

Fourth Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 3, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege.

As we all know, there are two issues with respect to raising a matter of privilege. First of all, we have to raise the matter at the earliest opportunity, and secondly, of course—the second test is whether or not a prima facie case of privilege is made to determine whether there is a breach of our privileges in this House.

With respect to the first test, Mr. Speaker, and the earliest opportunity test, I rise on a matter of privilege because of Bill 31, which is The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act. Bill 31 and the manner in which it was introduced in this House—Bill 31 was just introduced last Thursday, April 29th. It's a 145-page bill, wide ranging in its effect. It deals with many, many statutes. It deals with, of course, dealing with complex issues, dealing with tax increases, backdoor taxes that have been imposed on Manitobans, all the way from that to protecting ministers' salaries.

Mr. Speaker, 145 pages takes a little time to digest and, of course, this being the day—the next sitting day after it was introduced, this is the earliest opportunity, I believe, to raise this as a matter of privilege. Since it is the next sitting day and, as a result, I would submit that the first test in terms of whether it's—whether we're doing the matter of privilege at the earliest opportunity has been met.

The second test with respect to a matter of privilege is whether in fact a prima facie case of privilege can be made. A breach of privilege

infringes and limits our ability, Mr. Speaker, as MLAs to effectively perform as members of the opposition and as elected representatives of the people we represent in our constituencies.

And I refer, Mr. Speaker, to *Beauchesne's* citation 24, which defines parliamentary privilege as the sum of rights enjoyed in the House collectively and by members of the House individually without which they could not discharge their functions or duties. And again, that citation goes further to say that the privileges of Parliament are rights which are absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers.

Included within the rights that we now have in this House, Mr. Speaker, as an MLA, is the ability to be able to debate bills fully and completely: the ability to debate fully in second reading, fully in third reading, take it to committee, hear public input on each bill, and then when it comes back in report stage, the ability to bring forward legislative amendments at report stage, and then to also debate those fully and vote at each stage of the bill's passage.

Bill 31 is extremely controversial for the opposition, Mr. Speaker, and it should be controversial for all members of this House, in fact, not just the opposition. It's all about backdoor tax increases and amendments to our balanced budget laws, which we do not agree with.

Bill 31 needs to be debated fully at second and third readings. Amendments need to be put forward; they need to be all voted on. And I calculate, Mr. Speaker, that after concurrence—we all know that we rise in this House on June 17th, but once I calculated the amount of time left—available, there'll only be 21 days after concurrence for bills debate until June 17, when we adjourn for the summer. In those 21 days, as opposition members, we have the right to be able to put forward at least two opposition days, and that will leave only 19 days for bills debate. Second reading full debate on Bill 31 will take four days, full debate. Third reading—that's without government members standing up to speak to their bills, which they don't normally do because they don't always support the government's bills. Second

reading takes four days. Third reading full debate takes another four days. If you did amendments at report stage, a minimum of two extra days would be taken in this session for a total of 10 days of debate.

But, Mr. Speaker, one must always realize that there are other bills that the government is—will expect us to debate and pass and vote on, and the public expects that. They don't expect anything less. There's 39—there's likely going to be about 40 bills in this legislative session. There are still 39 bills left to consider, if there's 40 bills planned this session, and more than half of that time that we have available for debate will be taken by Bill 31, 10 days. And that will leave only nine days left to debate 39 bills. Thirty-nine bills, nine days; one bill, 10 days.

Our job as being an MLA, in my view, Mr. Speaker, is being curtailed. Our rights are infringed. How can we discharge our duties as an MLA? How can we do justice to the 39 bills that are left on the agenda in just nine days? In nine days, we're expected to debate those 39 bills and to vote on those 39 bills.

Let me again, Mr. Speaker, quote *Beauchesne* citation 24: Parliamentary privilege is defined as the sum of rights enjoyed in this House collectively and individually without which members could not discharge their functions or duties.

Clearly, MLAs have the right to properly debate legislation, and our rights to debate all bills, Mr. Speaker, not just one or two bills, but all wills—bills are being curtailed by Bill 31. Without proper debate, we seriously cannot discharge our functions as an MLA and as a representative of the people who elected us and took us here in the first place.

* (13:40)

In addition, Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* citation 24 indicates that the privileges of Parliament are rights which are absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers. Debate is a right in this House and that right is absolutely necessary for the due execution of the powers of Parliament, and that being the passage of legislation, after the legislation, of course, receives proper scrutiny and debate.

I also refer, Mr. Speaker, to Speaker Milliken's ruling, his recent ruling in the House of Commons on a matter of privilege raised there on March 18th, 2010. Had the opportunity to review the ruling and I think it has applicability here to this matter of privilege. In the ruling, he indicated that the

fundamental role of Parliament—he indicates that the fundamental role of Parliament is to hold the government to account. Secondly, he also indicates in his ruling, similarly, that the undoubted role of the House is to be the grand inquest of the nation, Mr. Speaker. That's the role of the House.

So I ask you, Mr. Speaker, how can we fulfill our fundamental role of holding the government to account? How can the House be the grand inquest of the nation when we have a government that introduces one bill which will take more than half the legislative time available before we adjourn for the summer on June 17th, and less—and leave less than half that time for debate, voting, amendments, committees, for another 39 bills.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that I have made the arguments for the *prima facie* case of privilege, and I look forward to a positive response and a positive ruling from you.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a *prima facie* case has been established.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Well, Mr. Speaker, I would submit that the only thing about the point of privilege raised by the honourable member that conforms to an appropriate point of privilege is, of course, the timeliness of his intervention. He's right that he's brought this before the House at the earliest possible moment. But then the question of whether or not this is a *prima facie* case of privilege is certainly open to a great deal of debate.

I would submit just very briefly, Mr. Speaker, that what the member has put before you is a highly speculative, hypothetical case as to how much debate will be available to any particular bill, including the BITSA bill, that the fact that there are other bills that have been introduced—upwards of 40, as the honourable member indicated. This is not unusual and this has been—is the object of and has been the object of negotiation in the past. Some bills have been left over to the fall; some bills not; some bills get debated. These are all things that will work themselves out in the course of the—of what remains of the legislative session.

The government is committed to a full debate on the BITSA, and the fact that the balanced budget legislation amendments are in that particular piece of legislation is not new. It's something that's been done before, and the process for amending the balanced budget legislation will be respected. I already indicated that to the honourable member when I spoke to him on Thursday by way of indicating how we saw things unfolding when this legislation was brought forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, it just seems to me that what we have here is—if we have anything that's *prima facie*, we have a *prima facie* case of the honourable member's party wanting to call attention to what we already know, that they are opposed to the amendments to the balanced budget legislation and the point of privilege is designed to call attention to that in some sort of symbolic way by obstructing the business of the House.

But it's—on the face of it, Mr. Speaker, it's anticipatory, it's hypothetical, it pays no attention to the common practice of this House that—and that is the openness of the government to work with the House leader, from other—House leaders from other parties in negotiating, you know, how much time will be allocated to bills that come before us. These are all things that can be dealt with between the House leaders and do not constitute an opportunity for an intervention by the Chair in any way whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster, on the same matter of privilege.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): On the same matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the Government House Leader found himself in a bit of an awkward position in the sense that, I suspect, if we talk about the process—and I know there was a time, in particular, when the Government House Leader was a Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons—that process was very, very important. And for the Government House Leader or the government to believe that this is not outside of the norm of process is indeed very wrong. What you need to realize in addressing the matter of privilege, that the timing has not been called into question. We all agree that this is, in fact, the most appropriate time to be discussing this particular issue.

Mr. Speaker, what I would suggest to you is that we do need to look in terms of the processing and the

tradition of this Chamber. In fact, if you take a look at the bill's summary, what you will find is that we do have 30 bills, and we understand there's another half dozen, 10, maybe even more—we really don't know—bills that are not on the Order Paper. I'm anticipating that there will be some more bills that'll appear on the Order Paper at some point in time, but we don't know for sure. But what we do know for sure is that there's 30 of them there today that are on the Order Paper. And, would you believe that 28 of those 30 have not even been debated for second reading yet?

And then we got the bombshell last Thursday saying that we have the BITSA bill. And inside the BITSA bill there's all sorts of red flags popping up, Mr. Speaker, in terms of bills that maybe could have been brought in as separate pieces of legislation. We need to be aware of this for the simple reason is what we need to address is the sessional order, because in the sessional order, it mandates certain legislation be passed by June the 17th. The BITSA bill is one of those pieces of legislation.

So, yes, ultimately, the government can say, well, maybe we won't pass this one, we won't pass this one, because it'll appease maybe some members of the opposition or some of the government backbenchers. But let there be no doubt that the government has found a backdoor in passing some its legislation through the BITSA legislation because it's mandated through the sessional order that it has to pass on June the 17th.

I believe that if we do a fair assessment in terms of what it is this government is trying to do, it is anything but the way that the House has proceeded with legislation from the past, that one could question the ethical behaviour on which the legislation in being brought before this Legislature. We need to give more attention to the legislation that the government has brought forward. Think about it: how many bills have actually gone through in terms of second reading or been given second reading? Well, Bill 2, which is standard practice. That is always given. It's budget related, and that was done back on December—back in December. Outside of that, it was only Bill 11.

There has not been a second reading on another government piece of legislation. There's been second reading on numerous opposition bills, Mr. Speaker, but nothing on government legislation. I would ask the Government House Leader to tell this House when was the last time that we didn't have any

debate on second reading, Mr. Speaker. So I do believe—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When members are up on a matter of privilege, it's to debate whether it's a prima facie case, not to debate the issue that has been raised. It's to deal with whether this is a prima facie case or not.

The honourable member for Inkster to continue.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that there is just cause here to seriously look at what it is the government has been doing. You'll recall, in terms of process at the ending of last year and the mismanagement of the House affairs and the impact that it had in terms of trying to get things dealt through in this House, this government does not understand and appreciate the importance of following the tradition of this Chamber. And I would suggest to you that this is indeed a valid matter of privilege, and something in which I would suggest that the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and others get to meet as soon as possible to resolve these outstanding issues, so that all sides will feel comfortable in the way in which the Chamber is actually being managed.

* (13:50)

I would conclude my remarks by stating just that the House, in my opinion, in terms of the way in which it's treating legislation, is very disrespectful, Mr. Speaker, and this is something that no one, whether you're a government member or an opposition member, should tolerate. We should be doing the right thing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. First of all, for the information of the House, there was not a motion moved for us to deal with this issue as a matter of privilege, first of all. But I would like to offer some information to the House that a matter concerning the methods by which the House proceeds in the conduct of business is a matter of order, not privilege.

Joseph Maingot, in the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, states on page 14 that allegations of breach of privilege by a member in the House that amounts to complaints about procedures and practices in the House are, by their very nature, matters of order.

He also states on page 223 of the same edition, a breach of the standing orders or a failure to follow an

established practice would invoke a point of order rather than a question of privilege.

On this basis, I would therefore rule that the honourable member does not have a matter of privilege.

Mr. Hawranik: I challenge the ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: Order. The ruling of the Chair has been challenged, so all those in support of the ruling of the Speaker, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed of the ruling of the Speaker, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Hawranik: A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

* (14:00)

Okay, the question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Blaikie, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wowchuk.

Nays

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurshou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 33, Nays 20.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 32—The Protection for Persons in Care
Amendment Act**

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 32, The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection des personnes recevant des soins, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, this amendment will expand the mandate of the Protection for Persons in Care Office, starting with adult patients receiving care in emergency rooms and urgent care as well as seniors attending geriatric day hospital programs.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

PETITIONS

Waste-Water Ejector Systems

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitobans are deeply committed to protecting the environment, and they want to be assured the provincial environmental policies are based on sound science.

In early 2009, the provincial government announced that it was reviewing the Onsite Wastewater Management System Regulation under the environmental act.

Affected Manitobans, including property owners and municipal governments, provided considerable feedback to the provincial government on the impact of the proposed changes, only to have their input ignored.

The updated regulation includes a prohibition of installation of new waste-water ejectors and the elimination of existing waste-water ejectors at a time of property transfer.

Questions have been raised about the lack of scientific basis for these changes, as a Manitoba Conservation official stated in the October 8th, 2009,

edition of the *Manitoba Co-operator*, we have done a specific study? No.

These regulatory changes have significant financial impact on all affected Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately placing the recent changes on the Wastewater Management Systems Regulation under the environmental act to hold until such time the review can take place to ensure they are based on sound science.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider implementing a prohibition on waste-water ejector systems on a case-by-case basis as determined by the environmental need in ecological sensitive areas.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider offering financial incentives to help affected Manitoba property owners adapt to these regulatory changes.

Submitted on behalf are B. Unrau, S.A. Moroz, V. Kroeker and many other fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary

equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program; however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (14:10)

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

And this is signed by A. Spencer, P. Ens, B. Lust and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Multiple Myeloma Treatments

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, a rare, progressive and fatal blood cancer.

Revlimid is a vital new treatment that must be accessible to all patients in Manitoba for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells.

Multiple myeloma is treatable, and new, innovative therapies like Revlimid can extend survival and enhance quality of life for the estimated 2,100 Canadians diagnosed annually.

The provinces of Ontario, Québec, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Alberta have already listed this drug on their respective pharmacare formularies.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the provincial government consider immediately providing Revlimid as a choice to patients with multiple myeloma and their health-care providers in Manitoba through public funding.

This petition is signed by C. Hambria, M. Pankewich, J. Arsiuta and many, many others.

Bipole III

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct its next high-voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba, a decision for which the NDP government has not been able to provide any logical justification.

Since this will cost Manitoba ratepayers at least \$640 million more than an east-side route, and given that the Province of Manitoba is facing its largest deficit on record, the burden of this extra cost could not come at a worse time.

Between 2002 and 2009 electricity rates have increased by 16 percent, and Manitoba Hydro has filed a request for further rate increases totalling 6 percent over the next two years.

A western Bipole III route will invariably lead to more rate increases.

In addition to being cheaper, an east-side route would be hundreds of kilometres shorter and we would be more reliable—and it would be more reliable than a west-side route.

West-side residents have not been adequately consulted and have identified serious concerns with the proposed line.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the cheaper, shorter and more logical east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, to save ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars during these challenging economic times.

And this petition is signed by H. Bryce, M. Moar, B. Schultz and many, many other fine Manitobans.

PTH 15—Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that traffic volumes at the intersection of

PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald exceeded those needed to warrant the installation of traffic signals.

Every school day up to a thousand students travel through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts their safety at risk.

Thousands of vehicles travel daily through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts at risk the safety of these citizens.

In 2008, there was a 300 percent increase in accidents at this interaction.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate installation of traffic signals at the interaction of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald.

To request that the Minister Transportation recognize the value of the lives and well-being of the students and citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by L. Reeves, L. Scott, C. Martin and many, many other Manitobans.

Multiple Myeloma Treatments

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, a rare, progressive and fatal blood cancer.

Revlimid is a vital new treatment and must be accessible to all patients in Manitoba for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells.

Multiple myeloma is treatable, and new, innovative therapies like Revlimid can extend survival and enhance quality of life for the estimated 2,100 Canadians diagnosed annually.

The provinces of Ontario, Québec, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Alberta have already listed this drug in their respective pharmacare formularies.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the provincial government consider immediately providing Revlimid as a choice to

patients with multiple myeloma and their health-care providers in Manitoba through public funding.

This petition is signed by J. Moncek, S. Moncek, G. Zak and many, many others.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the 2010-2011 Estimates for the Department of Local Government. Thank you. Merci.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2010-2011 Department Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors for the Legislative review.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of the honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from the King's School, we have nine Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Tyler Hendren. The school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Western Provinces Partnership Agreement Premier's Attendance

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the premiers of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia came together to sign the New West Partnership which is intended to create new jobs through new investment in the economies of those three provinces. Manitoba was left out, which is not only a missed opportunity but poses a new threat to the economy of Manitoba.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): Why is he isolating Manitoba from our Canadian neighbours and putting Manitoba jobs at risk?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba works very closely with all other jurisdictions in Canada. We work closely with British Columbia, we work closely with B.C. on—Alberta on certain issues and, certainly, we work closely with Saskatchewan. And, in fact, we did have a western—a Cabinet meeting, the first time ever between Manitoba and Saskatchewan. And at that

meeting, a news release was put out, and what did Premier Wall say? Premier Wall said our two provinces have agreed that our 'respectus' ministers of Highways and Transportation will convene a meeting of transportation stakeholders to achieve efficiency and consistency in regulations and a better transportation business climate. We work—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we know that they attend meetings in places like Yorkton, but where are the agreements? Where is the progress? Why are we not moving forward and being part of this new agreement? Premier Wall said, and I quote: "We signed an agreement today that creates an amazing economic force: the New West, an economic region of nine million people strong and \$555 billion in GDP," Wall said. It's an economic region that is home to a number of industries the world is very interested in right now.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): We know they attend meetings, why aren't they at the table when actual work gets done to bring jobs and investment to provinces in other parts of Canada, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we are working on behalf of Manitobans and we are working with all other jurisdictions. In fact, at the Western Premiers' Conference in June of 2009, we were involved with a plan that will result in—a purchasing plan for pharmaceuticals for western provinces and the Yukon, and we can use our combined population to achieve a better deal. We are working with other jurisdictions on pharmaceutical purchases, and there was an agreement that was signed in June of 2009.

*(14:20)

There may be another event. We work on a national basis. We are working with other jurisdictions and, Mr. Speaker, we are working on trade in other countries. We are going to India in May, to Israel in June. We have representatives in China, and those are major trading partners for—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't just an event, it was three premiers who signed a 76-page agreement to move the three provinces to—forward. They're leaving on a trade mission in less than two weeks to bring investment from Asia into Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. This means new jobs, new opportunities for those

provinces. They're also, under this agreement, working together to save money for their taxpayers, and they've talked about the need to consolidate in areas such as health-care procurement.

Now, I don't know if the brown-envelope schemes of members opposite didn't fit with a bulk purchasing arrangement that they are pursuing in the other provinces, but I want to ask the Premier: What is it about this agreement they oppose? Is it new investment, or is it doing the right thing for taxpayers?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we always do the right thing for Manitobans and the Manitoba taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we have worked on a joint western purchasing plan for pharmaceuticals for the four western provinces, along with the Yukon. We've worked on that. We are working together on transportation, and we are involved with trade with many other jurisdictions. We have representatives in China who work for us. We have taken trade missions to India and we will continue to work on trade missions with India. And I ask the opposition members to stay tuned on what will come out of those meetings, as well as the missions to Israel.

Mr. Speaker, this government works with all jurisdictions across Canada. We work with the provinces to the west, but we also work at the national table to ensure that all provinces are involved. But we do have agreements with Saskatchewan. We work with Alberta, and we do have areas where we work together with B.C.

Bill 31

Government Intent

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question. They do lots of talking, Mr. Speaker, and they go to lots of meetings, but they're—when it came time to sign the bottom line, they were nowhere to be found. They were left in the dust by the three western provinces as they moved forward, and Ontario and Québec have signed their own agreement, and Manitoba has now been isolated in the middle.

And another area, Mr. Speaker, where Manitoba is falling behind, is that we are the last province in western Canada that's planning on bringing the budget back into balance.

Mr. Speaker, three years ago, the NDP leader, Mr. Doer, made a promise in Brandon that he would balance the budget, and he criticized other parties who he tried to say were opposed to that—which, of course, was untrue. But he made the promise in 2007 that they would balance the budget.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today, with the bill introduced on Thursday, Bill 31: Why are they breaking that promise to Manitobans?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is—his word can't be taken very seriously. The other day he said—and I talked about—the Leader of the Opposition talks about, first of all, says there's no recession. He has said there's no recession even though other jurisdictions all across the country, the federal government, jurisdictions around the world have set their budgets and investing in stimulus. But the member opposite would say there is no recession and that all is well.

Mr. Speaker, governments across the country are looking at ways to continue to stimulate the economy to keep our people working, to make sure that there are nurses at the bedside, to make sure that there are doctors, that there are teachers in the classroom. We will continue to—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, with all of that rhetoric, what they're doing is piling on debt faster than any other province in western Canada. We've got more—we have more debt today than Saskatchewan and Alberta combined, which have four times the population—four times the population, half the debt of the province of Manitoba.

That's because, Mr. Speaker, they've ripped up balanced budget laws. They're going to run five years in a row of deficits. They're adding 2.3 billion to the debt this year, four more years of deficits to follow, and then they introduce a bill, not to protect jobs in Manitoba, but to protect their own salaries two years after they promised that they would take the deductions.

The then-minister of Finance said two years ago yesterday, we'll pay the penalty under the act if we don't balance the budget. Why are they breaking that promise today?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is wrong again when he talks about deficits. All provinces and the federal government are

projecting deficits this year: Ottawa is projecting \$49 billion; Saskatchewan deficit is \$622.7 million; Alberta, \$4.7 billion; B.C., \$1.7 billion; Ontario, seven—\$19.7 billion.

Mr. Speaker, right across the country there is a recognition that we have—there has been an economic downturn and people are making decisions on how they would address it, and we are making that decision through balanced—amending the balanced budget legislation.

We know what the members opposite would do. They would try to balance all in one year. They would cut health care. They would cut the number of police officers on the street. They would have increase in taxes, all of those things. We know their record from the '90s. We have a different plan than they do, and that's why we are amending the legislation so that we can have continued service, protect those front-line services that Manitobans have told us are very important to them.

The nurse at the bed, Mr. Speaker, is very—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the problem with what the minister is saying is that every one of the provinces she's referring to reduced debt when times were good. When economies were growing they paid down debt. Here in Manitoba, this NDP government did the opposite. They built the debt up to the highest level in the history of Manitoba, so that as we go into the era we're in right now, we have more debt in our province than any other province in western Canada. That's the difference between NDP Manitoba and what governments did in other parts of the country.

And I want to ask the minister, I know she's obsessed—I know they're obsessed with the past, but as we look to the future, how is it, Mr. Speaker, they're obsessed with the past? But let's address the future and let's talk about what is the plan—*[interjection]* I see the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak) is full of it today, and I just want to conclude by saying they're obsessed with the past. But how can we look to the future with optimism when they're mortgaging our children's future with Bill 31 and reckless, wasteful spending?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can—I would tell the member anytime that Manitobans don't think it's reckless spending when we protect health care, we protect education, we protect justice and we continue with child-care services. We talked—consulted with Manitobans and Manitobans told us

they would rather run a short-term deficit than lose those important services.

The member opposite, we know what they would do, Mr. Speaker, if they were to balance the budget under the existing legislation and balance it all in one year, we are putting at risk investments in health care, in education. We're putting training, which is very important to Manitobans, we are putting it at risk.

Mr. Speaker, the member says we haven't addressed the deficit. I wonder why he—our debt-to-GDP is 6 cents on the dollar when theirs was 13.

Bill 31 Government Intent

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the reality is the only thing that members opposite are protecting here are their own salaries, and I know members opposite like to—and they refer to the '99 election campaign, and I think we can recall back then that, along with a promise to end hallway medicine in six months was six—with \$15 million, they also promised to maintain the balanced budget legislation, another promise that they broke.

Mr. Speaker, in the last election Gary Doer placed balanced budgets as a priority. He said, and I quote: I can't keep up with my opponents. They're all going to be running deficits if they keep their election promises, God forbid, he said. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government breaking their election promise to keep balanced budget legislation? It's hallway medicine all over again. Why are they breaking this promise?

*(14:30)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. I don't think the leader and the—my critic talk. A few minutes ago he said, don't talk about the past, talk about the future. She just referred to 1999. You'll have to make up your mind.

Manitobans haven't forgot the time when Tories were in power. They never forgot how they funded education at minus two, minus two, zero. Manitobans haven't forgot how they fired the nurses, how they kept—they cut the number of seats at the universities.

Mr. Speaker, we've listened to Manitobans and we will amend the balanced budget legislation so that we can, indeed, keep that nurse at the bedside that Manitobans have asked for, so that we can keep

teachers in the classroom, like members opposite wants. And we will keep police officers on the street when we talk about justice and service for people. We will address those issues.

Mrs. Stefanson: The NDP government has changed balanced budget legislation twice since the 2007 election campaign, where their then-leader Gary Doer expressed concern about running deficits, Mr. Speaker. Now the NDP government is changing the legislation once again just to protect their own salaries.

Will this Minister of Finance just admit that she has never actually been in favour of balanced budget legislation, and that these changes represent one of the final nails in the coffin of balanced budget legislation?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, although the members opposite may not think that there was a recession and that there isn't any impact, every jurisdiction in the province recognizes that there is challenges and everyone that has balanced budget legislation has made amendments to the legislation.

We've put in place a five-year plan, Mr. Speaker. We've put in place a plan that will see us protecting those important services and spreading out the shortfall over a number of years.

If the members opposite were in power, Mr. Speaker, we know from what they are saying, the members opposite would settle everything in one year. And you know what that would mean: there would be all kinds of cuts, there would be tax increases, there would be no stimulus money.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know what the Conference Board of Canada has said about stimulus. Stimulus is keeping this country going, building infrastructure. And we will continue to invest in stimulus.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, we know in the past that this Minister of Finance has stated, and I quote, that no government needs balanced budget legislation. And she said that several years ago.

Isn't the real reason why they have effectively done away with the balanced budget legislation is because they never believed it in the first place. Now, Mr. Speaker, now that Gary Doer is gone, isn't this NDP government finally showing their true stripes, that they are doing away with a piece of legislation that they never agreed with, the balanced budget legislation?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that we have a five-year plan and we will spread out this shortfall over a number of years so that we can maintain services, just like Ottawa is doing, just like other jurisdictions are doing. We will do this to protect those services. We will continue, but we will also maintain parts of the balanced budget legislation, and, after five years, the balanced budget legislation will come back into effect in order that we can implement our five-year plan.

Mr. Speaker, the House leaders have talked to the members opposite. We've talked about this bill. We will have a briefing on the bill for the member opposite, as she has requested, and we will look at all aspects of this bill that are very important for us to be able to put in place our five-year plan.

Bill 31 Government Intent

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we know what the promise was to keep balanced budgets in 2007. There was another promise when Bill 38 came in in 2008 that, if they didn't, that their ministerial salaries would be docked by 40 percent if it happened two years in a row.

Now, Mr. Speaker, two years later, we've got a new bill coming in that protects those salaries, that provides 20 percent more than what they had promised they would take just two years ago. And we also have within that bill another provision which was not disclosed prior to Thursday, which erases, on paper, past deficits, in order to get them back up to 100 percent of salary, years ahead of where it would have otherwise been the case.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): Is Bill 31 all about budget implementation, or is it all about protecting the gang of 19 opposite?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, Bill 31 is about having the legislation in place, so that we can implement our five-year plan, a plan that will protect services, keep people working, make sure that we have hospitals open. It does all of those things, and it allows us to absorb the impact of the global recession over a longer period of time.

Mr. Speaker, the members—we have indicated very clearly to the members opposite that this bill is an important bill, and we will be—if it's necessary, we will extend sessions. We have told the Tories

opposite last week about what was in the bill, and they know that we're prepared to brief them on every aspect of this bill.

But the BB—balanced budget legislation and BITSA, BITSA is part of normal tax implementation and that's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, when Gary Doer was here, at least when they gutted the balanced budget law, they did it under a separate piece of legislation, and they were open and transparent about it in Bill 38.

This time, with Gary Doer gone, they've snuck it into a budget implementation bill. Not only do they bring in these salary protection measures, but they've actually rewritten the definition of deficits for prior years, arbitrarily taking out a piece of paper and a pen and declaring that past deficits were zero, Mr. Speaker, when, in fact, in reality, they were much greater than that.

I just want to ask the minister and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) how they can ask the 57 members of this House to vote for a deceptive bill that does nothing but protect salaries for the gang of 19.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I'm having a hard time understanding the questions of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition. I don't think there's any such things as gangs in this Chamber. All members are honourable members. They all have titles. *[interjection]*

Order. All members in here have portfolios, and they will be addressed as such. I don't think there's too many gangs that I know of in this Chamber, and I think that's wrong to make that kind of implications on either side. All members have constituencies, all ministers have portfolios, and every member is an honourable member. They should be addressed as such.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, as promised in the budget, when we brought the budget forward, we said that we would be amending the balanced budget legislation to implement our five-year economic recovery plan so that we could protect health-care services, education, justice and child-care services.

Mr. Speaker, those are very—issues that are very important to Manitobans. They want to be sure that there is a nurse at the bed when they get sick or one

of their family members get sick. We know that if the members opposite are so opposed to this, we know that they would slash and cut everything in order to get—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: And the desperation contained in that rhetoric, Mr. Speaker, is something that's quite clear. The government has very clearly, within this bill, put in measures to reduce the amount of the reduction to give them 20 percent more than they would have been entitled to under Bill 38, which was only introduced two years ago. They take a pen. They try to erase the reality of past years' deficits by deeming them to be zero, all of which is designed as a clever way of protecting Cabinet ministerial salaries.

And I just want to ask the minister and the government how it is that they can ask public sector workers, how they can ask people who are interested in addictions programs, how they can ask people who are concerned about services for deaf children in our school divisions, how it is they can ask people who are getting services in adult education programs in Portage, how they can ask families to pay more taxes, producers to pay more on eggs, milk and poultry, how they can ask everyone else to make these sacrifices, when the 19 members of the NDP Cabinet have introduced a bill to take care of themselves, and themselves only, Mr. Speaker.

*(14:40)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the challenging times that we were in, despite the fact that we did introduce a balanced budget under summary budget, we did not have to take a reduction this year.

As Cabinet ministers, as a government, we made a decision that we would show the public that we were concerned about this, Mr. Speaker and, in fact, that is a 20 percent reduction this year, even though the budget is balanced.

Now the member opposite might be obsessed with that particular issue, Mr. Speaker. My goal in bringing this budget forward and bringing this legislation forward is to ensure that we can implement our five-year economic recovery plan so that we can protect services for people.

Mr. Speaker, we know what the members opposite would do; they would cut and slash. Manitobans do remember what they would do in this kind of situation.

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III West-Side Location

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, it just continues to get worse for the NDP government and its completely ridiculous stand on the west side Bipole III. I would like to table a letter received from six retired professors from the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Manitoba. These professional engineers see no technical, social, environmental or economic reasons for forcing Manitoba Hydro to construct Bipole III on the west side.

Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro continuously says she will not take instructions or directions from the official opposition, but prefers to depend on professional advice.

Will the minister now take that professional advice and reverse the decision on the west side Bipole III?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, there are many people that have opinions on the east side-west side line. I will listen and we will take direction from the people that live on the east side.

The First Nations on the east side, Mr. Speaker, have given them—views. The people on the east side have said they want the UNESCO Heritage Site. They want real economic development, and they said that having a line through the east side would not give them the economic development that they wanted.

We—I would gladly meet with these consultants—or these engineers, Mr. Speaker, and hear their views, but we also have the Farlinger report that spells out the benefits of going on the west side of the province. Manitoba Hydro has taken that into consideration and they are doing consultation on the west side.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, when it doesn't suit them, they change balanced budget legislation. When it doesn't suit them, now they're not going to take professional advice, but they'll take advice from

anybody who wants to agree with their side of the argument.

Mr. Speaker, these well-respected professional engineers, professors from the University of Manitoba are so concerned that to put—that they put their concerns in writing. They said, and I quote: When we were still working as engineers, our training and professional responsibilities were to protect the interests of the public and the environment. The west-side route, in our opinion, does not do this. In our opinion, a route down the east side of Lake Winnipeg is preferable.

So why is the minister so obstinate and intent on wasting \$1.75 billion on a foolish west-side line? Why will she not change her position and not take the advice of these professionals?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we listened to a lot of people, and that did happen. Most importantly, we listened to the people on the east side of the province. That's the people that live there. Those are the people who raised concerns.

Mr. Speaker, but it was—it's not only based on that. We did—there was a report commissioned. The Farlinger report spells out the benefits of—although there's challenges on both sides, they spell out the benefits of the west side.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite didn't do anything when they were in government; they did nothing. We need this line for reliability of supply for Manitobans. That was an issue when they—for a long time. Members opposite would mothball the line and not do anything; we're going to move forward.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, they're moving backwards, not forward. Here's the benefits of the east-side line, and this is a quote from the letter: Compared with the mandated west-side route, a route to the east of Lake Winnipeg is much shorter and significantly less expensive, involves smaller ongoing line losses, produces higher revenues from the same amount of generated power, is in the area with lower frequency of tornadoes and lightning strikes, impacts a smaller number of landowners and existing infrastructure, has lower risk of breakdown and higher reliability.

Mr. Speaker, those are the benefits of the east-side line as put on the table by professionals. They are professionals. These are people whose opinion is extremely valuable. To not follow their advice is ministerial negligence.

Why does the minister insist on wearing the west-side boondoggle?

Ms. Wowchuk: The member opposite just talked about tornadoes and lightning strikes. I'd like to inform him, Mr. Speaker, of what Manitoba Hydro says. The possibility of line—Bipole I and III outage due to a tornado hit of Bipole I or II in the Interlake is one in 16 years. The possibility of Bipole III—an outage on the west side of the province is *[interjection]*—on the west side of the province improves to one in 3,650.

The addition of the Bipole III will significantly improve service reliability, Mr. Speaker. We made—we need Bipole III for reliability. We need Bipole III for export sales, and the members opposite would put at risk \$20 billion in sales over 20 years. We—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Brandon University Medical School Feasibility Request

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, there has been considerable discussion regarding locating a medical school at Brandon University. Many feel this would help fill the doctor shortage in rural Manitoba. Brandon University is interested in investigating the feasibility of moving forward with this concept. In fact, the president of the university, Dr. Poff, has sent a letter requesting \$80,000 for a feasibility study to the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, this letter was sent February 16th. I ask the government: Why has there been no response to this request?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Health): One of the things that I think we're very proud of as a Province is all of the investments that we've made in Brandon, including the oft promised but never built Brandon health centre, the MRI, the CAT scan, and the restabilization of a program to make Brandon a very significant regional centre, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of medical schools across the country. There are a number of medical schools, and other schools that are underutilized and overutilized, and the request will be looked at in terms of what is best—what is—for example—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time's up.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's quite ironic. This government can find \$115 million in a matter of days to fund a stadium and can't find \$80,000 for a health-care initiative.

Mr. Speaker, we've got over 40—pardon me, over 50 municipal corporations who have come together as a municipal health committee. They're looking at the feasibility of having a medical clinic set up here in the Brandon University, but they're getting no response from the government.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Advanced Education: When can the university and this region of the province expect a response?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Well, I thank the member for the question.

I'd like to tell him that in the fall the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and I met with members of the MMA and discussed the question of the Brandon medical school. I've also met with the president of the Brandon University. *[interjection]* Yes, I have, in answer to the member from Arthur-Virden. I have met with the—*[interjection]* My goodness, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. I expect to see flying bread or disembodied grins or—anything could happen. Who knows?

Anyway, as I was saying, I have met with the president. The Premier's met with the president. My understanding is a proposal was being prepared and submitted to the Council on Post-Secondary Education for analysis.

* (14:50)

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the message is I should deliver to the people in Glenboro tonight when they come forward to these public hearings.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to quote from a letter which ran in some of the community newspapers just recently, and this letter is signed by Kristine Janz, who is a municipal councillor and also sits on the Assiniboine Municipal Health Committee. In her letter she talks about Dr. Poff and the request for the feasibility study. And I want to quote here, specifically: "It is up to all of us to provide input and work toward establishing a sustainable health-care

system in Manitoba. It is ours. We can make it better."

Now, the other thing we should note, Kristine Janz not only being a municipal councillor, she has been appointed by this government to sit on the Brandon University Board of Directors. She's also sitting on the Assiniboine Regional Health board.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're asking: When will this government listen to the concerns of people being brought forward, here, in the western side of the province?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, there are more doctors in rural Manitoba, 96 more than there was in 1999. We have welcomed 110 new medical students at the U of M and we've added 40 medical spaces. There are more medical students. In fact, we've welcomed 49 rural students to medical school and, in fact, that was the representation made by the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

Mr. Speaker, there's also the fact that we don't have a veterinarian college in Manitoba. We have a veterinarian college—we send our students to Saskatchewan who get our teaching there. And when you think about the health-care system in this general sense, for example, we send our pediatric health heart patients to Edmonton, but Edmonton sends its Gamma Knife patients to Manitoba. So there are some benefits and synergies across various jurisdictions without increasing, necessarily, the—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Bill 31

Government Intent

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister is in full cover-up mode. She is bringing in bad, sweeping changes to balanced budget legislation in a bill called BITSA. In short, she is wrapping a nasty present in BITSA paper.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Why is the minister trying to cover up her bad financial management, the huge debt her government is accumulating, in BITSA legislation?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I don't see tabling a bill that will be debated as a cover-up. I don't know what the member opposite thinks is being covered up.

I announced in the budget speech that we would be amending balanced budget legislation in order that we might be able to implement our five-year recovery plan. Mr. Speaker, we have said that. The other day I tabled the legislation. I'll be—and in that legislation there are many things that happen when you're doing budget implementation, all things that are outlined in the various budget.

So if the member opposite sees tabling a bill and encouraging debate, and encouraging the public to have input this—if this is cover-up, I don't see this as cover-up, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is asking for amendments to the balanced budget legislation in this BITSA bill. I suggest that these amendments are similar to what a high school student would ask of a teacher when they've been slacking off and they have a big assignment due.

The Minister of Finance is asking for the type of extension that she is because her government has failed to manage the province's finances well. The result is huge increases in debt.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Is she planning to raise personal income taxes or other taxes to address the debt that she's accumulating?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member opposite to read the bill. I would encourage him to read the budget speech, because in the budget speech I did say there would be no increase to personal income tax. I'd encourage him to read that. But what this bill is ensuring, just as other governments across the country are doing, they are looking for ways to be able to carry through this recession. They are all putting in plans, and we are putting a plan—a five-year plan, and I would encourage the member opposite to read it. We want to continue those services that are very important to Manitobans. The member opposite seems to think that those are important. I don't want to see nurses let go, I don't want to see teachers let go and I don't want to see police officers let go. That's why we are implementing this plan.

Bill 31 Government Intent

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I think we need to be perfectly clear. The government is, in fact, bringing in the BITSA legislation in order to avoid to have to bring in balanced budget legislation. Let there be no doubt, that means there will be less opportunity for debate inside this

Chamber. That also means there will be less opportunity for public to be able to come and make presentation in committee. There is no doubt that this is a time frame that is established by this government, because in the sessional Order Paper it guarantees the passage of her balanced budget legislation—what should be balanced budget legislation—by June the 17th of this year. That is wrong.

And I ask the Minister of Finance: Why has she made the decision to ultimately bring it in through BITSA legislation as opposed to bringing in balanced budget legislation?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): I want to make it very clear that we have indicated already to the members opposite that this could mean a longer session, more sitting. Maybe we might have to extend hours, Mr. Speaker. We're not afraid to sit longer hours if we have to. We're willing to work. We're fine with that. We've already told the opposition—we told them this last week and we know—and the media has been told about this. We could have a longer session. But this will also go to the public, and the public will have an opportunity to have input into this.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Chief Minister Shri Nitish Kumar

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I will be speaking on a particular individual that is of high importance and I seek leave from the members here, it may exceed two minutes. Do I have the leave?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for the honourable member, if need be, to go beyond the two-minute time for members' statements. *[Agreed]*

Mr. Jha: I rise in the Legislative Assembly today with an example of the kind of change courageous and intelligent political leadership can have on the lives of ordinary people.

In Bihar, a state in northwest India with a population of more than 80 million people, Chief Minister Shri Nitish Kumar has effected astounding reforms, leading his brothers and sisters out of danger and poverty towards safety and prosperity. The chief minister's career in public service has been both long and fruitful. He was first elected to the Bihar Legislative Assembly in 1985 before serving in the Indian Parliament.

In 2005 Shri Nitish Kumar built a coalition between the wealthiest and the poorest people, of higher and lower castes, and was elected Chief Minister of Bihar, which at that time was struggling to capitalize on India's phenomenal growth. He introduced a strong but incremental reform. First the police force was cleaned up and corruption was targeted. Next came improvements in the schools. In 2005, more than 2.5 million school-age children were not attending their classes. This year that number has been reduced to 800,000. Hospitals and clinics were also drastically improved. After one year of reform, the patient load of local clinics had increased tenfold. Lowering the bureaucratic constrictions led to rapid upgrades in infrastructure worth billions of dollars.

* (15:00)

In rural Bihar, the change has also been apparent, often in a small but important way. Upgrades in road quality have meant that people in the countryside can move around with greater ease and speed. Solar lights illuminate narrow lanes. New pumps provide communities with clean water.

Mr. Speaker, as the *New York Times* put it in a recent report on the progress: Bihar is a textbook case of how leadership determines development.

Indeed, it reminds us in this House of the seriousness and potential value of public service. Having been born and raised in Bihar, it gives me tremendous pride to see this dynamic chief minister leading that state to great heights.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also proud to state that the honourable chief minister of Bihar was kind enough to receive our Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk), myself and members of the delegation during our visit to Bihar and India in 2008. I most sincerely thank him for his hospitality and wish him and the people of Bihar all the best in their future progress. Thank you.

Laura Bailey

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the extraordinary contributions of one young Manitoban has made to her community. This incredible young woman, Laura Bailey, who is with us today serving as a page to our member—our Manitoba Legislative Assembly—is only one of Laura's many contributions to the province and to her community of Portage la Prairie.

James Kostuchuk, one of Laura's professors at Portage Collegiate Institute, says and I quote: Laura has developed a real interest in civic service. She is truly interested in citizenship and all that word entails in a passionate way. End of quote.

In addition to the rigorous training schedule she keeps for her competitive swim team, Laura, a grade 12 student in Portage Collegiate Institute, has found the time to volunteer for countless community organizations and events. Incredibly, Laura has found time to serve in student government, work as a swim coach and lifeguard, and volunteer for the Special Olympics, CancerCare and the Manitoba Winter Games. She has also raised funds for youth groups.

Laura has been a great ambassador for her school and her community. She has proudly represented them both at the Forum for Young Canadians in Ottawa. For her dedication to her community, Laura was the Portage la Prairie School Division nominee and a finalist for the Manitoba School Boards Association Student Citizen Award. The award distinguishes students who have demonstrated the values of citizenship through their activities as volunteer service to their community, involvement in citizenship organizations, participation in student government or inspiring others to get involved in the community.

I invite all honourable members to extend a heartfelt thank you to Laura for her dedication and contributions to her community. Through her actions, Laura has made our community a better place and become a true role model for all youth here in Manitoba. Thank you, Laura.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Edmund Kuffel

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, on March 7th, a celebratory banquet was held by the Manitoba Polish Congress to pay tribute to the life, work and honorary degree bestowed upon Professor Dr. Edmund Kuffel by Poznan University of Technology in Poznan, Poland.

Dr. Kuffel has led an extraordinary life. Born in 1924 in Poland, he took part in the Italian campaign in the Second World War. Like most of the soldiers of the Polish Army Corps, he fled to the West to avoid persecution. He began to obtain a formal education in 1945 and over the next few decades discovered his love of and aptitude for science. Studying and lecturing around the world, he earned

his Bachelor's and Master's of Science degrees and went on to a Ph.D. in Physics. From 1968 to 1970, he lived in Winnipeg at the invitation of the University of Manitoba, assuming responsibility for the high-voltage laboratory and later returning in 1979 as the dean of Engineering. Dr. Kuffel also contributed his considerable expertise to the board of Manitoba Hydro for 16 years.

Leaps and bounds are made every day in the quest for scientific knowledge, but advances are arguably most significant when they improve the lives of the disadvantaged. Among his most outstanding achievements, Dr. Kuffel organized many aid programs for developing countries. He also provided opportunities for young Polish scientists to study in Canada by extending his research grants to them. It was his opinion that supporting scientists was the most effective way of assisting his home country regardless of the state of the political system. Dr. Kuffel has shared his knowledge in university classrooms around the world and has been distinguished with numerous awards.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Kuffel illustrates how the desire for education and human betterment lead to a lifetime of achievement. Thank you for your contributions, Dr. Kuffel.

Mental Health Week

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to put a few words on the record about Mental Health Week, organized by the Canadian Mental Health Association. This year's theme is "Building Your Mental Health: one support at a time."

Mental health is a critical but often overlooked aspect of one's overall health. One in five Canadians are likely to experience mental illness in their lifetime. Mental illness indirectly affects all Canadians at some time through a family member, friend or colleague. Mental illness affects people of all ages, education, income levels and cultures.

Despite the fact that mental illness is so pervasive, many people wait too long before seeking help. However, research shows that the earlier someone gets help, the better their outcome will be. That's why it's such a terrible shame that the wait times for psychiatric services are so long in Manitoba and that the current NDP government has done so little to address this problem. Without the appropriate medical resources in place, mental illness may go untreated and grow worse as a result.

In 2007, the current government promised a mental health ER, but in the three years since, we have seen no progress made toward this initiative.

Other non-medical supports for mental health are also lacking; in particular, housing. Safe and affordable housing for mentally ill Manitobans is in critically short supply, meaning that many of the facilities that are available are overcrowded and unsafe. Despite promises to address this issue, the current NDP government has done very little to solve this troubling problem.

Additionally, mental illnesses often co-occur with addictions. While local addiction providers have made great strides in treating both addictions and mental illness together, their hands are often tied by this government's fragmented and ineffective addictions strategy and its inconsistent funding arrangements. Last month's decision to halt progress on Magnus Centre is just one example of this government's approach.

Finally, perhaps what is most troubling about this NDP government's approach to mental health is its total lack of a mental health strategy. Earlier this year, we requested a copy of the government's comprehensive mental health strategy and we were told it was unavailable because it was still in the draft form. That's not very reassuring to the thousands of Manitobans who need mental health support and aren't getting it. Indeed, it strikes me as strange that this government is doing things like promising a mental health ER without having a strategy in place.

So, this year, during Mental Health Week, I would like to first commend the many organizations in Manitoba's mental health community for the help—for helping to educate Manitobans on mental illness and for supporting those who live with it every day. They are doing a wonderful job, but I would certainly urge the government to stop paying lip service to mental health in Manitoba and to get a strategy in place and to put the proper supports in place, so that these organizations can do their job and, ultimately, so that more Manitobans can take charge of their own mental health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

International Workers' Day

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, May the 1st of every year marks International Workers' Day or May Day, a day of solidarity with, and recognition for, the workers of the world. On this

day we honour the important contributions that working people and labour unions have made and continue to make to our province.

This year's theme was "Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities, Progress for All" with a special focus on women's rights and opportunities.

Our understanding of the importance of May Day in Manitoba will always be linked to the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, one of the most historically significant strikes in our history. Over 35,000 telephone system operators, metal trade workers and other labourers took to the streets and demanded collective bargaining rights. Their protests were met with fierce retaliation from the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand, a group organized by employers to quell the strikers' spirits. Eventually, the federal government was forced to intervene and a violent confrontation between the RCMP and the strikers ensued. Thirty people were injured, one man was killed, and many others were arrested, deported or jailed.

This May Day, a march commemorating those events made its way through the streets of Winnipeg, raising the profile of women's labour issues. Women's considerable capacity and contributions were highlighted, and calls were made for greater recognition of the essential role of women in the labour force. This theme was particularly significant because women across the globe still struggle for respect, equal wages, rights and opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the organizers, participants and local artists for their involvement in May Day. Their work encourages us to honour and celebrate the courage and conviction of the workers of the world who fought and continue to fight for justice, equality and the dignity of labour.

* (15:10)

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a point of order.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, my point of order relates to the way bills seem to be proceeding through this House. Obviously, from what we can tell, the way things have been going, the government seems to be very disorganized in the way they

approach legislation. They seem to approach the implementation or the voting on legislation, including the debates, in a very haphazard manner, and it's becoming a concern to us on this side of the House.

As I pointed out earlier, there was—we expect that there'll be 19 days of bills debate yet before June the 17th. Bill 31, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, could take, and will likely take, 10 days of debate in this House, Mr. Speaker, whether it's second reading, third reading, also amendments, perhaps, that may be put forward with respect to Bill 31. One bill, 10 days of debate, possibly 39 more bills coming in front of this House with only nine days for debate. And, certainly, that—what that does is tell us that, obviously, the government doesn't believe that the 39 bills are very important—a possible 39 bills.

Now, I know it's hypothetical to say that there will be 39 more bills, Mr. Speaker; however, to date we've got—we do have 32 bills. In fact, on the long bill status, as of today, of which two have already been—have gone through. So the reality is is there's—for sure, there are 30 bills left to debate. There's no doubt about it, and I believe that the government will likely ask us to debate those bills in a fulsome manner, to propose amendments, as we always do, that improve any legislation that comes forward and to oppose those kinds of bills that opposition would be expected to oppose and to improve.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think what this does, too, is highlight the fact that the government is—does not believe that the rest of the bills are all that important, that we can't have a proper debate. And I just point to a few bills to illustrate my point. As an example, Bill 4, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act, I would think that the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard) would think that that's an important bill, and she would welcome our input in terms of amendments and whatever we need to do to highlight the—any special interest groups' concerns about those, and individuals' within Manitoba.

Another one, Bill 7, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Suspending Drivers' Licences of Drug Traffickers). Certainly, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) would think that that's an important bill to debate. If he didn't, certainly, why is he introducing it?

Bill 8, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety Precautions to Be Taken When Approaching Tow Trucks and Other Designated Vehicles).

Certainly, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton) would have thought that that's an important bill, and so do we, Mr. Speaker. Safety is always important on our highways, and it's important that we do have the time to debate some of these bills and propose amendments which may improve the effect of the bill.

And Bill 13. Minister of Justice introduced a bill called The Civil Remedies Against Organized Crime Amendment Act. Certainly, we've seen the failure in the past of this government in terms of trying to take civil remedies against organized crime, and now they're trying to improve that act. We think it's important to improve that act because of the failure of the government to actually deal with that situation.

Bill 14, The Body Armour and Fortified Vehicle Control Act. Another bill by the Minister of Justice, Mr. Speaker, that I believe that he would think is important to Manitobans—important to us, too, in terms of trying to improve it as well.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the Bill 19, another Justice bill, The Protection from Domestic Violence and Best Interests of Children Act—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When members rise on a point of order, should point out to the Speaker what they feel is the point of order or breach that has been broken or not followed by the House, or not following the House practice, but not get into substantive debates about other issues but the issue of what the point of order is, because it's usually a breach of a House, well, one of our rules or one of our House practices.

Mr. Hawranik: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for reminding me of that. I just wanted to ensure that I put on the record that there are numerous examples of other bills that certainly have to proceed through the House—and bills that are important to various ministers—and, certainly, they need proper debate. And I take your advice, because we—on a matter of privilege which we just had prior to question period, you indicated that this particular matter is a matter of order and, therefore—and, of course, we voted on that particular matter. And, obviously, it was not a matter of privilege, so I would submit that it is a matter of order, and that it is a point of order to be seriously taken.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, indeed, it is a point of order. It's more appropriately a point of order than a point of privilege, but it doesn't make it a good point of order.

It just makes it a point of order. Not all point of orders are equal, and this one is certainly way down the totem pole, as far as being worthy points of order.

All that the government has done, through the introduction of the budget implementation legislation, is to do what was done last year, for instance, at the very same time. So I don't know if the honourable member intends a kind of retroactive point of order, in which everything that we've done and which we are now doing in the customary way is somehow outside the rules of this House, Mr. Speaker.

The fact of the matter is that we've introduced the legislation. If the honourable—I was glad, I must say, to see that the honourable member thought so highly of all the bills that we've introduced. He's very concerned about the passage of these bills. And if he's concerned about the passage of those bills, well, we can certainly meet and decide how to expedite the passage of those bills. I'm open to those kinds of discussions anytime, Mr. Speaker. I'm also open to discussions about how we might pass the BITSA bill and ensure the appropriate amount of public input and committee hearings and all—these are all things that we can sit down and talk about. We haven't had a chance to.

An Honourable Member: What?

Mr. Blaikie: We haven't had a chance to. We introduced the bill on Thursday. I had a preliminary conversation with the honourable member. And this is a matter for House leaders to decide, Mr. Speaker, as to how legislation will proceed, what kind of agreements there will be. It's—as I said earlier, when I was speaking to the point of privilege, this is highly hypothetical, speculative, presumptive, you name it. It—this is all has to do with how legislation will unfold, and that is something that I'm quite prepared to work with the House Leader from the Official Opposition on and, for that matter, the House leader from the Liberal Party or the third party in this House, whatever the appropriate procedural term is.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I think it's kind of obvious what's going on here. It's the same point being made again, and it deserves the same fate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): On the same point of order.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to emphasize the one point, and that is in terms of the House practice. And

that's what I believe the—where the point of order is quite accurate.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to go back in terms of tradition inside this Chamber, you will find, at one time, we even had House rules that dictated that you would have Estimates and bills being done simultaneously in the sense of being done in the same week. So, for example, if my memory serves me correct, I believe it was Mondays, Tuesdays—Estimates. Wednesdays was debate on bills. I believe it was then Thursday—Estimates, and it might have been Friday on bills; I'm not really too sure. But, anyway, I go back into 1988, and there always seemed to be a mixture of bills into second reading being debated—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Members having a conversation, please go to the loge, because matters of privilege and points of orders are very serious matters, and I need to be able to hear every word that is spoken. I ask the co-operation of all members, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, from what I can recall, is there's always been that mixture of bills and Estimates process. Then there were many discussions over the years, virtually from the early '90s, amongst different House leaders as to how to best utilize the time of the Chamber. And the way in which that was evolving was something to the degree of which you would have a budget and Estimates in the springtime, with the sprinkling of the bill debates, and then you would carry the bill debates into the fall. And that seemed to be the way in which we were moving, but we always—always—had some sort of a mixture of debate and second readings.

* (15:20)

So I would suggest, in addressing the point of order, that they—the breaking of the tradition is—or the practice is that we're not debating bills in an appropriate timing. The House leaders, yes, can negotiate on behalf of respective caucuses. But there is still is the tradition of the Chamber, that being that there needs to be a mixture of Estimates and bill debate. So, this way, critics or whomever has the interest, public, whoever it might be, can see that there is a procedure that is being followed that's over and above a negotiated—an agreement, unless it's an absolute consensus of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), who is the Official Opposition House Leader, I have heard from all three House leaders, and what I was hearing was pretty well the same as what has happened in the past, where House management, the House leaders have usually gotten together and negotiated the House business and if there is changes of rules or procedures in the House, where it was all negotiated jointly by the House leaders.

But I would strongly recommend that the House leaders meet and, as past practice, negotiate the House management for this session. And I would discourage all members to—or House leaders to not do their negotiations on the floor of the Chamber. That's not normal practice in any House. That's why all parties have House leaders, and they do the negotiations. And I would strongly encourage House leaders to get together and to negotiate the businesses of the House. *[interjection]*

Order, please. And for the information of members, it is not the jurisdiction of the Speaker to set the House business. The only time a Speaker would intervene is if there's no—like, if there's an impasse where the House stalls and we cannot proceed further with House business. The Speaker would normally meet with the House leaders and try and negotiate some kind of an agreement to get the House working.

And so I would strongly encourage the House leaders to get together and do their negotiations wherever you do, in whose-ever office, but I would strongly discourage you from trying to do negotiations on the floor of the Chamber.

So the honourable member for—the honourable Official Opposition House Leader does not have a point of order and I hope that they will—*[interjection]* Order, please. And I hope that they will, for the sake of the functioning of the House, set some time aside and to sit down and negotiate some House procedure that will be satisfactory to all sides.

So the honourable member does not have a point of order.

Mr. Hawranik: I challenge that ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the ruling, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the ruling, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Hawranik: A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

* (16:20)

Order. The allotted time has expired. Could we have the bells shut off and close the doors, please?

The allotted time has expired, so the question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Blaikie, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wowchuk.

Nays

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 33, Nays 21.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Tuxedo, on a grievance?

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a grievance.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it should be no surprise to members opposite that we have many grievances on this side of the House when it comes to the various dealings of this government. So I would suggest that the minister sit back and listen to some common sense when it comes to this province.

Mr. Speaker, I am here before you in the Legislature today to grieve for all Manitobans, all Manitobans who believed that this NDP government would uphold balanced budget legislation in our province. And, unfortunately, they have not, and Bill 31, introduced in this Manitoba Legislature last Thursday, is proof of that fact, that this government has broken its promise to all Manitobans.

And so it's incumbent upon us on this side of the House to stand up and grieve when promises are broken, promises that are made election after election after election; promises that are made by a number of members opposite, and those promises that are not upheld for Manitobans. Manitobans voted for a government based on the fact that they supported balanced budget legislation and now, all of a sudden, they turn around, and they do the exact opposite. And that is—it's undemocratic, Mr. Speaker, and it does not represent what those in our city and our province believe.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP, and I will remind members opposite, campaigned and I know they like to go back very often to the 1990s and so, know what, I'll take them back there just one more time because I think it's important to point out during the 1999 election that one of the NDP's top five promises, the election commitments in 1999 was to, and I quote: keep balanced budget legislation and lower property taxes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they have broken their promise there. In fact, Gary Doer, he acknowledged that balanced budget legislation introduced by the Tories was a good idea, one, he said, that his party would keep. He said, and I quote: We've said all along that we're not going to change the things they got right, said Doer.

* (16:30)

And that also included sticking to the Filmon government's debt retirement plan, which calls for an annual payment of \$75 million, something else that they have abandoned, Mr. Speaker, in this legislation

and in the legislation of the past that they've brought in.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP also campaigned on balanced budget legislation in 2007. Gary Doer placed balanced budgets in a—as a priority in 2007. When he referred to spending promises made by other parties he said, and I quote: They're all going to be running deficits if they keep their election promises. God forbid. Clearly, Mr. Doer was—placed balanced budgets as a priority, and now, all of a sudden, this government has—under this new leader—has abandoned those promises and under this Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk). So, not only has this NDP government broken its promises to uphold balanced budget legislation, they are going about it in a sneaky and undemocratic way.

Changes to the balanced budget legislation have been inserted into the BITSA bill, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act. A bill that, by the laws of this Legislature, must pass by June 17th of this year, thus curtailing debate for this bill and the 32 other bills that sit on the orders and notice papers in this Legislature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you may ask, well, why would this government—why would this NDP government do such a thing? Why would they want to introduce a bill in such a way? Well, when you look at the contents of the bill, under the budget measures, and, more specifically, the fiscal management sections, you will see exactly why the government wants to make sure that this bill passes under a bill that is—that will automatically pass through this Legislature on June 17th of this year.

Under this section of the bill, Mr. Speaker, there is no requirement for the Province to balance its books until 2014. In addition, once the Province returns to a positive summary budget balance, the deficit years will be excluded in the four-year rolling average that is used to determine ministerial pay reductions, and, as a result, instead of taking a 40 percent pay reduction for multiple-deficit years as prescribed under the current legislation, the salaried reductions for Cabinet ministers will be 20 percent each year and will return to normal much sooner.

So I would like to remind members opposite of something this Premier said when he introduced changes to the balanced budget act in 2008. He stated, and I quote: If you don't do that—meaning balance the budget—you will take a penalty—he said—as prescribed in the legislation. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the Premier stated, when he was

Finance minister, that he had no problem with living up to the legislation at the time. But now he has changed his tune, now that he's become the Premier of the province. Now that the salary reductions is a reality for his 19 members of Cabinet, he has decided to change the legislation to protect their salaries.

Why, just two years ago, Mr. Speaker, was the Premier prepared to live up to the laws and now he's not? Is morale that low in Cabinet these days? Is that why he's doing this? Is this a way of maintaining Cabinet solidarity? Is that why he's bringing forward this legislation?

Mr. Speaker, the real issue with all of this is that this government is abusing their powers as government by implementing changes to the balanced budget laws in the BITSA bill in order to protect their own salaries. Rather than looking out for the best interest of Manitobans, they are choosing to protect themselves first, and it's absolutely shameful.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government seems to like to also speak out of both sides of their mouths when debating the state of the economy in Manitoba. One minute they are talking about how Manitoba is booming and all of the great things that are happening in the province. But, when we ask them, if things are so great, why are you increasing the debt by over \$2 billion this year alone and why do you plan on running deficits for five years in a row, well, suddenly—suddenly, the government changes its tune and starts to talk about a worldwide recession. Sometimes there isn't even 30 seconds between a flip-flop for members opposite when they're answering questions in question period to—with respect to the budget and to the state of our economy.

The fact of the matter is that this ND—that the NDP deficits in Manitoba are deficits of choice; they are not deficits of necessity. Recent data from Statistics Canada revealed that Manitoba's GDP declined by 0.2 percent in 2009. Manitoba has fared well compared to other jurisdictions during the recent global economic downturn. Adding billions to our debt, running projected deficits totalling over 2 billion over five years and gutting the balanced budget legislation are not appropriate reactions to a 0.2 percent decline in GDP, Mr. Speaker.

All in all, the NDP is unable to live within their own means. They have, Mr. Speaker, a spending problem. They have changed the laws of this province in order to pay for their spending problem, and they have introduced changes to the balanced

budget laws in the BITSA bill for the sole purpose of protecting their own ministerial salaries. It's undemocratic, and it's unbecoming of any government, and that is why I am grieving here today. And I hope members opposite take this very seriously, because there are Manitobans out there that are very concerned about the way that this government is managing the financial—the financials of this province. And so I would hope that members opposite listen carefully as we grieve in this House on behalf of all Manitobans.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a grievance. Are you up on a grievance?

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I, like the member from Tuxedo, I'm up on a grievance, grieving for the fiscal future of the Province of Manitoba. It is like a death knell, what this government is doing, to not only this generation but future generations to come in the province of Manitoba. So I grieve, and I do wish the members opposite would listen, in fact, to what their government, their Finance Minister and their Premier (Mr. Selinger) is doing to the future of this province.

The budget implementation bill is supposed to be just that: the implementation of the budget that this Finance Minister brought down not that many weeks ago. The budget, Mr. Speaker, we can debate forever knowing full well that the budget that they put forward is going to be a fiscal nail in the coffin of Manitoba and its future. But, really, one of the grievances that we have and I hope Manitobans have, is that what they're trying to do in this budget implementation bill is to try to hide exactly what it is that they believe in.

What the New Democratic socialist government of the province of Manitoba really believes in, Mr. Speaker, and what that is is that they do not, never have and never will believe in balanced budget legislation. I have not been in this House that long, unfortunately, but since I've been here, three times this government, this Finance Minister and this Premier has changed what was put into place in 1995 by a previous administration, and, at that time, embraced by the premier, the previous premier, Gary Doer, and the current Premier, the—the current Premier who was the Finance minister.

They embraced balanced budget legislation, not because they believed in it; because it was necessary

that they speak the same language as Manitobans. And they spoke that language from 1999 until about two years ago when all of a sudden balanced budget—balanced budgets were not that very important to them, because they went back to their roots. They went back to the roots of spending and taxing, and that's what they believe in. That's fine. They can believe in it. But all I'm asking is be honest with Manitobans. Don't try to manipulate the process. Don't try to manipulate a budget implementation bill to satisfy their needs, their wants and their desires, Mr. Speaker, because what they've done, the first time that they came forward with a change to balanced budget, I was there, I was the Finance critic of the day, and now, all of a sudden, they didn't want to balance a core budget which means core spending, revenue in, expenses out. What's left over should be in a positive nature. They didn't want to do that, so what they did is they manipulated the process and said, we're going to go to a summary budget. We're going to bring in all of the Crown corporations and their revenue so that we can, in fact, go out and spend like they like to spend and we don't have to be accountable to anybody or anything. We will just simply spend more money because the Crowns, then, can offset that money in a summary budget.

* (16:40)

Well, that was fine for one year. So what they did is they had their summary budget, but not only that, then they decided, well, rather than just balance the budget on an annual basis, even with the summary budget, that might be too difficult to do because their spending was out of control. So what they were going to do, then, is they were going to put a four-year rolling average into place. They didn't have to have a balanced budget either on core or summary, but they could spend and have deficits for three years and, in that rolling average in the fourth year, could come into a positive light, Mr. Speaker, and they would be oh so happy because they would then comply with their idea of balanced legislation.

Then last year they started the process. They found this little—this little niche where they could now manipulate the budget implementation legislation because, in the original balanced budget legislation, even the one they changed, they still had to pay down debt. In fact, they had \$110 million that they had to pay down every year. That was in legislation. That was the first change.

Then they decided, my, if we have to then, even on a paper movement, put \$110 million into the

column where we're paying down debt, that doesn't give us the \$110 million to go and spend foolishly like they like to spend. So then they changed the budget implementation bill last year. First time they changed that and then they were going to go from zero—I'm sorry, from \$110 million of paying down debt, to zero. Okay, at the stroke of a pen, in the BITSA legislation, they were going to put this through without having to come to this Legislature and amend the balanced budget legislation. They found a really interesting way of hiding it from Manitobans, and that is to put it into balanced—into the budget implementation. And, sure enough, they were going to go from zero—they were going to go from \$110 million paid out of debt to zero.

Well, we stood in this Legislature and said, what you're doing is not only wrong fiscally, what you're doing is immoral in this Legislature, changing a balanced budget piece of legislation by manipulating the BITSA bill. We had some negotiations that went on, and we were successful, not totally successful as opposition, holding their feet to the fire, but they did, in fact, come to the point where they would add \$20 million to debt repayment. So it went from 110 to zero back up to 20. They amended the budget implementation legislation and went merrily on their way.

Well, we thought that would be the end of it, but, no, no, uh-uh. See, now we don't know whether there's a recession or not a recession. We don't know because there's conflicting views that come from each and every member, minister, from that side, but now what we found out is in this budget they've now budgeted for five—count them, five—years of deficit funding, but they do that because they like to do that, Mr. Speaker. They do it because, ideologically, that's the way they are prone to go. They like to spend money. Even if they don't have it, they can borrow it. They got credit cards. They can put it on one credit card to pay off another credit card, and that's really not good fiscal management, but it's the way they work.

So now they found out that this next five years they're going to run five deficits. Well, the balanced budget legislation doesn't allow that to happen. So what are they going to do? They're going to sneak it into the BITSA bill. Isn't that absolutely lovely? They're just going to sneak it—just slip it in there and, hopefully, nobody'd see it, but if they saw it, what does it matter? They did it last year. So now they can do the same thing this year, that they can now change the order of the budget implementation bill.

So now what they want to do is they want to make sure that they can run five years of deficits, but why are they doing that? You gotta ask your question. First of all, we know why they spend money and why they have deficits for five years. That's already a given, because they can't manage properly and they love spending, so that's a given. But what they really want to do is they want to protect ministerial salaries.

You see, the ministerial salaries is also mentioned in the budget implementation bill. So, if they run a deficit for one year, ministers have to give up 20 percent of their ministerial salary. If they run a deficit for two years, ministers have to give up 40 percent of their ministerial salary. Well, as it is, they don't want to do that, so now they're going to change the balanced budget legislation once again, incorporate it into the budget implementation bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I could speak to this issue for days, but, certainly, I have a grievance, as does Manitoba. If the NDP socialist government wants to get rid of the balanced budget legislation, do so by bringing amendments to the balanced budget legislation, don't bring it to BITSA.

If the NDP socialist government want to save ministerial salaries, then bring it as an amendment to the balanced budget legislation, not in the BITSA bill. If the NDP socialist government want to have five years of deficit, bring it in a balanced budget legislation, not in the BITSA bill. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the members opposite have been following the situation that's going on in Greece right now. Check it out, because right now there is a mirror image between Greece and what's going on with this government. They're borrowing money—they're borrowing money like it's going out of style. They're borrowing money, spending on a lifestyle that they can't afford. They're depending, as Greece is depending now, on the EU and others' largesse, depending on the IMF, this government depends on the Government of Canada to keep their spending continuing.

Mr. Speaker, if a government like Greece can default on loans, a government like Manitoba can also default on loans. This is dangerous; it's absolutely unprecedented. There's no way that this piece of legislation should be passed unless they bring in balanced budget legislation and make the amendments to that, not to the BITSA bill. It's wrong, it's immoral, and Manitobans won't stand for it. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Arthur-Virden, on a grievance?

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Yes, Mr. Speaker. It's—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Arthur-Virden has already used his grievance. So you're only allowed one grievance. The honourable member has already used his.

Point of Order

Mr. Maguire: Just a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I just felt that this was a serious circumstance—this issue, and so I wanted to have the opportunity to put a few words on the record on this, but—so I just thought I would ask for leave of the House to allow me to grieve this particular circumstance.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to have a second grievance?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? I heard a no, so the honourable member has already used his grievance.

Okay, that's it for grievances? We'll move on to orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I think the House might briefly resolve into Estimates.

Mr. Speaker: We will now resolve into Committee of Supply. And in the Chamber will be Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and room 255 will be Infrastructure and Transportation, and 254 will be Conservation.

The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the hour being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 3, 2010

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