're dealing with some that go back as far as 2011.

So we're certainly working very hard to deal with applications in a very timely manner, and we will get to the bottom of the pile eventually.

**Private Members' Bills
Passage Before End of Session**

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Earlier today members opposite were given a second opportunity to vote and pass Bill 209, The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act.

I would like to thank all members of this House for their support. The bill recognizes September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month every year here in Manitoba.

Can the Government House Leader tell this House the next step in ensuring passage of this and other private members' bills before the close of the session?

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Well, I thank the member for the question.

I'd first like to congratulate the member for Lac du Bonnet on securing passage at second reading of Bill 209, The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) on the passage of Bill 208, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Day Act.

Our PC team is putting forward a strong legislative agenda with fresh energy and new ideas, a government that demonstrates—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Micklefield: —Manitoba values each and every day.

It was my pleasure to announce earlier today that Bill 208 and 209 will proceed to the Standing Committee on Private Bills this Thursday evening.

**Manitoba Hydro
Consultant Report Costs**

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): For several weeks now, I and my colleagues have been trying to get from this government confirmation of the amount of money they spent on a report from the Boston Consulting Group. This is one of the few things this government has actually tried to do and it's blown up in their face because the report told Manitoba, a

green energy province, that we should burn more fossil fuels.

Could the minister for Crowns please inform the House if he has any new information on the cost of that report?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): I believe that question has been answered on numerous occasions, and, on top of that, the other question that's been answered is, under this NDP government, Manitoba Hydro went from \$12 billion to \$25 billion in debt.

Madam Speaker, this government, this Conservative government, has been elected to fix the finances of this province, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: That's a gutless answer, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: I would just ask the member to refrain from using language like that in the House. It is not something that promotes good decorum and respect for other members and I would encourage the member to be very cautious with his language. Words like that do tend to be inflammatory and I would urge him to respect what we are trying to do in this House in terms of moving forward with improved decorum and respect for everybody that's asking questions and answering questions.

* (14:20)

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I, of course, withdraw the remark.

Allow me to rephrase: This minister was in attendance at a meeting where his own officials from Hydro confirmed the dollar amount, yet he does not have the courage to acknowledge it here in this Chamber: \$4.2 million to \$4.3 million spent on a report telling a green energy province that we should burn more fossil fuels.

It gets even worse, Madam Speaker. It turns out the company involved paid no visits to any of the affected communities, had no terms of reference, and provided very little if any information that isn't already publicly available.

How is that an appropriate use of funds in Manitoba?

Mr. Schuler: Well, Madam Speaker, question asked, question answered.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, Madam Speaker, I notice the Premier likes to bat cleanup. He likes to say he likes to take the easy questions, so here's a nice easy one for him.

I'm wondering if there's any of the hard-working organizations in Manitoba who have been advising this government constantly on ways that they can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, when can they expect a contract in the mail from this Premier's government for \$4.2 million that doesn't require any new work, doesn't require any terms of reference and can be done from their computer?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The previous administration gave out hundreds of millions of dollars of untendered contracts, no terms of reference, and gave many of them to their friends. Madam Speaker, the member knows that and he shouldn't really stand in his place without doing some research on his own previous administration's record.

We're going to clean up the tendering process in this government, we'll make sure that we shop effectively, we'll get value for money and we'll make sure that Manitobans understand that their government finally, after 17 years of decay, debt and decline, they have a government to fix the finances of this province.

Northern Manitoba Communities Request for Premier to Visit

Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, we know that northern Manitoba is facing unprecedented challenges: the closure of Port of Churchill; the cut to the rail service by OmniTRAX; the potential closure of Tolko; job losses affecting thousands throughout the region.

Today is 100 days—and it's counting—since the public has known about these challenges and the Premier still hasn't visited the North.

When will the Premier take the time and go visit the North and listen to the people's concerns?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I really do appreciate the member's question regarding northern Manitoba. I

would suggest that northern Manitobans now have a government that actually recognizes the great work that they're doing. It does not take them for granted like the previous government did.

Madam Speaker, we recognize and northern Manitobans recognize the challenges they face as a result of the actions taken by the previous government. This government will fix those challenges and we're dealing with northern Manitobans every day to correct the wrongs over the last 17 years.

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

Northern Manitoba Economic Plans

Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas): Well, Madam Speaker, if all that is true, then why doesn't the Premier simply go visit northern Manitoba?

This is how the minister's plan—the minister and the government's plan is being portrayed. The Port of Churchill layoffs come out of nowhere. It's pretty heartbreaking, a worker says, after he and others receive layoff notices—nervous times up north; the regions apart—coming apart at the seams.

Now, even their own Conservative candidate, in the last election from the North, has said there's no shared vision for the North.

Simply put: What is their plan?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): We've had a number of conversations with the communities in northern Manitoba and we've brought in all kinds of people in terms of the chambers, the communities, indigenous people. In fact, we had one chief go out of a meeting and say this is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —historic. This has been an historic meeting. Where they failed, we're going to deliver.

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

Mr. Chief: Yesterday the Premier said that Manitoba gave him a raise, and I quote: I thank them for the increase in pay as well. I appreciate it.

No vision or plan for the North; no minimum wage increase for northerners; he won't show up and listen to northerners.

So, I ask the minister: Does he believe the Premier has earned a wage increase when the—when his map of Manitoba doesn't include the North?

Mr. Cullen: Obviously, we value northern Manitobans. Obviously, the—under the short-term bailouts that the government have left us with before have not worked for northern Manitobans. Northern Manitobans recognize that. That's why they believe in us, standing hand in hand with them, to fix what they didn't fix.

Sale of MTS to Bell Competitive Environment

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My question is to the Premier, and it's about the Bell-MTS merger.

When will this government come to its senses? The Bell-MTS merger will be nothing but harmful to Manitoba consumers and will lessen competition in this province. The Competition Bureau knows it. The CRTC knows it. Even the former Harper government, in the one good move they made, knew it. But this government refuses to acknowledge the facts.

When will they side with Manitoba consumers and make sure this merger is killed so rates don't go through the roof?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I like to field this question yet again. I know the members opposite, they like to relive history. We're going back into the 1990s now. I know they still have a sore point over MTS.

We believe this is going to be a positive deal for Manitoba; obviously, Bell Canada, bringing over \$1 billion investment to the province, this is going to be a great opportunity for many northern Manitobans. And it's going to be great for job creation and job growth here in the province, something that we need after 17 years of decay from the opposite side.

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

Mr. Maloway: To the Premier: the federal Harper government supported more competition in the telecommunication industry. James Moore, who he knows very well, former industry minister, said that

greater competition in the telecommunications industry leads to lower prices, better service and more choice for consumers and business.

Will this government not support more choice for consumers?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, it was two years ago today, Madam Speaker, that a group of people got together and had an historic press conference downstairs in this very building. And they wanted change. They said that they wanted competition. This was unusual for this particular group, because these were known NDP supporters, actually former Cabinet ministers in the previous administration. And at their press conference, they said they were tired of a government that was living in the past—that preamble demonstrates that that habit dies hard among members opposite. They said they were tired of a government that was being self-serving in its behaviour. They said they were fatigued about a government that was being deceptive. And they also said, to a person, that they were tired of being part of an organization that was no longer a team, that had stopped listening.

Madam Speaker, we replaced that particular government, and we are going to continue to listen to Manitobans. We will serve Manitobans to the very best of our ability. We are dedicated that task as a real team.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a point of order.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Point of order.

Madam Speaker: Point of order.

Ms. Fontaine: I just want to take a couple of minutes in respect of the Premier's tabling of this photo. I just want to indicate that the Premier, in his narrative, tried to attach it in respect of violence against women and somehow was trying to implicitly imply that either our caucus was either involved in the vandalism or somehow condoned the vandalism. And members opposite have repeatedly tried to attempt and construct that what took place here with the other union were somehow, again, organized by these caucus members.

I think it is entirely disrespectful for members opposite to accuse our caucus of condoning criminal behaviour, particularly in this. We certainly would never stand by this, ever.

And so I will not allow my caucus members and myself to continually—continuously be attacked for what labour does in this province.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I think the comments from the member opposite are a little bit rich. When I saw, as many of us did, the galleries filled with union members who, when they yelled and screamed and made threats, members opposite turned around and nodded and clapped. So that's what I'd like to draw our attention to this afternoon.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that what I'm hearing this afternoon is members entering into some level of debate. It is not truly a point of order. It is—certainly, having something painted on doors is a concern to all of us.

But I respectfully would indicate that that's not a point of order, but merging into some level of debate in this House.

PETITIONS

Bell's Purchase of MTS

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

The background of the petition is as follows:

Manitoba Telephone System is currently a fourth cellular carrier used by Manitobans along with the big three national carriers: Telus, Bell and Rogers.

In Toronto, with only the big three national carriers controlling the market, the average five-gigabyte unlimited monthly cellular package is \$117 as compared to Winnipeg where MTS charges \$66 for the same package.

Losing MTS will mean less competition and will result in higher costs for all cellphone packages in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government do all that is possible to prevent the Bell takeover of MTS and to preserve a more competitive cellphone market so that cellular bills for Manitobans do not increase unnecessarily.

And this petition is signed by many fine Manitobans.

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

Union Certification

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

The reasons for this petition:

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

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

These signed union cards are submitted to the Labour Board and are subject to a tripartite review which includes worker and management representatives as well as an independent third party, each of whom review every card and ensures that the law has been followed.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government maintain the current legislation for union certification which

reflects balance and fairness, rather than adopting the intention to make it harder for workers to organize.

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

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on House business, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee of—sorry—on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, November 7th, 2016, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, November 7, 2016, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act.

* * *

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, it is our intention to call concurrence and third readings on Bills 6, 10, 2 and 4 this afternoon, in that order. It is also our intention to request recorded votes on each of these bills.

Could you please canvass the House to see if there's leave to defer recorded votes on all of the bills called for concurrence and third reading today until after all four debates have concluded? To be clear on that request, each bill would be set aside once the question has been put and the request for a vote has been made.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to defer recorded votes on all of the bills called for concurrence and third reading today until after all four debates have concluded? Each bill would be set aside once the question has been put and the request for a vote has been made.

Is that agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: The request has been denied.

Mr. Micklefield: Then we would like to pursue concurrence and third reading on bills 6, 10, 2 and 4 this afternoon in that order, beginning with Bill 6.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that this afternoon the House will consider concurrence and third readings in the following order: Bill 6, Bill 10, Bill 2 and Bill 4; starting, then, with Bill 6.

It has been moved by the honourable—oh.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 6—The Financial Administration Amendment Act

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister for Education and Training, that Bill 6, The Financial Administration Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: I'm pleased to be able to put a few words on the record as this bill comes back at third reading.

Madam Speaker, when I spoke on this bill in—at the second reading stage, we talked about the obvious constraints that are placed upon government, a government that actually chooses to go in the direction of containing the size of government operation. Of course, that wasn't the context that we recognized. We as a new government led by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) undertook to reduce the number of ministers in government from 18 to 12 as one of the very first things that we did. In so doing, leading by example, but also identifying and suggesting strongly that there had been too much movement in the opposite direction by our predecessors where there were many, many members with ministerial portfolios, with ministerial staff, with ministerial offices and all the resources that flow to them, and they kept dividing and dividing functions.

Really, the work undertaken by this government is substantive work. It, of course, has a direct result in terms of realized savings in the operation of government. I believe the changes we brought reduced government spending somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$10 million per year.

But it also is an action that then more logically aligns functions inside a minister's responsibility and portfolio of responsibilities. And so even today we saw the Minister of Education get up a few questions ago in question period and answer a question on immigration. Where that former government had a

minister responsible for Immigration, this government locates that responsibility logically with the minister also responsible for Education and Training. Where the former government had a minister of Labour, this government locates that responsibility inside Growth, Enterprise and Trade and, in so doing, there's an obvious savings of government.

*(14:40)

Of course, Madam Speaker, having explained this, I will say again that what comes with this is some very pragmatic considerations, that there are less ministers who can then be called upon, tapped on the shoulder to take a seat at the Treasury Board table. And so, that is why this government brings Bill 6, The Financial Administration Amendment Act as a result of our decision and the good work that was done to reduce those numbers of ministers, to reduce those offices, to reduce those senior staff and technical officers, who all—who come along with that area of function. Of course, you've got that many less bodies to draw on when it comes to Treasury Board.

What this bill essentially does is allow non-ministers do be full members of Treasury Board. Now, I remember when the member opposite got up at second reading and says that, you know, that when the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) was in government, he says he remembers being at the table and being a full member, and he, of course, is wrong. If he was not a minister at the time, then he was not a full member of the board, because, of course, he had no rights to vote on anything. He had no voting capacity, and, of course, his presence in that room could not have counted towards quorum.

So, if that former government—and I don't know what the inner workings or the machinations of the way they did business at Treasury Board, but when they closed that door, if they had four non-voting members and three voting members, that would still not have counted as a significant number of voting members to constitute quorum. That member was not a full member. That's what this bill does, in essence, is it simply gives all the rights and privileges of non-ministers to be in that room, to fully participate, to have their say taken and recorded, and of course, in this case, Madam Speaker, let's be clear that the individuals, who have, as a result, been able to come to the Treasury Board table, strengthens those deliberations not just for this government, but for all of this province.

And I'm thinking of the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Mayer); I'm thinking of the member for

Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), individuals who bring to this Legislature the wealth of their past experience in the private sector, their commitment to volunteerism, their participation in and with business across the province, their academic training, and I would suggest in this House that all members of the public are served by the contributions that those individuals are making; not just partial contributions, but full contributions to the process.

And Madam Speaker, I'm thinking of the member for Brandon West's, you know, past involvement in the business community, his former role as the Chamber of Commerce president in the city of Brandon, his training in business administration at Cornell University. These are strengths that he brings to the table.

The member for St. Vital, who I know and have known for some time now, her former work in the community, her lead role with the Old St. Vital BIZ district, her knowledge of the area, her work, let us not forget, as a trustee in the St. Vital—the Louis Riel School Division. These are all former roles that more than qualify her to be at this table.

So some will say that this is an administrative change, but I submit to you that it is a substantial change. It goes further than the last government went. Of course, in answer to questions raised earlier by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), I would remind these members that along with these privileges come, of course, the responsibilities of full members around the table, and that means that these same members now are subject to the same rules around non-disclosure. They are subject to the same rules that correspond—or, that relate to disclosure of conflict of interest. And we have made sure that these concerns have been addressed.

So, Madam Speaker, this is good work. It's work that we're happy to undertake. We understand there are many bills that come before this House, but I am pleased to have this brief opportunity this afternoon, with Bill 6, to talk about how these changes—administrative but substantial—strengthen our deliberations here. Certainly, members on that other side who have served on Treasury Board and have had that honour and that responsibility, they understand that the submissions that come before them in that capacity—well, it's everything from soup to nuts—and it is good to have that broad-based knowledge base to consider these things.

Diverse perspectives that are offered up in respect of the submissions—the items that are

considered there, you know, there's an expression, of course, about many hands make the work light. And, certainly, I would not suggest that the work of Treasury Board is ever light, but still the many hands assist in the work. And so, as full members, these changes allow non ministers on the government side to participate in that work, to make those strong contributions.

The work that I referred to when I began my remarks this afternoon talked about the hard work that we've done, as a government, to begin to correct the course, to move forward toward balance, to fix the finances of the province, to repair services and rebuild our economy. And the work starts, of course, by leading by example, and that's what we have done by—as government, reducing the number of ministers from 18 to 12. When members of the opposition stand up, they will be silent on this. They won't want to address the growth of the number of ministers. They will not want to address the growth of the number of technical officers, political staff, if we can call them that, that served in those capacities. They will not want to address communication staff who were assigned to those ministers. They will not want to address those overall related costs that go along with that expanse in the number of ministers. Why was it done? Those questions would have to be addressed to members of the opposition now, but, certainly, a government who does not lead in that way by example is a government that faces strong questions about management.

We have led by example. We have brought these changes; they strengthen the process. They are changes that I believe have been carefully examined to make sure there is not a downside. There are not unintended consequences that make that deliberative process less safe or less transparent or less open. And so we support them wholeheartedly. And we look forward to the discussion this afternoon and, of course, we look forward more to seeing this bill proceed from this point and see ascension and have it adopted into law.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I'm pleased to get up and speak to third reading of this—

An Honourable Member: Exciting bill.

Mr. Allum: Of this bill, yes, I was trying to think of some way, some adjective that might help to elucidate just what it is that we're debating this afternoon.

The Finance Minister has put a lot of time into this bill, put the House in a lot of time into this bill—

An Honourable Member: Big priority.

Mr. Allum: As my friend says, it's a big priority of the Finance Minister. In fact, he's so seized with it that he's forced us all to have to address something that he knows full well, Madam Speaker, is merely housekeeping; it's really of no particular significance. And I think the best example of that, frankly, is when this bill came to committee just a few weeks ago. Instead of having a lineup of concerned Manitobans stretching out the hallway and down out the front steps of the Legislature, a grand total of zero people came to that committee. And they didn't come, because they knew full well that this is a part of the Finance Minister's attempt to divert and deflect from his real agenda, which comes out in drips and drabs over the course of our time here in this session, but it becomes crystal clear what he's after. And instead on the other hand, we're forced to deal with a matter of minutia that is simply a consequence of the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) own mishandling of this particular issue when—in the immediate aftermath of the election.

* (14:50)

Now, the Finance Minister gets up and does his rooster impersonation and clucks around and talks about the reduction of Cabinet from 18 to 12 or 12 and a half—or 13 if we include the very fine Conservative House leader in the Cabinet. And—but fails to say, in doing so that he—the Premier—eliminated the Department of Labour—like, actually eliminated the Department of Labour, a long-standing, bold and brave—a tradition in Manitoba to have a Department of Labour that dealt directly with workers, with workers' concerns, with workers' issues, with matters absolutely essential to working people and their families. And what the Premier did is just eliminated—he just wiped it right off like it was on a white board and he took the cloth and wiped it right off and suddenly a very, very important tradition in Manitoba ceased to exist.

Now, the Finance Minister might want to brag about that kind of administrative maneuver. He might want to brag about that kind of politics. But what he did—what the Premier did and what the Finance Minister supported the Premier doing was simply to abandon working people in this province. And we see it repeatedly over and over again throughout the first six months of their mandate—Lord knows it feels longer—but in the first six months

of their mandate they've made it crystal clear that when the first sign came out and they wiped out the Department of Labour, it was because there was going to be full-scale, full-frontal attack on working men and women and their families in this province.

And we had, first of all, the introduction of Bill 7 into this Legislature, which the only intention of that bill is to discourage working people from joining a union and having the protections they deserve in the workplace. [*interjection*]

Now, I hear the minister of labour say something about a secret vote. He's the minister of labour, although he's actually called the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen); labour is such an afterthought that it's not even included in the title of his ministry. But he has responsibility for labour and he talks about the secret vote, which only suggests that he doesn't understand the very legislation that he's put forward to.

And at committee the—on last Thursday he had 20-odd people come in and educate him about what the nature of that process looks like, and you know what? He was so enthralled with those presentations he didn't have one question—didn't ask one speaker one thing during the course of that committee meeting. He managed to go through three hours of very carefully laid out presentations and he didn't even have a question for those who'd taken their time from their life and their family life, maybe even taken time off of work, and he cared so little about them, couldn't even ask one single question.

Fortunately, my friend from Flin Flon had many questions, and that put it in profound relief and context the nature of the government's desire to undermine the position of unions and working men and women and their families in this province.

But I only raise this in the context of this particular bill, Madam Speaker, because the minister himself did it. He got up and talked and bragged about the reduction of 18 to 12, failing to mention that very, very serious matters are no longer addressed by a Cabinet minister in this new government but, in fact, are afterthoughts, sub-issues not to be of great concern. And so what we get instead are these kinds of bills put before the House, Bill 6, The Financial Administration Amendment Act. The title is about as exciting as the bill itself.

And what we know, and we know for sure that this was a matter of face-saving for the government. And it's the Finance Minister—and I'll give him some

cred here—coming to the rescue of his Premier who had so badly stumbled out of the starting gate from the moment—from the day after the election. The starter got up on the day after the election, and he said, ready, set, go, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) took his first step, and he tumbled forward. He took a colossal misstep, and that misstep began with whom he met—whom he named to Treasury Board.

Because we know that in the people that were first named to be on Treasury Board, that it lacked diversity—lacked diversity, Madam Speaker—and did not include, in the first instance—we were the only province in Canada not to have women represented on Treasury Board when the Premier came out of the gate. That's because at that point, the Premier was arguing that he was all in favour of a meritocracy. And he kept saying, only those who've earned it get a place at the table at Treasury Board. Well, apparently, the only people who had earned it were people who did not reflect the very, very real diversity of this great province that we all live in.

And it wasn't just women, Madam Speaker, who were not represented. Indigenous peoples were not represented on Treasury Board. Northerners were not represented on Treasury Board. Persons with disabilities were not represented on Treasury Board. So as I said, when the Premier was at the starting gate on the first day after the election, and the starter went ready, set, go, and he put his foot forward, and he stumbled and did a somersault, because he actually failed to reflect the very diversity of this province in his first attempt at naming individuals to Treasury Board.

So along comes his Finance Minister, and he says, well, you know, I can help you there, Premier. You've made a mistake. You've stumbled; you've erred; you didn't get it right. But the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), to his credit, said, you know, I'll help you. I'll help you. You know, you're having a bad time, Premier. You're not really getting it right. But I'm going to ask my officials in the Finance Department, who are seized with any number of important files, numerous critical issues, and he says to them, I want you to get to work on a bill that changes the composition of Treasury Board.

And so many people were interested in this bill, Bill 6, that not a one showed up to committee. Nobody was there. And so I hear the member from Morris, who's known to mishear and is quick with his thumbs but not his—but not anything else—I hear him saying, well, that's a sign of good legislation.

Oh, he says—I hear him saying now it's rock-solid legislation. And I'm sure when he gets the opportunity, he's going to go canvassing in that great constituency of Morris, and he's going to say—this is how he's going to say it. He's going to get to the door, and he said, you know, we got to our first few days in government, and my Premier (Mr. Pallister) stumbled. My Premier took a misstep. He tumbled and fell; he erred; he got it wrong. And so the member from Morden-Winkler, the Finance Minister, came to his rescue and he had his officials working day and night on a bill—day and night—on a bill to change the composition of Treasury Board.

* (15:00)

It's quite something, frankly, Madam Speaker, that we're required in this Chamber—when there are so many pressing issues in our communities, so many great challenges, so much to build and create, that this is what we're forced to deal with.

And I certainly go to my constituents in Fort Garry-Riverview and I said—I say to them, this government's so uninspired that the Finance Minister, who has stumbled himself on any number of occasions, even though he came to the rescue of the Premier who stumbled—[*interjection*] Oh, we'll get to your stumbles—his stumbles in a moment, Madam Speaker.

But in this case I'm trying—I tried to give him some cred, tried to show that he came to the rescue of a Premier who valued meritocracy over diversity more. And the member from Morris is going to go to the door and he's going to say, well, this Finance Minister, he was so hard at work getting a bill to change the composition of Treasury Board.

And you know what the member from Morris' constituents are going to say to that, Madam Speaker? The first thing they're going to say is why didn't the Premier get it right in the first place? Why didn't he have the instincts and the finesse, the understanding, the ability to recognize that Treasury Board must include all the voices of Manitobans and must reflect all the diversity of this province if they're going to make the kind of decisions that need to be made on behalf of the people of Manitoba to build a fair, more just, more equitable society for everyone?

So that's the first question that the constituents from Morris are going to ask. And then they're going to say, well, they're going to say, well, are you saying

that others couldn't attend Treasury Board prior to this bill coming forward?

And the member from Morris is going to have to say, well, actually they could. In fact, my esteemed friend from Fort Garry-Riverview, when he was a—on the backbench of—when he was on the backbench of the former government, was in fact invited to attend to Treasury Board, week in, week out. The minister says this is—this bill is notable because this will now allow people to be in the room—[*interjection*] Yes, listen to the discussion and then have their say.

Well, Madam Speaker, when I, as a humble member of the former government, attended Treasury Board—[*interjection*] Well, I don't know why that would cause such an uproar. I'm nothing if not humble—[*interjection*] Mr. Humility, as my friend says.

But I—but when I was a humble member of the backbench and I went to Treasury Board, I was in the room—check; I was able to listen to discussion—check; I was able to have my say—check. We could do it; it could all be done.

And so, consequently, Madam Speaker, this is a—[*interjection*] Well, no; that was the point. I also wasn't—I didn't have a vote, as the member said. Quorum didn't depend on my presence or absence, but I had the great privilege of sitting with other members of the backbench at Treasury Board who were in the room listening to discussion and having their say.

In fact, I remember very fondly sitting with the former member from Selkirk who went on to become Finance Minister of this great province, and he and I shared in many, many wonderful meetings being part of the Treasury Board, a larger group of people. Yes, only certain folks had certain Cabinet ministers, which is in the parliamentary tradition of this country, had voting privileges. But there was always the opportunity to participate, to engage and even to meet that very high platitude, acknowledged by the Finance Minister, that I could even be in the room.

So, in that respect, Madam Speaker, we know—and I've said this a few times. Because I honestly feel it and also I'm a really big fan, but I'm—there's so many Seinfeld moments from this government. And this, more than any other bill we're going to debate over the course of the next few weeks, over the next few months, over the next few years, this is a bill about nothing. And that's a very, very sad

commentary for a government who spent 17 long years in the wilderness wandering around—wandering around getting beat in not one election, but two elections, three elections, four elections, four in a row. When this group of folks is able to have a record of four winning elections in a row, then we'll listen to them. Then we'll hear what they have to say.

But I can guarantee you that within six months they've already put the damper on their government's agenda, because after 17 years of wandering out of the wilderness this is the first bill out of the gate? *[interjection]* Yes, I mean, they were so excited on election night. I can just imagine the Premier (Mr. Pallister) looked up and he said, the sky is blue, and you know what, Manitobans, we're going to change the composition of Treasury Board, and everybody in that room probably went, woohoo.

An Honourable Member: But they're sore winners.

Mr. Allum: Yes, they are, they—I couldn't agree more—sore winners in that respect.

And I just can't understand—I can understand—I need to rephrase this a little bit. I can understand why the Premier would want a bill like this because he mishandled this whole issue right from the get-go, found himself in hot water right from the get-go. And as this Premier is wont to do, he wouldn't apologize for it, wouldn't say that he'd maybe made a mistake, wouldn't say that he'd made a decision that actually didn't reflect the incredible and important diversity of this province. Instead, he tried to defend it, first of all, and then he had to rely on his Finance Minister to come out with some kind of bill to save his bacon, put his department into enormous amounts of work over something that really is not a central issue to the people of Manitoba.

I know that these folks didn't go—I'm talking to the members of the government now. I know that they weren't on the doorstep talking about this when they were running for a campaign, no. No, I don't think that they did. I'm quite certain that not one member of the government said, you know what—you know what—not one member of the government said to folks at the doorstep, you know, the first thing, the first bill, the first law we're going to make in this province—you know the first thing we're going to do? We're going to change the composition of Treasury Board.

An Honourable Member: I did, James.

Mr. Allum: Now, the member from Morris said he did, and that's a dramatic disappointment to hear him

say, make that kind of admission, that he lacks such empathy with the people of Manitoba that the only thing that he's interested in is changing the composition of Treasury Board.

But I would say this, Madam Speaker. In putting forward this face-saving bill to save his Premier from a terrible, terrible misstep, that it actually reflects a pattern in the way in which the new government has acted. It has not made any effort to reflect and to pay tribute to the tremendous diversity of this province.

* (15:10)

I think the most—the best example of that, and it came in the middle of the night under the cover of darkness, when we saw the pointless removal of two respected members of the Winnipeg Police Board, who through no apparent fault of their own were suddenly, without warning, without being properly advised, notified through the media that they would no longer be welcome on the Winnipeg Police Board.

I'm talking about Leslie Spillett, who I have known for many, many years. I have the utmost respect for her standing as a iconic figure in her community, who has fought day in and day out for indigenous peoples in this province and in this country; indigenous women in this province, in this country; and for indigenous communities in this province and in this country. And then, unceremoniously, under the cover of darkness, with no warning—with no warning—with no warning—was unceremoniously dropped, frankly, fired, from the Winnipeg Police Board.

The same can be said for Angeline Ramkisoan. Also, the same thing happened. Unceremoniously, without warning, without any call from any minister of the government to explain their actions or to do anything, just suddenly dropped, not even thanked for their work on behalf of the people of Manitoba. And that's exactly to the point, our problem with this particular bill.

It's—if the Finance Minister wants to change the composition of Treasury Board to try to make up for the errors of his Premier, we get it. It's fine; no big deal on our side at all. But what we have trouble with, on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, is the overwhelming pattern that seems to exist in this government to eliminate diversity from the composition of many, many bodies that are—represent this government.

We found, again, not only with the two iconic figures associated with the police board, but also deputy ministers who represent diverse communities, also let go. You know, but there was probably a thank you there somewhere along the way; thanks for your contribution but see you later. And so, consequently, again, it's that pattern that is of great concern to us. And I think it's because, Madam Speaker, that the government listens to one voice and one voice only, and that's the voice of business in this community.

It was no surprise that at the Bill 7 hearings the other night, we had, I think, 20-odd supporters—20-odd people in opposition to that bill, and the only one to show up to support it was the chamber of commerce. To us, that could be no more of a dramatic illustration of a government not interested in the diverse voices of Manitobans, not interested in the diverse opinions of Manitoba, not interested in reflecting the diversity of our people and who we are becoming in the 21st century. No, for them, they're looking to walk us back not just to the 19–20th century, Madam Speaker, but all the way back to the 19th century when one voice and one voice only determined what should happen in this province, and that was the voice of big business.

Now, we have, actually, when we were in government, an outstanding record of listening to business and working with business. We're the government, after all, that took the small-business tax down from 8 per cent all the way down to zero, zip, nada, nil, nothing.

So we understood that there's a relationship that needs to be built with the business community, that's for sure. But they weren't the only voice we were going to listen to. We wanted to hear the voices of all Manitobans, to hear their experiences reflected in public policy made by our government. On the contrary, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) does away with the—what was formerly called the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, and instead he establishes something called the Premier's enterprise team, his PET, I believe is the acronym for that. And who's on that committee? Does it reflect the diverse interests of Manitobans? No, it doesn't, Madam Speaker.

The former Premier's Economic Advisory Council had representatives from labour, working—representing working men and women and their families in this province, representatives from the newcomer community, representatives from the

indigenous community, representatives from the environmental community, a broad spectrum of people participating in establishing the policy direction of the province for decades and generations to come. And it reflected Manitoba, as it should be, in the 21st century, with different faces and diverse opinions around the table.

Not with this Premier, not with the Premier's enterprise team, which is a very high-selected group of individuals; they don't reflect the diverse nature of our population nor do they reflect the diverse public policy issues.

So, Madam Speaker, in the brief time I've had to speak out on this bill, I just want to put it on record again because it's important: that this province faces very, very significant challenges to keep Manitobans at work, to keep the social and economic foundation of this province growing, to continue to work with Manitobans from all walks of life so that there's a place for everyone here in Manitoba. And the best the Finance Minister could do was come up with a bill out of the starting gate, to save face for his Premier who'd stumbled, and to change the composition of Treasury Board when it didn't actually need to be changed in the first place.

But we've spent an inordinate amount of time debating it. Madam Speaker, we don't really have any issues with this bill, but I hope, from now on, that this is the end of the housekeeping for the Finance Minister; he'll get on to the real problems facing Manitobans.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I look forward to the opportunity to speak on this bill. I notice the last member speaking talked about not wasting time; I will try and not waste time by speaking briefly.

I—we in the Liberal Party support this legislation, but I do have a couple of things that I would like to raise with the minister and concerns. I had raised some concerns during second reading about the legislation and about exactly how the conflict of interest measures would work. I had asked whether the conflict of interest measures, for example, would extend if a member who's on Treasury Board, who is not a minister, leaves their position as an MLA, would there be a period of time when that member would still be covered by that conflict and could not be lobbying government related to matters that may have been before Treasury Board and based on insider information.

* (15:20)

I was very happy, and I will quote the minister when he said, on my question at second reading—the minister said, we will clarify further for him when this bill goes to committee to make sure that there isn't inadvertently any opportunity created through this bill that wasn't there before. And I certainly appreciated that.

I have looked at the minister's statement at the committee stage. In fact, I replied later on to the minister in the second reading period. I said I hope the minister at committee stage will be able to present the full documentation with regard to the guidelines and the restrictions. And with optimism, therefore, I looked carefully at the minister's presentation at the committee stage. And I have read it four times, and I still don't find the reference to the increased documentation, the reference to what happens if an MLA who's been not a minister has been on Treasury Board, who's retired, and will they be covered for a period that they can't lobby the government if they are not on Treasury Board. And so it would have been very nice to have all these details, and hopefully at some point, the minister will come around and present these details to me.

I note that the minister, in his speech, talked about strengthening the process. I hope that it is. But without this sort of documentation, I really can't judge. And I'm not yet ready to take the minister at his word without having seen the documentation. And I think the minister would understand that.

With those words, Madam Speaker, that's really all I wanted to say, and just pass those remarks on to the minister that we will support this legislation.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 6, The Financial Administration Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, a recorded vote.

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

* (15:30)

Recorded Vote

Madam Speaker: The question—order please.

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 6, The Financial Administration Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Bindle, Chief, Clarke, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fletcher, Fontaine, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Kinew, Klassen, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Selinger, Smith, Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Swan, Teitsma, Wharton, Wiebe, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 53, Nays 0.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 10—The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to concurrence and third reading of Bill 10, The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister for Indigenous and Municipal Relations, that Bill 10, The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke), that Bill 10, The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer

Accountability Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Friesen: It's my pleasure to be able to stand at third reading and put a few comments on the record in respect of this act that would, essentially, pave the way for this new government of Manitoba to bring new legislation that will once again restore to taxpayers in this province protections because Manitobans have the right—Manitobans have the right—to be able to vote on major tax increases, PST increases, personal income tax, corporate income tax, health and education tax levies. These were the original taxes that were identified in legislation that were—that was brought in the 1990s. Speaking of the 1990s, the members of the opposition love to speak about the '90s; here's their opportunity.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In this province, fine legislation was brought at that time designed to give Manitobans the right, when a government was contemplating a major tax increase, to be able to have their say through a referendum. And as I said in second reading of this bill, had that legislation its—the letter of the law and the spirit of the law been respected by all governments that came henceforth, we would not be where we are today, because that legislation brought real protections, and the legacy of the NDP government was to incrementally water down that legislation, try to make changes when no one was looking, move to a procedure whereby balance would be seen on a four-year basis instead of a one-year basis, eventually amending and removing conditions that went to ministerial salary penalties because they were not hitting the targets they were supposed to hit. So they basically took a pay cut, a second one, and then they enshrined it. They wanted to make sure that they would not, as a consequence of their overspending, face the consequences in law of their overspending which was to be subsequent salary reduction.

* (15:40)

Of course, Madam Speaker, there were more changes brought and I understand—oh, sorry, Mr. Acting Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to acknowledge you in your place there and indicate, as I was saying, that at its inception, this legislation, of course, brought other protections as well.

I remember from that time that there was language that went to catastrophic events that realized that there are events, substantial events, often weather events—events, as individuals who live in this province know only too well, that can strain the ability of government to meet its targets. And that original legislation, as good legislation does, acknowledged that challenge. But in addition to that, it also talked about things like public hearings that would be necessary if governments wanted to raise the tax.

What happened after the bill was introduced is that the former administration, the NDP government, proved themselves to be no respecters of that legislation, as I said, bringing amendment after amendment and we find our self at this place right now whereby the legislation does not resemble what it first intended to be. And, as a result, our government did the hard work of looking at this and saying, what is the path forward for this government? Does accountability matter in a legislature? Yes. Does accountability matter for—or, does it matter that a government keeps its word? The answer, we believe, is yes.

Members of the other side have a different opinion of that. We all know the context of this discussion. We know, when I was first elected in this House in 2011 and others as well at that time, we knew that the fundamental pledge of the NDP government, the pledge that found their way to an electoral victory in 2011, was the pledge they made, the solemn covenant they've made to Manitobans that they would not raise the PST, and then they did. Broke their word and went around a law that was in place in order to do it.

Now we all know the path. Members of this Chamber understand legislation that that former government had every right to raise the PST if they want to do that. They had every right. But there was a process in law whereby they would have first had to have brought the amendments to that bill, the taxpayers protection act. They would've had to bring the amendments to allow them to remove a clause about a referendum and then basically pave the way. But it would've taken time and they did not favour that view. They wanted a tax hike. They wanted it then, and they went out and did it. They had legislation in place and they ran roughshod over it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are where we are. Our government didn't announce this and realized that the path forward is a two-part path. The path

forward must be seen as first striking the legislation as it sits now, so poorly amended, so watered down in intent, and then, sharply on the heels of that, introducing new legislation that will restore for Manitobans those rights we talked about because those rights matter just as integrity of government matters. And so what this bill essentially does is pave the way.

Now I know this afternoon, members of the opposition may stand up and say, oh, well, this government cares so much about these protections and yet this bill strikes those protections. And I wanted to say right away for the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) who might go here, or the member for Fort Garry-Riverview, that he knows this not to be the case. He understands that this is a two-part process. We cannot enact new legislation today that conflicts. There is a process. We will bring this legislation.

We are optimistic that this legislation will find its way to this House after debate. We are optimistic that it will receive royal assent, and we look forward to that day when we will place on the table in this Legislature a new bill that will, once again, once again, restore these protections to Manitobans; to protect them from a government that is unscrupulously trying to raise tax; to protect them from a government who feels that accountability should not go to its ministers when they fail to meet their targets.

And, as I've said before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this process will have to do, when we lay that new legislation on the table, is it will have to address two paths. It will have to address a path that takes government back toward balance with meaningful consequences to a government that will not hit its targets in respect of moving towards balance. And then that legislation will have to articulate another path ensuing from a place from balance to make sure that, as I've said in the past, that no government henceforth loses its enthusiasm or appetite for balanced budgets.

Why does it matter? Why does it matter in an era when the opposition says there's no problem with not matching revenues against expenditures? This can go on. We can find the sweet spot, they say, between insolvency, and somehow underneath that we can find that area whereby we can keep raising the government's spending. We can keep borrowing beyond our ability to sustain it, and somehow we'll just keep the creditors at bay.

Well, what did we hear last week—just it was a week or two ago, we heard the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and I know the member for Louise Bridge will want to—oh sorry, I mean the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) will want to hear this. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that the spending practices of the provinces are currently unsustainable. He used the word unsustainable.

So, while we know that the members of the opposition will not hear it from us, maybe they will hear it from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who says that provincial spending at these levels is unsustainable, must be sustained, must be corrected—stability must be brought. This is necessary legislation. It is necessary for Manitobans. It is necessary for our government who cares to do the right thing. We care to do the right thing. This is the path forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let members of this House not be fooled by the rhetoric that will be put on the record. The opposition will make claims that somehow the government gave itself a raise—nothing could be further from the truth. If they're read the legislation in place, they know what the rules say. While they are saying those things, all members should hear that they gave themselves a raise. They gave themselves a raise every time they walked away from the conditions of that legislation that would have required a requisite decrease in ministerial salary when they failed to make their targets. That government did not hit their targets.

That government left this province with a legacy of debt, a net debt—summary net debt that doubled in less than 10 years, revenue that could not get in alignment with expenditure. That's why this legislation is necessary. We look forward to the passage of this in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I'm pleased to get up to speak to Bill 10, The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act. I tell you, when this Finance Minister comes up with titles he really comes up with catchy ones, doesn't he?

But I want to begin where my friend from River Heights began when we first started debating this bill, and he pointed out the incredible irony of this Cabinet minister fronting, this government repealing a bill that they brought in in the mid '90s, and then

hailed as the second coming of all great legislation. And now here he is today, coming forward, saying, well, we need to repeal it. Yes, we need to repeal it. Yes, because they are not able to follow it.

* (15:50)

And so that's rich in irony, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It gives us, on this side of the House, a great chuckle—[*interjection*] as my friend from Tyndall Park says. And I have to say we're not going to stand in the way of repealing a balanced budget legislation. As the Finance Minister says, there's a step two coming, and that's when our ears prick up, and that's when we're going to hold them to account, and that's when we're going to be fighting. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill, while somewhat more consequential than the previous bill we were debating about changing the composition of Treasury Board, nevertheless also promises more than it delivers. And it's really nothing more than cleaning up the mess made by the Filmon Conservatives in the 1990s. And here we are having to debate it.

The thing about the bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is we were at committee the other day, and I pointed out in the committee meeting over the composition of Treasury Board, not a Manitoban came, so uninspired were they by the Finance Minister's attempt to establish a legislative agenda here. But I will say—I will say—that at the committee hearing for Bill 10, at least one brave Manitoban came. And it's such an interesting thing, because in this bill they're supporting it, but they're not supporting it because the government's on the right track. They're supporting it as—in an effort to get the government on the right track.

And so Josh Brandon of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, a very highly respected individual in his own right—I've known Josh for a long time, and he's a really dedicated, committed individual to social justice in our city and in our province, but also working for the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg which has done extraordinary work since 1919 to work with community organizations and networks on critical issues, as they say, like poverty, homelessness, immigration and justice, all things which are foreign to the government but which are absolutely of critical importance to everybody else in Manitoba and certainly the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

And Mr. Brandon comes to committee—and I'm going to quote at length from it, because it's important to get on the record for the second time

what he had told the Finance Minister. And he came to committee, and he said—and I'm quoting here: There are two aspects of the legislation for which we speak in support: (1) eliminating the requirement that the Province post an annual budget in either balance or surplus, and (2) eliminating the requirement for a referendum on tax increases.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

So while Mr. Brandon is there, arguably in support of the Conservative bill to repeal the balanced budget legislation, he's actually in direct opposition to what the Finance Minister's agenda is going forward.

Mr. Brandon goes on to say, and I'm quoting again: Both of these conditions restrict the ability of government to operate effectively. They lead to poor governing decisions. Over 20 years of balanced budget legislation, it has been the people in the lowest income groups who have borne the brunt of service reductions that have been the result of the legislation. End quote.

And then he goes on to say, for organizations providing services—quoting again: For organizations providing services to people living in poverty, balanced budget legislation introduces inflexibility and increases uncertainty often at the times their services are most badly needed, such as during market turndowns. Balanced budget legislation passes off financial risk to those living most precariously at the edge of our economy, unquote.

And so the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, who showed up to the Finance Minister's committee meeting and spoke directly to the Finance Minister about the implausibly wrong direction he's setting Manitoba on course for—and he takes particular issue with the Finance Minister's desire—at some point in the future, I'm sure we'll see—to reintroduce legislation of this kind, and he says, quite directly to the Finance Minister: Don't. Please, don't. Don't go there. It's not necessary. It's not required. And I hope the Finance Minister will review what Mr. Brandon said about that particular element of the balanced budget legislation and take it seriously, because people in Manitoba need flexibility, need agility from their government, in order to address their issues. And all the Finance Minister wants to do is put Manitoba in a straitjacket, unable to respond to the issues that matter most to Manitobans.

Mr. Brandon goes on to say, and I'm quoting again, deficit financing should be seen as one tool in

government's tool kit for managing the economy, not—one not to be over-relied on but indispensable under certain circumstances. Balancing the budget should not be an end in itself. Rather, we must use whatever tools to work to build an economy that benefits all citizens, increasing equity and justice, end quote.

Again, I'll say to the—through you, Madam Speaker, to the Finance Minister, I'm hope—I hope his ears were wide open when Mr. Brandon was saying this to him at committee meeting, the only Manitoban to show up to address 'thish' issue. And I hope he will take him seriously and apply the very lessons that Mr. Brandon is talking about.

And then Mr. Brandon goes on to talk—and about the other aspect of Mr.—of the Finance Minister's plan going forward, because, really, the repeal of the balanced budget act is, as usual, more housekeeping from the Finance Minister. But it's what's to come next that is of great concern to us.

And so Mr. Brandon said to him in committee, and I'm quoting again: Another part of the act being repealed involves a requirement to call a referendum before introducing a tax increase. This requirement is bad public policy and prevents governments from developing tax policy to meet the needs of citizens. Referenda are blunt instruments of gauging public policy. They oversimplify what are often complex issues. Recent experiences of other countries, including Brexit and the Colombian peace accord, as well as the experiences in Canada, such as the Charlottetown Accord, election reform or transit taxes show how too often referenda devolve into plebiscites on general government performance, rather than on the specific question being asked.

This is important advice that the government needs to listen to from one of Manitoba's most respected advocates for social justice, for equity and for fairness for all Manitobans. Don't go down this path again. It's not necessary. It's not required. It's the responsibility of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Cabinet to manage the finances of the province, but they don't have to put a straitjacket around the budget, because that straitjacket will prevent the government from addressing the concerns of those people who need it most. That's the lesson. That's what we learned at committee.

And that's what has been learned from balanced budget legislations passed all across this country and around the world. And we see that no one's going

there any more because it's simply not necessary and it's not required.

So, Madam Speaker, I just want to say that we stand in support of this particular piece of legislation, because we want to say bye-bye to this kind of antiquated piece of legislation that has no place in the 20th century—21st century. On this side of the House, we stand for fairness, equity, social justice for every Manitoban. That's what we want to be debating in this House. And we invite the Finance Minister to get on with it once and for all.

* (16:00)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I want to put a few comments on the record with regard to this bill. The balanced budget taxpayer accountability act, which we're repealing, is currently a rather watered-down act—the bill, which was watered down over successive years under the NDP when they were in government.

It's interesting; I'll be watching carefully and curiously at how the NDP will vote on this bill, which repeals the balanced budget, fiscal management and accountability act. The NDP made major changes to the original act. If their changes had been any good, then this bill should now be a good bill and they should vote against repealing it. If the changes that the NDP made were no good and the bill ended up being a bad bill, then they should vote for this bill.

So, depending on whether the NDP did a good job or a bad job when they were in opposition, you know, will indicate—we will find out by how the NDP actually votes.

One of the things that we object to is that this bill, if it's repealed—we don't mind repealing the bill, but if it's repealed without putting in a new accountability measure, then we will have a vacuum; we will be in limbo; we will have no accountability whatsoever. So we oppose the fact that this bill creates a vacuum in accountability because it repeals accountability without replacing it.

It also means that there will no longer be a reduction in Cabinet ministers' salary if Cabinet ministers don't do their job. Now, I acknowledge and I want to compliment the NDP because they took responsibility, accepted the reduction in Cabinet ministers' salaries, knowing that they had not been able to fulfill the terms of the balanced budget and balance the budget, but—so I think the NDP deserve some credit for that.

But, of course, the first thing which the Conservatives did when they got into power was to raise Cabinet ministers' salaries in their first budget, and I've been asked, for example, by a number of people, you know, how many people that the Conservatives have let go or fired, if you like, so that their own salaries, their Cabinet ministers' salaries, could be increased?

Now, of course I don't know the answer to that, but it's a reasonable question and, you know, maybe the Finance Minister will provide an answer some day to that.

So we're rather skeptical, I would say, of the path that we have seen so far being taken by the Conservatives. We're skeptical about their credibility on accountability. The Conservatives, one of their things that they've done just a few weeks ago, was to vote against Bill 106, which would bring accountability into health care. We couldn't understand why the NDP talked so much about accountability and accountability in health care, and I must praise the Speaker because she was very strong on accountability in health care and even supported an earlier version of Bill 6 before her party became government.

So we were surprised when the Conservatives voted against Bill 106, which was going to provide accountability, and it seems to suggest to us that the Conservatives don't really care all that much about accountability.

We are still waiting. We are quite concerned that the Conservatives are not making funding decisions even when they can spend some money to save a lot of money as a result, and that, you know, why would you hesitate to spend some money if you're going to save a lot of money? And yet the Conservatives are postponing decisions. Many organizations are being left in limbo because they're not making decisions. Sheriffs' office's training has been delayed and is waiting, and people—I even had a fellow who came to me, right. He had signed up for Sheriffs' office training, and it was right toward the end of August, as I recall. And he'd been told, you know, this training is starting at the beginning of September. He was very looking forward to it.

He was told by the people in the training program that in order to be in training, he would have to quit his job. So he let his employer know that he would be leaving his job a couple of weeks ahead of time just as, you know, you normally would do so that your employer is not in difficulty if you're

leaving. And his employer appropriately then hired somebody to replace him and had him train that person.

And then right at that point where he was just ready to start the course, he got a call saying the Conservative government had put the training in limbo. It was all in limbo. He was without a job now because he'd had to leave his job, and there was a replacement there; there was no going back.

And, you know, that's the sort of thing which is happening at the moment and we're getting calls from people and organizations because government decisions are not being made about whether they're going to have sheriff's officers' training, whether they're going to have funding for organizations, whether they're going to support the new Inuit Art Centre or not, and on and on.

And so, you know, we're not—we're skeptical about this government; we're skeptical about their real commitment to accountability. We're skeptical when they don't take opportunities to save money, to take those opportunities. And so we don't want to give this government a blank cheque. We don't want to get rid of accountability without replacing it with any other form of accountability. We don't want to be left in limbo like so many others—the sheriff's officers who want to be trained and so on—are being left by the Conservatives.

So, you know what, we've looked at this situation and we've decided we will not support Bill 10. There's no—we don't give credibility to the commitment to have a new bill until it's actually there. We have some skeptical, and I think rightly so, about the, what the Conservatives' real commitment to accountability.

So without seeing the bill that will replace this, without having a form of accountability there, we don't want to get rid of accountability completely, and we don't want to support a situation where the Conservatives are going to continue to have an increased, increase their own ministers' salaries without accountability.

So, Madam Speaker, those are my comments on this bill, and that's our decision and the Liberal Party.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 10, The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act.

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

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Recorded vote, please.

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

Recorded Vote

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 10, The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act.

Division

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

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Bindle, Chief, Clarke, Cox, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fletcher, Fontaine, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Kinew, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Saran, Schuler, Selinger, Smith, Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Swan, Teitsma, Wharton, Wiebe, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Gerrard, Klassen, Lamoureux.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 50, Nays 3.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 2—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to concurrence and third reading of Bill 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur

l'Assemblée législative, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Stefanson: I just have—mostly, I've—I put a number of words on the record already about this bill, and I just have a few more that I'd like to add.

Certainly, this bill—right now, The Legislative Assembly Act currently requires a by-election to be held within one year of a vacancy occurring in the representation of an electoral division. So this bill requires a by-election to be conducted within 180 days after a vacancy occurs. And, actually, as a result of some of the information submitted by the Chief Electoral Officer after the bill had been drafted, we felt it important to make a minor change to the bill in order to provide some clarity to a matter that was raised. And subsequent to this request, we made an amendment to the bill to ensure that an election must have taken place within 180 days of an electoral district vacancy. So just to clarify that for the bill, that was the intention in the first place, and so we just wanted to provide further clarity. We thank the Chief Electoral Officer for the input on that matter, and I know that that amendment was passed at the committee stage.

So I think with those few words, I look forward to the passage of this bill so we can move on.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 2 at third reading stage.

You know, there aren't enough books written about political life here in Manitoba, and I look forward one day to read the book that's going to be written about the one-term government that sits in front of us. And that book, of course—that book is going to, of course, set out the history. And there in that book will be the first couple of days of this new government coming in with 40 members, many of them sitting in the back row, not sure what they're doing, and that's okay, because many times, it takes a while to get to understand what's going on in this building. But as they understand, they will see the vacuous, thin legislative agenda that this government has come forward with.

And here's Bill 2, the very first substantive bill that this government brought in. All kinds of things

they wanted to talk about, all kinds of things they wanted to do, and what does this bill do? It shortens the time to call a by-election from 12 months down to six months, something which—[interjection]—and I hope Hansard will record the applause from all the folks across the way because it proves the thesis of how thin this government's new ideas truly are.

The bill itself, of course, there isn't much wrong with it. Of course, it was rewritten by the Chief Electoral Officer after the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), I presume, took the bill, after it was introduced in this House, and said, well, here's this bill. We know the Chief Electoral Officer had major changes, in fact, pretty much the entire bill. But I do appreciate the fact that the Minister of Justice did, after the bill was introduced, talk to the Chief Electoral Officer. But, again, it just highlights the—I'm trying to choose my words carefully, Madam Speaker—the challenge that this new government is having in their actions actually keeping up with their words.

This is a government which talks about consultation, but it's rather obvious that the Minister of Justice didn't consult with the Chief Electoral Officer before she introduced the bill. We know that's the case. We know that's the case because I asked her the question in the question and answer period on this bill, and we know it's the case because, of course, the Chief Electoral Officer suggested changes, and we had to make those changes in the course of committee, which is fine. The bill is better as a result. But for this Minister of Justice, perhaps now she's learned the lesson that she should actually do some consulting with people who are affected by the bills before she stands up and introduces them in the House.

And, of course, why did she introduce this bill? Well, she was told to do so by the Premier (Mr. Pallister). And we know, of course, we've got the letter of May 3rd, 2016, which is also going to form a very, very interesting part of the record in what will be a fascinating book about this one-term government. The title might be, how did it all go wrong so quickly. And, of course, in that mandate given to the Minister of Justice, there's 17 unnumbered points, 17 bullet points, none of which, of course, have anything to do with public safety in the province of Manitoba. That's actually not the fault of the Minister of Justice who, I think I've put on the record before, I rather like, who I think is a decent person, but that is the fault of the Premier.

The Premier decided that his first step would be issuing a mandate letter, which very, very surprisingly, in a province like Manitoba, which said absolutely nothing about any role of this Minister of Justice in reducing crime in Manitoba, about making our communities safer in Manitoba, about making our roads safer in Manitoba, about respecting the people who work in our justice system and making things safe for people who are in the justice system against their will. And that has really been highlighted.

And I suppose all the work the minister has done on Bill 2, having to run down to get the Chief Electoral Officer to correct her work, has taken her eye off the ball. And we see now, day after day, more evidence that, unfortunately, this Minister of Justice has been given no tools by the Premier to actually make things safer in Manitoba, and, in fact, we're moving in the other direction.

Bill 2, itself, of course, it's a fascinating history. We have a Premier who, of course, complained about how long it has taken some by-elections to be called, yet we also have the same Premier who complained bitterly when the previous government called a by-election immediately after he was acclaimed as the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba. Of course, there wasn't a leadership contest; they didn't have a contest because they could only find one person that actually wanted to do the job.

And after that time, the bill was called—or the election was called very quickly in Fort Whyte. And did the new Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party see this as an opportunity to simply go out and campaign and do his thing? Well, no; his first action was to turn around and complain that the election was called too soon, because, of course, for the Premier, in his reality, as he likes to call it, his altered reality for working people in the province of Manitoba, you see, August in Manitoba is family month. And most families that I represent in the West End of Winnipeg, of course, may get a couple of weeks of holidays that they'll use sometime during the year—they may not; they may have responsibilities to their families, they may have responsibilities in their communities. I haven't yet met one of the hard-working people in Minto, nor would I meet hard-working people in Concordia or Elmwood or St. Boniface or Tyndall Park or frankly any of the areas now represented by Conservatives, where people would say, well, I'm sorry, August is family month; I can't get any work done.

So, you know, a little bit like Goldilocks, you know, the porridge was too cold and the porridge was too hot. And now I think the Premier (Mr. Pallister), of course, he's now suggesting that if the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) just keeps focusing, then the porridge will be just right. Well, it's a strange way to start the legislative agenda for this new government, and something that does have to give us pause for consideration.

Now, what things has this minister been ignoring while she's been working on gravely important bills such as Bill 2? And, of course, one of the ironies is that, of course, this government, I guess, supposes—insisted on bringing this bill in right away, because it feels the need to constrain itself. Because over the next four years, and probably only four years, it will be the Premier who's going to make the decision on when by-elections get called in the first place. I don't know if it's a indication that he has so little self-control that he needs to be constrained within six months, but, in any event, that's been the burden that this Attorney General has had to bear.

And what else has happened while the Attorney General has been working away on her checklist contained in the letter of May 3rd? Well, we've been learning that the population in our jails in Manitoba has skyrocketed. And just back in July, when we were in Estimates, I asked questions of the minister, and she put on the record that at that time there were 2,373 inmates in the provincial jail system. Well, that is a high number, but actually no higher than it had been when I gave the answer in Estimates in April of 2014. And, as a matter of act, that number was about 4 per cent lower than it had been the year before, as we were making progress on a very, very difficult situation.

But making progress on bringing down the numbers of people in jail, it's not easy. You can't take your eye off the ball. It requires a minister who is dedicated to the task, who's going to listen to the excellent advice of people in department and is prepared to work with community partners to try and get better results.

* (16:30)

But, no, this minister—again, nothing personal against her—but a minister, who is constrained by this Premier's own world view, has done nothing. And, as a result, we now know that as of yesterday morning in Public Accounts Committee, we learned that there are 182 more prisoners in our jail system than there were less than five months ago.

And I'll be very honest, Madam Speaker, I was surprised by that and, in fact, the discussion that the member and I had in Estimates in June, she acknowledged that, indeed, the number of people in our jail system had stabilized over the last couple of years.

But now here we are, less than five months later, 7 per cent increase in the number of people in our jail system. And, indeed, if we look at the very, very serious of overcrowding, in just the past five months the number of—or the ratio of overcrowding has actually increased by 50 per cent, and Manitobans are worried about what's going to come next, and I'm worried about what's going to come next because it's clear that we have a minister who has no answers.

And yesterday morning at Public Accounts Committee I had a chance to ask the deputy minister not political questions—real, practical questions about what answers the Minister of Justice and the Department of Justice has and, unfortunately, those answers don't seem to be there.

And we heard yesterday morning that I guess while this minister was so busy working on Bill 2 there is no plan to increase the number of correctional officers in Manitoba to try and deal with another 182 people in our jail system.

And, again, to put it in perspective, 182 people is more than the planned capacity of the Dauphin correctional centre.

An Honourable Member: And they're not even building that.

Mr. Swan: And they're not even building that, says my colleague, quite correctly. There is no plan to hire any further full-time correctional officers. And, in fact, what he heard is that the only thing the department is trying to do is to get a bigger pool of part-time workers to fill those positions.

And, of course, we found out last week that this government and this minister had postponed indefinitely the training of sheriff's officers in Manitoba to fill 16 vacancies identified by the department. The department certainly knows how important those positions are. Sheriff's officers do very, very vital work, taking prisoners to and from court appearances, maintaining safety in our courthouses, in our courtrooms, for victims who are there who may be very, very concerned, for supporters and families and friends of people involved in the court system, for media, for judges and for lawyers.

But instead, this government, in its new pause phase, chose to postpone indefinitely that training, which has resulted in 16 lives being turned upside down and, at the same time, more concerns that we're going to wind up with greater backlogs in the court, which is going to have an even worse impact on our court system and, indirectly, then, further make the situation in our correctional system worse.

I did ask yesterday morning about the Dauphin jail, and we were given, frankly, the strangest answers imaginable by the minister and deputy minister. They wanted us to know that, no, the Dauphin jail is going ahead but, no, it's not going ahead because it's under review. And the minister said, well, I don't want to prejudice what's going on.

Well, there's no prejudice. The minister should be the one talking to the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and, most importantly, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to let them know how vital it is that we continue to increase capacity, that we replace an outdated facility in the Dauphin correctional centre and, as we know, not only have there been deaths in the Winnipeg Remand Centre, there was a suicide in the Dauphin correctional centre over the summer, which was greatly upsetting to inmates, to the community and to the correctional officers that work there.

And that's another thing that the minister could have been doing rather than continuing to tell us how important Bill 2 is because, again, we have to weigh what's contained in Bill 2 with the other things which are going on in our system.

And what other concerns has this minister been ignoring while we've been debating Bill 2 and talking about Bill 2? Well, another example would be road safety and, frankly, it was embarrassing earlier this year when I asked the minister what I thought was a very reasonable question in Estimates that turned out to be a trick question. And I asked her: Is the minister responsible for road safety in Manitoba?

And you look it up in Hansard. The minister looked at me and said: Well, what do you mean by that?

And I said, well, I mean taking steps to reduce impaired driving, to reducing distracted driving, to reducing speeding and making our roads safer.

And the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) said, no, no, that's the Minister for Crown Services that's responsible for that.

So I took the minister at her word, because I didn't know how the new boundaries were drawn up with the new Cabinet. So I came to Estimates for Crown Services, and I asked the Minister for Crown Services if he was responsible for road safety. And the Minister for Crown Services gave some of the most bizarre and strange answers that you would see, making it very clear that he didn't see that he had any greater responsibility for the safety on Manitoba roads and highways, not only than any other member of this Legislature, Madam Speaker, than any other Manitoban at all.

And it was only after asking that question, and getting the Crown Services Minister to put his comments on the record, that things began to change. And I shared the lack of interest and, frankly, the contempt that the member—or the Minister for Crown Services was showing to police officers, to victims of impaired driving, to victims of distracted driving. And things began to change. And just a couple of weeks ago, we had the Minister for Crown Services standing up and talking about the number of deaths on our Manitoban highways.

And, indeed, Madam Speaker, this has been a terrible year for deaths on Manitoba highways. And, indeed, when you look at the statistics, so far, in 2016, we have lost a shocking number—92 Manitobans, on our roads and highways. And how does that compare to last year, to 2015? Well, the number last year was 61—still a high number, but nowhere near where we are now. And, as a matter of fact, just as overcrowding is up by 50 per cent, by some sort of strange coincidence, the number of road deaths in Manitoba is also up by 50 per cent.

And I know we can look through the mandate letter, dated May 3rd, and I know it doesn't say a single word about this Minister of Justice responsibility for road safety. Again, I don't think that's her fault. I think that's the Premier's fault. Somebody over there blew it. And we are now unfortunately seeing the unhappy by-product of a government that clearly is not interested, that does not care and is not prepared to put in the work, day after day after day, to try to improve things.

And, when it comes to distracted driving, when it comes impaired driving, when it comes to speeding, frankly, it is frustrating that many Manitobans don't get the message. It is frustrating

those messages have to be repeated over and over and over again. But we had a situation where, for several months, nobody on the government side even seemed to know or care who had that responsibility. And, again, for this—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I'm having some difficulty trying to determine whether the minister is moving into actually what the bill is about in terms of elections. And I would urge him to try to head in that direction and speak more to Bill 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, and try to have some relevancy in the debate. I'd appreciate that.

Mr. Swan: I thank Madam Speaker for that, and I was just getting back to the fact that Bill 2, of course, Bill 2 represents a priority of this government which seems to be—which seems to ignore the realities of justice and safety in the province of Manitoba. And, of course, this government is able to bring in such bills as they want to. They've chosen to bring in a bill which doesn't seem to have much to do with what problems we're now experiencing.

And, of course, you know, the government may say, well, this is something Manitobans really wanted. And I sat in Bill 2 committee, and, of course, in the Bill 2 committee, when, of course, any Manitoban—any Manitoban—who wants to, can come down and put their views on the record. And, again, because this was the first bill brought in, presumably, the new government had a wave of people who were excited about Bill 2 and wanted to come down and talk about Bill 2. Well, there were no presenters. Not a single Manitoban found it necessary to come down and speak to this bill. That's in sharp contrast, of course, to the committee hearings on Bill 7, when we've already heard from 20 Manitobans with some very strong views. We'll hear another 20 tonight. There was not a single Manitoban who felt strongly enough about this to come down to talk to committee about the very, very first substantive bill brought in by this government.

* (16:40)

So there are many things that were done in previous years to improve the ability of Manitobans to exercise their right to vote. Our government, of course, was always very interested in moving the needle and making it easier for people to cast their vote. And, indeed, we did that by greatly expanding the opportunity for Manitobans to cast their vote in advance polls. It wasn't that long ago that to vote in an advance poll, the only place you could go was the

returning office, and sometimes, you'd even have to give a reason to the returning officer why you weren't voting on voting day. Well, thankfully, those days are long behind us, and now, people in Manitoba can vote at a wide, wide range of advance polls. They can even vote at the airport. They can vote at universities and colleges. They can vote at shopping malls—not just those contained in their own constituency but anywhere in the province and be able to cast their vote and have their vote properly counted. And that was a good thing.

We also established a set date for general elections. Unlike the Progressive Conservatives, who preferred fixed elections, we preferred to set dates for elections. And, again, that has made a big difference and was certainly something which the Chief Electoral Officer thought was the right thing to do.

We also moved to allow polls to open earlier to allow voters more time to vote on the way to work, increased the number of days people could vote in advance at all these places, and we also improved access to advance polls in our rural and in our northern areas that residents in communities would never have to travel more than 30 kilometres to an advance poll. Those are all things that we thought were very good.

As well, we expanded representation on the electoral boundaries commission. Every 10 years, of course, there is redistribution of the boundaries in Manitoba, and we actually upped the game of that commission, and we made sure that Westman was represented with the head of Brandon University, and we made sure the North was represented by including a representative of University College of the North to the commission, and we also expanded Elections Manitoba's role to include promotion of participation. Of course, that stands in stark contrast to the dying days of the Stephen Harper government, where they actually told Elections Canada to stop trying to promote people going out to vote because they believed that wasn't their mandate.

Well, we made a lot of steps here in Manitoba, some of which the Progressive Conservatives have gone along with, others, of course, which they have opposed. And, of course, one of the things they opposed was when we took big money out of elections by banning union and corporate donations. And, oh, how they fought against that, and they spoke against that, and they said how unfair that was. And, indeed, my old friend, Hugh McFadyen, said,

well, if I'm ever elected, I'm going to reverse that. Well, we know that didn't work out so well for my friend, and I do truly mean my friend, Hugh McFadyen, who led the party to two glorious defeats, from our perspective.

So there we are in Bill 2. We have a bill which is, of course, only necessary in the next couple of years if, indeed, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) can't exercise any measure of self-control and wouldn't call the by-election within six months.

We don't think there's anything majorly wrong with Bill 2. So we have no objections to going ahead. I believe the Liberal member might have something to say about this, but we are prepared, subject, as I started with, Madam Speaker, again, to invoke the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), perhaps to get out under the servile yoke of the Premier and perhaps listen to Manitobans, to listen to her department, to listen to what people have to say and actually start doing some things that are going to make things better for public safety, to make things safer for our correctional officers and for inmates, to make things safer for people on our roads, to make things safer for people in our communities, because Bill 2 doesn't take a single step. And, clearly, it has distracted this Minister of Justice from dealing with the things which are really important in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I am pleased to rise again today to speak to Bill 2, which provides for more timely by-elections. The Manitoba Liberals support this change to The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, as it ensures that Manitobans are not left unrepresented for an unprecedented amount of time.

As members of the Legislature, we have a responsibility to create new legislation as well as to improve existing legislation. Bill 2 is an improvement as it brings about a more timely and fair democratic process dealing specifically with by-elections.

Three hundred and sixty-five days, or rather, one year, as it currently stands for calling a by-election after a member resigns his or her seat, is too long.

Manitobans deserve to be heard in this Legislature through their local representative. Our job is to be the voice for our constituents in shaping legislation, and when Manitobans are left without a sitting MLA, voices are left out of the conversation. It is a true honour for me to represent the people of

Burrows and, as I'm sure you have all experienced, people do talk, sometimes in great numbers about their issues to us as their MLAs.

In my constituency office on McPhillips Street, residents stop in or drop in to talk to my staff and I about issues they face or the concerns that they have. From there I use the opportunity I have been given to voice their issues and concerns here in the Legislature. I understand and appreciate the importance for all of our roles here in the Chamber, and because of this, I believe that Manitobans deserve proper representation.

It was unfair for the people of Morris to be without representation for 350 days in 2013-14 and again in The Pas when they went without an MLA for 341 days in 2014-15. I will not speculate on the reasoning for such a delay in calling for a by-election. However, the people of Manitoba should not ever be without representation for this length of time again.

Once again, I am pleased to reiterate our support for Bill 2 to ensure that Manitobans' voices never go unheard.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

An Honourable Member: A recorded vote, please.

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

* (16:50)

Recorded Vote

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

Allum, Bindle, Chief, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fletcher, Fontaine, Friesen, Gerrard, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Kinew, Klassen, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Saran, Schuler, Selinger, Smith, Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Swan, Teitsma, Wharton, Wiebe, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 52, Nays 0.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 4—The Elections Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to concurrence and third reading of Bill 4, The Elections Amendment Act.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 4, The Elections Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, reported from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: Pleased to just put a few words on the record with respect to this, but I did want to point out that the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) spoke on the previous bill for about 23 minutes and how terrible it was, and—the bill was and so on. And then I'm pleased to see that he saw the light at the end of tunnel and saw how great a bill it was and that he voted in favour of it.

But I will say, Madam Speaker, this bill is—and I hope he does the same with this bill, because these are good, important bills for the electoral process in Manitoba and for democracy. We will always stand on the side of democracy on this side.

This essentially sets the election period for a set election for 28 days and for by-elections between 28 and 34 days. It also provides clarity as to the process in the event of a death during an election period as well as the clarity around the consequences of a tied election.

So we believe this is very important for democracy in Manitoba. I hope that all members of

this House will join with us on the side of democracy.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'm pleased to speak to Bill 4, and I believe the Attorney General wasn't listening carefully to my comments on Bill 2. I wasn't talking about how terrible the bill was; I was talking about how terrible this minister's judgment was, because this minister—well, you know, there's members, and I know they're sitting around the back of—in the third row, and they're doing their booing when they're supposed to boo, and they're applauding when they're supposed to applaud. They can go back to their communities and they can answer questions about why road deaths are up by 50 per cent, and they can answer questions back in their own communities about why there's people dying in our jails and why overcrowding has gone up by 50 per cent, while Bill 2 and Bill 4 were priorities.

So, you know, I appreciate the minister's comments, but she needs to think a little bit more about all of the other obligations. And I mentioned some of the other pressures that this minister put behind, moving ahead with Bill 2 and Bill 4. And I'd mentioned the letter she received on May 3, 2016, talking about her priorities. And of course, one of the strangest things, of course, was that she was told to move in to make sure there was immediate, mandatory disclosure of all untendered contracts. And the fascinating part about that is that we learned just at committee on Friday talking about Hydro, that the first thing this new hand-picked board of directors at Hydro did is they went ahead and they spent \$4.2 million on an untendered contract, which of course told Hydro to continue doing what this government has been doing.

So perhaps—you know, and I wonder—I wonder—how that's going to play back in all their own communities when they're talking to all their own constituents' associations when they say—[*interjection*]

Well, and here's the Minister for Crown Services who wants to talk about this. And the Minister for Crown Services was either unwilling or unable to answer a simple question that was asked by all of us on repeated occasions on how much this report was costing and whether it was tendered. And the Minister for Crown Services either was told by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) not to answer the question or he didn't know the answer. It took two questions at committee on Friday—I believe the Minister for Crown Services was there—to find out from the chair

and the CEO of Hydro that Hydro spent \$4.2 million on an untendered contract.

So perhaps—you know, I know that Bill 4 meets one of the requirements in the mandate letter of this minister, this mandate letter which says nothing about public safety, which says nothing about road safety—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

When the matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 27 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 1, 2016

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