

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, February 29, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 19—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Continuity of Learning)

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Continuity of Learning), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Allum: I am pleased to stand before the House today to table Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Continuity of Learning).

Last month I was pleased to accept, along with the Minister of Family Services, a report from the Manitoba Task Force on Educational Outcomes of Children in Care, co-chaired by Kevin Lamoureux and Tammy Christensen. This report provides some useful direction on how we can be sure to support all children in our schools, and this bill was developed to respond to their recommendations.

One of the key action areas identified by the task force was school placement and continuity. Students are more likely to succeed academically when they are connected to their school. That's why we're working hard to help all children be successful in our schools, especially those facing the additional barrier of being in care. This bill will allow children in care to remain in the school in which they are enrolled even if their foster placement changes and they longer—no longer reside in that school division.

This bill is a concrete step we can take to help children in care get the best possible education and improve the circumstances in their lives because, on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, everyone matters.

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

Further introduction of bills?

Bill 207—The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 207, The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act; Loi sur la participation du Manitoba au nouveau partenariat de l'Ouest, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, this bill requires the government of Manitoba to contact the governments of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan to begin negotiations to join their economic partnership known as the New West Partnership within one year after the bill receives royal assent.

And, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to members opposite supporting the speedy passage of this bill because we know it's in the best interest of Manitobans.

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

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Riel-evate Foundation

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, winter has been a bit warmer this year in Manitoba, thanks in part to the Riel-evate Foundation. Riel-evate is a new group that works with Louis Riel School Division to help improve the lives of Manitobans. Their first event was a massive clothing giveaway that reached out to families across Winnipeg.

Riel-evate's staff includes Wayne Ruff, Marna Kenny, Tom Park, Duane Brothers and Cindy Turner. They are with us today in the gallery. Together they issued a challenge to Louis Riel School Division's schools and parent committees, and the response was amazing.

The Riel-evate Foundation collected more than 1,500 items of clothing because of the generosity of Manitobans. Volunteers piled the clothing high at the school division's office, and families showed up from all over Winnipeg to sort out throughout the variety of clothes, toques, scarves and boots.

Riel-evate's generosity knows no bounds. One night during the giveaway, a father came to get a coat for his daughter. He merely asked if he could have two, and his eyes lit up when he was offered to make as many as he wants. He answered that he always gets coats for his kids, but it was the first time that he was—he would remember when he could get one for warmth for himself.

This is just one example of how Riel-evate is reaching out to draw Manitoban families and students together. The Riel-evate Foundation is excited about the incredible response to their first initiative, and they are eagerly looking toward their next general project.

Thank you to all members of the Riel-evate, countless volunteers and anyone who donated their clothing. Our team is proud of the work, and you are doing a great job to Manitoba—to build Manitoba better. Thank you very much.

Political Science Student Group

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to talk about my recent visit with a group of students from the University of Winnipeg.

These students are enrolled in an introductory course in the political sciences program. Their current topic of study is political participation. I was invited to provide a presentation on behalf of our PC caucus and then open the floor to them for feedback and discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I was so impressed by the genuine interest and enthusiasm these young men and women had in regards to politics in Manitoba. Many of them, as new voters, were looking forward to being able to exercise their right to vote in the upcoming election with the knowledge that their vote counts and that voter apathy is something to stand up to.

During our discussion, they pointed out the challenges that they feel the government needs to address: transparency, lack of positivity in politics, taxes, infrastructure and the education system that has failed so many Manitoba students by not preparing them properly for life post high school, whether it be in post-secondary studies or the workforce.

They further expressed the need for regular review of government policies and legislation. They felt that applying the practice of setting realistic goals and conducting thorough background research would produce the best results for citizens. This practice would better protect the taxpayer from ineffective spending and achieve measurable outcomes, not the continuation of flawed practices.

* (13:40)

Mr. Speaker, these young people are concerned about the future of Manitoba just as much as the generations of Manitobans before them are. They want to compete—complete their education here, be gainfully employed here and raise their families here. They want to see a government that works for them, not vice versa. They think we need to listen to their voices and work toward providing them with the answers they so rightfully deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to close by thanking the students for the opportunity to engage in such a lively and informative discussion. I wish them all the best for success in their studies and commit to work toward getting the results they have asked for. If we work together, a change for the better is coming.

École South Pointe School

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): A record number of families have moved into Manitoba over the past few years, especially in Waverley West.

The schools in the area have been feeling the strain of accommodating so many students, and our NDP government has worked with them to build a new K-to-8 school. We heard these concerns in 2013 and announced the new école St. Norbert—or École South Pointe School for the growing community of St. Norbert.

South Pointe will serve French-immersion students in a state-of-the-art facility in physical education, science, practical arts and music and will help prepare young people for their future. The new school will also have a 114-space child-care centre with an early-learning program. École South Pointe

School will help reduce class sizes of nearby schools such as école Bonnycastle and Ryerson Elementary and will help more students receive that one-on-one attention from teachers.

The completion date for École South Pointe was pushed back to next year after expansion plans for Bonnycastle school were rejected by Winnipeg city hall. Our NDP government opted to expand South Pointe in order to keep class sizes manageable for teachers. Now the school will have a capacity of 800 and an additional eight classrooms.

School principal Ruthanne Dyck has been working very hard, co-ordinating parent advisory council, hiring teachers, developing relationships with future students and building a South Pointe identity. She has 30 years of experience in Manitoba education system and was formerly the principal at Whyte Ridge Elementary and Laidlaw elementary. Her excitement and knowledge has been a huge asset to the school's progress.

I know that families in Waverley West are looking forward to having a place where their kids can learn and grow in our own community, and I'm pleased that we are one step closer to providing high-quality education for hard-working middle-class families.

Our NDP government knows that the key to Manitoba's future success is education. Our schools prepare young people for opportunities of tomorrow, and we continue to make strategic investments so we can ensure every child succeeds.

Manitoba Hydro–Government Promises

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Broken trust, broken government. In 2011, every member opposite went into every community and told hard-working Manitobans that they had a great deal for them. They said: Trust us; vote for us; believe in us. We will build a new hydro line and a new dam that will cost you not one cent. The dream of dreams. Manitoba took them at their word.

What happened next? After the 2011 election, this NDP government ordered Manitoba Hydro to build Keeyask and Bipole III, a line that would go way across to the Saskatchewan border and back down south through the best farmland in this province.

In 2014, just before Christmas, this NDP government expropriated that land from those farmers without any negotiations. Not only is this just wrong

and unfair, this NDP government is putting farmers' livelihood at severe risk.

Fast forward a few months and Manitobans found out that this is a nightmare: building a dam, building a line that Manitobans would have to pay for to subsidize Americans with cheap hydro. This misrepresentation to Manitobans will cost billions and billions of dollars which our children and grandchildren will inherit, and it's all due to the mismanagement by this NDP government.

When the member from St. Boniface made an attempt to say that he and his MLAs made mistakes, he was right. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask every member opposite to stand in their place and apologize for misleading Manitobans. Every member opposite has already increased hydro rates by close to 30 per cent under this Selinger government.

On April 19th, Manitobans will have the opportunity to show they do not like being misled.

Rex Ferguson-Baird

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, our team of NDP MLAs does everything it can to help our Manitoba students achieve their full potential. Listen up. When you give kids an outlet to realize their dreams, there's no telling where they will go. That's why I'm so happy to help give Rex Ferguson-Baird, the principal of Brooklands School, the recognition he deserves.

Two years ago, Brooklands School hosted an amazing ice hockey virtual field trip with the True North Foundation. Brooklands School students hosted the trip, the Discovery Channel broadcasted it and a couple thousand kids from across the globe logged in to participate and learn about hockey.

The field trips were created by the Discovery Channel and they had chosen Rex as one of 14 discovery education champions for 2015-2016. Rex has worked hard to connect Manitoba students to amazing new worlds and his hard work paid off. Discovery even invited Rex to their headquarters in Maryland to talk about great new field trip opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we invest in our schools so that teachers have the resources they need to help students dream big by building new schools, upgrading labs and building better shops rooms for opening horizons, just like Rex Ferguson-Baird.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before we proceed to oral questions, I want to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us this afternoon Harvinder Singh Phoolka, who is the senior advocate to Supreme Court of India.

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

And also seated in the public gallery we have with us this afternoon from the Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, we have 27 visitors under the direction of Donna Smith, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of advanced-Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum).

And also seated in the public gallery we have with us this afternoon from Lockport School, we have 11 junior parliament students under the direction of Jennifer Krawchuk, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Gimli.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

OCN First Nation Meeting NDP Leadership Campaign

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): On February 19th last year, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and Deputy Premier boarded a taxpayer-paid flight to The Pas and journeyed up there to meet with the OCN council.

My question for the Premier is: Did he do that as the Premier or did he do that as the leadership candidate for the NDP?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we actually believe in going out and meeting with people when we visit the community and talk to them about things that we can do together to improve their quality of life. We do that on a regular basis.

Wherever we go in Manitoba we meet with municipal leaders; we meet with First Nations leaders; we meet with indigenous leaders; we meet with friendship centres; we meet with local chambers of commerce. We work with all parties to find better ways to increase the prosperity of their community,

job opportunities for the young people. These are things we do all across Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: [*inaudible*] for the question, and I understand they don't like meetings that much in their caucus room lately.

But the reality is we do enjoy meeting with the people of Manitoba and we don't do it as candidates for the NDP leadership, but it appears the Premier did that.

Now, The Pas, we knew and the NDP members knew, was a lock for the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). The Premier's leadership campaign was behind; media reports had it at third place. The Pas was also the largest single block of voters in the NDP leadership race.

On February 19th, 2015, the Premier and the Deputy Premier met with the council of OCN and thereafter, two months later, the chief of OCN issued a letter stating that he was promised jobs in return for votes.

Did the Premier participate in a meeting during which the chief and council of OCN were promised jobs for votes?

Mr. Selinger: Short answer to that, Mr. Speaker, is no. It's important for the member to know that the voting in the leadership contest had already concluded before the meeting occurred at the time we were there.

So we know there is a concern registered with Elections Manitoba. We support Elections Manitoba looking into it to the depth that they feel is necessary to verify the facts. But if the member opposite is going to make accusations, at a minimum—at a minimum—he could get his facts right.

*(13:50)

Mr. Pallister: Delegate selection had concluded, Mr. Speaker, but what the Premier knows and every member over there understands, is that the mail-in ballot deadline was later. The mail-in ballot deadline was later, and the Premier just tried to misrepresent the reality of the purpose of his meeting and the purpose of his trip, because the purpose was clearly out of desperation to persuade people not to vote for the member for Thompson, who had secured the support, as he knows, of the people of The Pas and of OCN in advance of that meeting taking place.

Now, the member for Thompson was in the lead. He could have been the champ. As Marlon Brando

said in the great movie, *On the Waterfront*: You don't understand, I could've had class, could've been a contender, but the fix was in.

Well, the fix was in, Mr. Speaker, and I want the Premier to admit that the member for Thompson had earned the support of the delegates of The Pas and of OCN prior to his meeting, prior to his promise being made, but because of the Premier's visit there and the participation, also, of the Deputy Premier, the fix was in.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, again, the member is trying to be judge, jury and prosecutor. Neither role, none of—neither of those three roles is he qualified for.

If there's a concern, Elections Manitoba will canvass it. I was very clear to him: There was no engagement or promises made in any respect to any of those matters. We go listen to people, identify their concerns, encourage people to find solutions. We encourage people to find solutions for economic development.

I was just up there a week ago, Mr. Speaker, for The Pas trappers' festival. And once again, we met with the leadership of the First Nations community, and we saw the things they're doing to create jobs for their own people. We met with the town council. We met with the reeve from the municipality.

We look at things that will make communities stronger and better all throughout Manitoba. And when we do that we make great progress.

We don't mail in the Northern Development Strategy from Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker. We look for ways to do things that will make Manitoba a prosperous province, including northern Manitoba, including rural Manitoba, including urban Manitoba. Those are the things we do together in this province.

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

OCN First Nation Manitoba Hydro Contract

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, last week the plot thickened when the Deputy Premier rose in his place in this Chamber and claimed that the chief actually wasn't responsible for the letter saying the Premier had promised jobs for votes, that an overzealous staffer was to blame.

Interesting. An overzealous staffer didn't do an interview with the CBC in December. An overzealous staffer didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. The chief of OCN did that interview, and he said he was standing by his story, the same story he told for 10 months last year, the same story he told until this imaginary letter appeared. That was the impression of council, he was quoted as saying in that interview, that what we—that's what we thought we were hearing at the time, but it didn't happen. When you make a mutual agreement with government, you shake someone's hand. You think they'd pull through, right?

That's what the chief said, of OCN, in December, not an overzealous staffer.

Now, will the Premier admit that the only overzealous staffer involved in this whole mess is very likely the one who wrote that letter on behalf of the chief, in the Premier's office and at his direction, just last week?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, never let it be said that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't lack for overreach, that's for sure. He likes to tell tall tales. He's telling even taller tales today. I prefer to describe it as nonsense on stilts. That's what we're getting here, more nonsense on stilts.

If he has any suggestion, if he has any evidence, if he has any information, provide it to Elections Manitoba. Provide the information there. Don't try to use the Legislature to play political games.

Focus on the fact that in northern Manitoba there are one—over 1,400 people working on building Hydro projects in northern Manitoba now, Mr. Speaker, 1,400 people for over \$9 billion of export contracts. Explain to the people of northern Manitoba why you believe, as the Leader of the Opposition and the wannabe premier, that you don't think Hydro should be built for export. Explain why you want to kiss off \$9 billion of contracts and 1,400 jobs.

That's what the Legislature's for. If you have a complaint, file it with Elections Manitoba, and let's get on with the business of building a better Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: *[inaudible]* complaint, Mr. Speaker, and what truly is nonsense—and it's amazing to hear that word come out of the Premier of Manitoba's mouth—what really is nonsense, is using Hydro jobs as a ploy to get delegate support in a desperate attempt to hang onto his leadership. That's sad

nonsense. The Premier wants to run on his record of trust? Good luck with that.

Now, what has changed—what has changed? Since the December interview with the CBC, where Chief Constant stated: I still communicate with the Premier, but it's still unfinished business, I feel. What's changed? The only way the chief would change his story is if the business was finished.

So let's have the Premier put on the record in this place, in the interest of transparency and openness, if the business is finished and the Premier's damage is under control, how many jobs did he promise the people of OCN in order to fulfill his promise a year after he made it?

Mr. Selinger: I answered his question right off the hop. I said it was complete nonsense, nonsense on stilts, as a matter of fact.

Mr. Speaker, we like jobs in northern Manitoba. We think jobs in northern Manitoba make a lot of sense. We think when you can sign up over \$9 billion of export contracts and build a dam for six and a half billion dollars, that that is a good investment for the future of Manitoba. That will allow the export revenues to pay down the cost of the dam. That will allow the energy to be made available to Manitobans at one of the lowest rates in North America.

What is his plan for northern Manitoba? Will he be bailing it in from the south like he did the last time around? Will he send somebody else up there to deliver the message for him, or will he spend a little time himself going out and listening to people about what they think is important: housing issues, food-security issues, job creation issues, opportunities to get an education for people? All of those things are at risk with his plan to chop opportunities in northern Manitoba, with his plan not to build hydro for export, Mr. Speaker. His plan is too risky for the North. His plan is too risky for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: And the Premier's record on what's nonsense and what's not is pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, and what is nonsense is making promises to the people of Manitoba about never raising their taxes for five years, and then giving them the largest tax additional burden in the modern history of Manitoba. That's truly nonsense.

The member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), when she was part of the rebellion last year, stated that the Premier's top priorities were no longer those of Manitobans, but were simply hanging on to his

job. And his conduct in respect of the people of The Pas and other conduct recently demonstrates that loud and clear.

Now, the Premier would mislead members of his own team. If the Premier would disadvantage the people who are competing in a leadership race against him by taking advantage of his role as Premier, using his role as Premier to try to suppress support for another member he was competing against, if he would do that to people he sat with in his own caucus, if he would do that with the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who were clearly ahead of him in the polls, out of desperation, then what wouldn't he do to the people of Manitoba?

What would he say to the people of Manitoba? What wouldn't he promise to the people of Manitoba to hang on to his job?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, here's what we wouldn't do: We wouldn't promise not to privatize the telephone system and then ram it through in the middle of the night and make sure that people get personal profits off it. Every time a young person or somebody picks up their cellphone bill now and they see one of the highest rates in Manitoba—in Canada—they can thank the Leader of the Opposition.

If he really thinks he should sit and judge other people, why won't he declare in the Legislature today whether he made any money off the sale of MTS shares, let us know how much he made off of that. If he wants to be sanctimonious, let him acknowledge that he broke that commitment to the people of Manitoba. Let him acknowledge that.

We will focus on jobs for the people of the North of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, whether they're hydro jobs, whether they're opportunities in resource development, whether they're opportunities in tourism, making sure the people of the North have access to a good education with University College of the North, an institution that never existed before we came into office, paving the roads and building sewer and water opportunities in the North. All of those things are at risk with the risky plan of the Leader of the Opposition.

OCN First Nation Letter to Government

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, for a year officials at OCN stood by the letter that was sent a year ago. Then, a year later and months after having confirmed it, the Minister of Aboriginal

Affairs said that he got a letter on Thursday that absolved the Premier (Mr. Selinger) from responsibility.

It reminded all of us of that time where the Premier filed a false election statement and then he demanded a letter from his party to absolve him of any responsibility, and then, of course, he had to pay back \$76,000 even though he got the letter at that time.

* (14:00)

Isn't it obvious to NDP members and all Manitobans that this is just how the Premier does business? He's been doing it this way for years.

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): As I said on Thursday, Mr. Speaker, allow me to repeat that the contents of the member's question contain a bunch of false information. Let me try and, for his information, try and get the record straight.

The deadline for delegate selection was on February 16th, 2014. We met with the chief and council on February 18th to discuss a variety of issues. I met with the chief and council alone on February the 19th. We spoke mostly in Cree at that meeting. Mr. Speaker, allow me to read the contents of the letter that I received the other day, copied on a letter that was sent through the Commissioner of Elections for the province of Manitoba, Mr. Bowles. And it reads the following, and I'm sure I'll have an opportunity to read the letter—

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

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the letter that was sent a year ago that talked about the deal for support for the Premier for jobs sat on the Premier's desk for a year. He didn't decide to send it to the elections commissioner then.

Only on Thursday of last week did the Premier finally manage to get himself a letter, just like he did previously, to try to absolve himself. It kind of actually reminded us of when the Premier assured this Assembly, all of us in this Assembly, that civil servants weren't used in a political stunt here in the Legislature. Of course, they said that for a year, and then we found out a year later that the Premier had concealed an email that proved just that.

Covering things up for a year: There's nothing new to that when it comes to the Premier. It's how he does business.

Why doesn't he just admit he's always been doing that here in the Legislature?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I'll get the appropriate number of copies required for tabling in a few minutes. But I want to provide again the information that was sent to Mr. Bowles from Chief Michael Constant, whom, I'd like to add, is a person of honour and a person that is respected by his community to be the leader of that community.

He says in his letter that: I would like to provide clarity on the recent allegations being made by myself and the First Minister. For the record, myself did not promise work on Bipole III in exchange for my community's support in the Premier's leadership bid for the NDP party leader of the NDP or NDP support in the upcoming election. My signature does not appear on this letter; it was drafted by overzealous staff members, and I was not given the opportunity to peruse the letter before it went out, and I apologize for the fervour and political positioning that this letter has created.

Mr. Goertzen: And, of course, the minister has no way for accounting for what the chief said just in December when he said that there was an agreement.

Now, of course, you know, we might be inclined to try to take the Premier at his word. We know that there are thousands of others who wouldn't and many others in his own caucus who wouldn't. But when we hear that he has used taxpayers' dollars to try to save himself politically, we might want to believe him, but then we remember that it wasn't that long ago that he spent \$760,000 of taxpayers' dollars to pay off political staff that weren't his supporters. We remember that it was hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money that he spent to bring Heather Grant-Jury into his office to try to save him.

So, in fact, this isn't anything new, him using taxpayers' dollars to try to save himself from a political problem; he's been doing it for years.

Why doesn't the Premier just admit this is always how he does business with taxpayers' dollars, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Robinson: Again, I must repeat, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Steinbach is putting false information on the record in this Chamber.

And, again, let me repeat, the deadline for delegate selection was on February 16th.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) and I met with the chief and council and the elders of the community on the 18th. I met with the chief and council and elders in the community on the 19th. The meeting, primarily, was conducted in the first language, Cree, in that meeting.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to table again the letter that I received on Thursday, copied by the—Chief Michael Constant, a letter that was sent through the Commissioner of Elections, Mr. Bill Bowles.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Steinbach, on a new question.

NDP Leadership Campaign Support in Northern Manitoba

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Well, of course, if Chief Constant was on the radio just in December saying that they had a deal.

Now, it's clear that this is not information that is foreign to the government, to the Premier; they've done this sort of thing before. The Premier knew in his leadership battle that it wasn't enough just to gather support; he also had to suppress support.

And, of course, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was successful in essentially running the table when it came to delegates in The Pas and in other places in the North, and so the Premier had to ensure that he was able to suppress that vote.

Now, it just so happened that there was a pretty low turnout for those mail-in ballots in The Pas, seemingly, right after the Premier was up there making a deal.

Why won't he just acknowledge—why won't he just admit that he had a two-pronged strategy? Wasn't it just to try to get support in the leadership, but it was also to try to suppress support and that was done with taxpayers' dollars?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Again, Mr. Speaker, I am hearing something that is being created as they go along, and I believe the English term is fiction. That is what is being created here by the member for Steinbach.

You know what my advice to the member for Steinbach? Stop playing political—cheap political games on the backs of suffering Indians.

NDP Leadership Race Campaign Strategy

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I have some advice too. How about follow the law and maybe stop having caucus meetings while you're at it?

Now, Mr. Speaker, perhaps if this was the only dirty trick that happened, we might think, well, it was maybe a one-off by the Premier, but clearly there was more of a strategy. We only have to remember about Swan River where the Premier had one of his supporters, nobody less than a former senior Cabinet minister in the NDP government, who went there and decided to fill out ballots on behalf of seniors without them actually knowing that the ballots were being filled out, and so then they had to reset the ballot posts just because the Premier was trying to, again, pull off a dirty trick.

So this was something that happened on a common basis throughout their leadership. The Premier's not foreign to it. We've already described all the different things he's done over the years.

Why doesn't the Premier just stand up, admit what everybody knows? It's how he does business. It's how he does things in the Premier's office, and he can't be trusted. Everyone knows that.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): I will rise, Mr. Speaker, and just say that the Premier and I have committed our lives to the well-being of our citizens in the province of Manitoba and they involve indigenous peoples. And just the other day we introduced our bill on the truth and reconciliation and we're very proud of that. We hosted the missing and murdered indigenous women's forum here in the round table in the city of Winnipeg. Did I see any members from the opposite end there? No.

And, again, for the record, in quoting Chief Constant's letter—who is an honourable leader, in my opinion—I did not, meaning me, did not promise work on Bipole III in exchange for my community support for the First Minister's leadership bid for the NDP party leader or the NDP support in the upcoming election.

That's only part of the letter, Mr. Speaker. The remainder I've tabled.

Mr. Goertzen: Of course, we know, Mr. Speaker, he had said something entirely different in December.

And, you know, I mean, we've seen the record of this government in the past. This Premier has used

his office and he's used taxpayers' dollars to try to help himself out politically. We know that Manitobans have lost trust with the Premier (Mr. Selinger). Most of his caucus has lost trust with the Premier. We read that in the paper almost every day.

Now, the Premier was trying to make a deal, not unlike, of course, he goes to the convention and he made a deal there too. We made sure that firefighters were there to support him and he did it at the cost of paramedics. Because at the end of the day the Premier isn't about trying to ensure that the best interests of Manitobans are made or kept, he's only interested in his own best interests.

Why doesn't he just admit that when it comes to his office, when it comes to his leadership, he's not looking out for Manitobans, he's only looking out for himself?

Mr. Robinson: Back in 1995, I believe it was, Mr. Speaker, we had the opportunity of meeting one Darryl Sutherland—the late Oscar Lathlin and I, former member of The Pas—and Mr. Sutherland was really deeply hurt by how people from the other side of this Chamber were using him as a token in trying to rig the vote from the Interlake election that was coming up in that spring.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, these members have a lot of room to talk about wrongdoings. We had no doings whatsoever untoward, and we spoke about the initiatives that were being made by the OCN. Some of the efforts we supported, obviously, and still continue to support because it's for the betterment of the people on OCN.

Bipole III Transmission Line Landowners' Biosecurity Concerns

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Yesterday, I attended the landowner blockade of the Bipole III transmission line construction project southeast of Winnipeg. The landowners have legitimate biosecurity concerns about Manitoba Hydro's lack of proper cleaning of the construction equipment.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am offering to drive the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro out to the blockade this afternoon to meet with the landowners.

Will he accept my offer to set up a meeting on site today?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): I'd like to offer that member a trip to northern Manitoba where Aboriginal people, indigenous peoples, are actually benefiting from the hydro development activity that is going on up there. It'll also give him a better understanding of where our power comes from.

We know that hard-working Manitobans want clean, reliable, affordable energy, Mr. Speaker, and I also know that the public has been consulted on the Bipole III initiative and the project since 2008, with more than 400–400–meetings with landowners, RMs, First Nations communities, stakeholder groups, and based on the recommendations of the Clean Environment Commission, this work is being done very carefully.

Mr. Pedersen: So today the Premier just finished telling us how he meets with Manitobans all over the province, and now the minister refuses to go out and meet with constituents. This NDP government continues their—to show their lack of respect and erode the trust of Manitoba Hydro to hard-working Manitoba families.

Why is this minister so afraid to meet with these Manitobans? Why is he, instead of meeting with them, why is he threatening them with court injunctions rather than sitting down with farm families to address their concerns?

Mr. Robinson: Let me repeat, Mr. Speaker, that the public has been consulted on the reliability project since 2008, and 400 meetings have been held with the people that the member is talking about, including RMs and First Nations communities.

And I know that the crews—I've been advised that the crews that work for Manitoba Hydro are doing everything they can to enter private property only with the permission of the landowner, only on foot and wear appropriate protection to prevent the spread of foreign biota, which is the main concern that we're talking about this afternoon.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, this is why I'm offering to take the minister out there, because what he just said is not correct. Manitoba Hydro, at the order of this government, is going onto private land without biosecurity, and yet he refuses to take me up on my offer so that he can actually learn something about what is going on within his portfolio.

So why is this NDP government so intent on using bullying and intimidation, putting stress on farm families, rather than addressing issues which

will affect both their own livelihoods, Manitoba livelihoods, but it'll have a direct negative impact on the Manitoba economy because of this government's sloppiness?

Mr. Robinson: Hydro is—Hydro is following all terms and conditions of the environmental licence that's been issued for Bipole III. Clause No. 46 makes it very clear that any equipment moving from one vegetation type to another will be cleaned properly prior to being moved.

Now, to be extra clear, even though Manitoba Hydro is allowed access to private land under The Manitoba Hydro Act, section 15(1.2), Hydro makes every attempt to contact private landowners before doing survey work on their land.

So that, Mr. Speaker, is how this consultation is working.

CFS First Nations Agencies Children's Special Allowance

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, last week I shared with this House my concern that this government's clawback of the Children's Special Allowance was putting First Nations child and family services agencies at risk of failing. Now we hear that layoff notices have been given to social workers in one agency and closer—closure of our branch office is imminent.

When is this minister going to show real concern for children in her care and quit the clawback of the Children's Special Allowance?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): This side of the House shows care and concern for Manitoba children living everywhere, every day. We work with the agencies and the authorities to provide the appropriate services. We have tripled funding. We have hired more social workers. We are supporting families with prevention initiatives, working with not-for-profit organizations. We are making a significant difference.

We have a lot more work to do, but we are continuing to work alongside families and communities to ensure that we can provide the necessary services for children so they can get the love and support and nurturing within their home community.

We are not going to be implementing the risky cuts, as the members across are suggesting. We will not be slashing CFS rates. We are going to continue to work with Manitoba families every day.

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Speaker, this minister has already brought in her own type of cuts by clawing back the Children's Special Allowance. This government's practice of clawing back the Children's Special Allowance from First Nations agencies is leaving vulnerable children at greater risk by closing down front-line services. The minister had to know this would be the consequence of her reckless practice of clawing back the Children's Special Allowance.

What is she going to do about it?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I have the privilege of frequently meeting with the leadership council, with the CEOs of the authorities, the board of directors of many agencies as well as executive directors of agencies and often the privilege of meeting with social workers in the front line. We talk constantly about what are we going to do improve services. We focus on the importance of prevention, making sure that we are providing those necessary supports for families to address the issues of poverty, to address the issues of poor housing, to ensure that they have opportunities that are provided only through a good education and a strong economy and good jobs.

We're going to continue to have those conversations. We're going to continue to work for Manitoba families. They need to be very, very fearful of the members across the way and their risky cuts and their record of what they did when they were in charge of Family Services.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, this minister may be meeting with them but she's surely not listening to them. I am sure Manitobans are tired of NDP mismanagement and its impact on the front-line services, yet here is another example of vulnerable children left at risk by this government.

We are used to crisis management style from this government. Is this the next crisis?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Working with the indigenous-led organizations, working with the not-for-profit organizations, we are working every day to support Manitoba families. We're working to develop more and better prevention programs.

Our focus is the protection of children but also acknowledging the best place for a child is within their family, within their community. That's why we have introduced the customary care legislation. This is important legislation that is going to change the way that we do service across this province, ensuring that communities have a say, that communities can

wrap around their support and ensure that families have the support that is necessary so that that child can stay within their community, ensure that they have their sense of belonging, they're aware of their culture and their traditions. We're going to continue to work with all Manitobans and make a difference.

Payroll Tax Economic Impact

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, in 1987, the tax-loving NDP created a payroll tax, which, like a head tax, charges a fee to businesses based on the number of employees and the size of their employees' earnings. This tax on employment has had a harmful impact on business and employment growth in Manitoba, and as a result, many companies look to the cost effectiveness of moving employees and operations outside of our province.

* (14:20)

Why does the NDP continue to have a payroll tax which drives business and employment away from Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, the health and education levy is worth \$471 million. The Liberals proposed to eliminate it. That's \$471 million of cuts to health and education. That's the largest single promise that the Liberal Party of Manitoba has made—a foolish province that will give tax breaks to the wealthiest banks in Manitoba. The banks in Canada last year, their profits: \$35 billion.

By the way, the payroll tax is deductible against your federal corporate taxes, Mr. Speaker. It's a misguided policy, will not do anything to create jobs in Manitoba, will cut education, will cut health care, will mean less people get education and training, will mean less people get access to timely health care in the community, less home care. It's a foolish policy.

I ask the member from River Heights to reverse it with his leader today.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, a considerable proportion of the payroll tax is paid by organizations like hospitals and schools; maybe that's why it's called a levy on education and health.

These organizations receive money from the provincial government for their operations. In taxing such organizations, the government is artificially incurring extra costs and artificially inflating its revenue and expenses by moving money from one pot to another and back again. Liberals will end this bureaucratic paper chase of over \$100 million on a

circuitous route that doesn't achieve any useful purpose.

Why have the NDP failed, in more than 16 years, to remove this in-and-out scheme?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, \$471 million cut out of health and education is not what this province needs right now. That would be folly. That would be foolishness. That would mean less teachers in the classrooms. That would mean less nurses at the bedside. That would mean less doctors in the community. That would mean less QuickCare clinics. That would mean less support for people that need to have access to health care. That would mean less investments in early childhood development. All of those things will take Manitoba backwards.

Mr. Speaker, the health and education levy would mostly benefit the big banks and the big corporations.

Why is that his priority? Why is that the priority of the Liberal Party when we know people need the training to enter the labour force where we have one of the lower unemployment rates in the country, where we have one of the better job creation records in the country?

Why would he want to cut supports away from young people, senior citizens in Manitoba?

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is dedicated to opposing the growth of business and opposing the growth of government revenue by placing an onerous tax on this growth.

The Premier should recognize that all businesses contribute to our economy by employing Manitobans, by providing services to Manitobans and by purchasing goods and services from each other, and thus helping the whole economy to develop and to grow.

Why is the Premier not following the Manitoba Liberal Party lead and supporting all businesses in our province?

Mr. Selinger: We, in fact, are supporting all businesses. Small business taxation rate in Manitoba under the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives: 9 per cent. What is it now in Manitoba? Zero per cent. Corporate tax rates under the Conservatives when they were in office: 17 per cent. What is it now? Twelve per cent. Capital tax on businesses of all sizes in Manitoba: eliminated.

The payroll tax will cut jobs from schools. It will take away opportunities for young people to get an education. It will take nurses away from the bedside. It will take doctors out of our communities and nurse practitioners out of our QuickCare clinics and reduce the ability to provide free cancer-care drugs to all Manitobans. That is a foolish policy. That is a misguided policy. That is a policy that will make all Manitobans worse off, and only the big banks and corporations will be better off.

Shame on the Leader of the Opposition.

Surface Water Management Act Support for Second Reading

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, today our government provided a flood forecast this spring.

Of course, as we just heard from the Liberal Party, they were more-prioritizing giving away \$471 million over flood protection. Since my area is affected by flood protection, the Liberal plan is terrible for my area.

In 1997, when the flood hit Manitoba and St. Norbert residents were cutting hot water tanks and furnaces out of their basement and being evacuated from the area, the Leader of the Opposition abandoned his post and ran from the province as the minister of EMO.

Our side stands for more investments, better flood protection, taking care of the residents of St. Norbert.

Can the Minister of Conservation please inform the House of the steady progress we've made working with wetlands and working for flood protections for all Manitobans?

Hon. Thomas NevaKshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I thank the member for the question.

Proper water management is fundamental in the province of Manitoba, which is why this afternoon we will be introducing for second reading The Surface Water Management Act, and we hope for speedy passage on the co-operation of members opposite. And I want to thank all of the various different interest groups across the province for their work in formulating this bill, particularly groups such as Ducks Unlimited, the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation and so forth.

I want to, again, point the finger at the Liberal Party for their lack of commitment in this regard, Mr. Speaker. Their party platform stating specifically that they will suspend investments in flood protection infrastructure going forward is exactly the thing that people of Manitoba do not need.

I thank the member for the opportunity to put this on the record.

Student Financial Aid System Timeline and Costs-Update

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, student financial aid software was supposed to be up and running in June of 2011 and cost \$12 million. Today the software is not up and running and the cost has run up to nearly \$30 million, another great example of under the Selinger government Manitobans are paying more, and in this case, they're getting nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Education today: Is the reason that this software is not up and running arrogance or incompetence?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): As I've said to the member opposite on many occasions, were he to go online today he would be well-served by Manitoba Student Aid, and if he was in a position, met the criteria to receive support from Manitoba Student Aid, at the time that he would go to pay it off he would find that there's no interest on his student loan.

Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba we have among the lowest tuition in the country because we want it to be affordable for our students. In Manitoba we have among the highest funding to our post-secondary institutions, to colleges and universities because we want it to remain affordable and have a good quality.

The member opposite has made it very clear that he doesn't support investments in our education, and the truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, the biggest threat to education in Manitoba is the opposition. The biggest threat to steady growth in Manitoba is the opposition. The biggest threat to Manitobans is the Leader of the Opposition.

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for petitions.

Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route— Information Request

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is 600-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located in southeastern Manitoba that will cross into the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

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

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

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

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

* (14:30)

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition has been signed by K. Rey, D. Lagimodiere and K. Orobko and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Applied Behavioural Analysis Services

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

And this is the background to this petition:

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

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

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

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

(5) The current provincial government policy now imposed on the ABA service provider will now decrease the significantly proven, empirically based and locally proven five-year program to a consultative model that will now have over 200 child wait-lists and allow only a small portion of children to access these new services.

(6) Waiting lists, decrease in services and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their diagnosis still remains and their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services, maintain the current

successful program and fund true ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder until they reach age 21.

This petition is signed by J. Guenter, C. Toews, C. Froese and many other fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Budget 2016

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

The background of this petition is follows:

(1) On April 30, 2015, the Minister of Finance clearly stated: There will be another budget before next election.

(2) The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans, a significant tax expense—taxpayers' expense, with a clear understanding there would be another budget before the next election.

And (3) just two days after the Public Accounts at fiscal year 2014-2015 were released, showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by an additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Minister of Finance stated: I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but, in fact, that the matter is we're weighing our options as whether or not to introduce the budget prior to the election.

And (4) after months of misleading Manitobans, on February 4, 2016, the provincial government finally admitted they would withhold a budget.

(5) Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding the true state of the provincial government's fiscal mismanagement.

And (6) the budget has been prepared, but the provincial government is hiding it and the facts from the Manitobans instead of being transparent and accountable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government keep its promise to the people of Manitoba and immediately bring—but forward a complete budget they are withholding from the—with—from public scrutiny.

And this petition is signed by the—by K. Mawser, K. Thompson and T. Riach and many fine Manitobans.

Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route— Information Request

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by P. Dyer, G. Hertes, M. Toews and many more fine Manitobans.

Applied Behavioural Analysis Services

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by W. Taycok, J. Hickman, W. Hickman and many, many other fine Manitobans.

* (14:40)

Budget 2016

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

On April 30, 2015, the Finance Minister clearly stated there will be another budget before the next election.

The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans at significant taxpayer expense with the clear understanding there would be another budget before the next election.

Just two days after the Public Accounts for fiscal year 2014-2015 were released, showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by an additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Finance Minister stated, I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but the fact of the matter is we're weighing our options as to whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election.

After months of misleading Manitobans, on February 4th, 2016, the provincial government finally admitted they would withhold the budget.

Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding the true state of the provincial government's fiscal mismanagement.

The budget has been prepared, but the provincial government is hiding it and the facts from Manitobans instead of being transparent and accountable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government keep its promise to the people of Manitoba and immediately bring forward the completed budget they are withholding from public scrutiny.

And this is signed by J. Currie, S. Brenot, C. Allbutt and many others, Mr. Speaker.

Community-Based Brain Injury Services and Supports

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Brain Injury Canada, cited at <http://braininjurycanada.ca/acquired-brain-injury/>, estimates that 50,000 Canadians sustain brain injuries each year, over 1 million Canadians live with the effects of an acquired brain injury, 30 per cent of all traumatic brain injuries are sustained by children and youth, and approximately 50 per cent of brain injuries come from falls and motor vehicle collisions.

(2) Studies conducted by Manitoba Health in 2003 and 2006 and the Brandon Regional

Health Authority in 2008 identified the need for community-based brain injury services.

(3) These studies recommended that Manitoba adopt the Saskatchewan model of brain injury services.

(4) The treatment and coverage for Manitobans who suffer brain injuries varies greatly, resulting in huge inadequacies depending on whether a person suffers the injury at work, in a motor vehicle accident, through assault or from medical issues such as stroke, aneurysm or anoxia due to cardiac arrest or other medical reasons.

(5) Although in-patient services including acute care, short- and long-term rehabilitation are available throughout the province, brain injury patients who are discharged from hospital often experience discontinuation or great reduction of services which results in significant financial and emotional burdens being placed on family and friends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to develop and evolve community-based brain injury services that include but are not limited to: case management services, known also as service navigation; safe and accessible housing in the community; proctor or coach-type assistance for community reintegration programs; improved access to community-based rehabilitation services; and improved transportation, especially for people living in rural Manitoba.

(2) To urge the provincial government to encompass financial and emotional supports for families and other caregivers in the model that is developed.

And this petition is signed by L. Elliot, S. Fayant and A. Baraniuk and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions?

Seeing none, okay, we'll move on to grievances. *[interjection]* Before? Okay.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, on a matter of urgent public importance, I move, seconded by the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that under rule 27(1), the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of public

importance, namely the conduct of Manitoba Hydro under the direct pressure of this NDP government toward landowners in the path of construction of the Bipole III transmission line.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Midland, seconded by the honourable member for Lakeside, that under rule 27(1), the ordinary business of the House—

Mr. Pedersen: We need a rewording of this motion for the urgent public importance, so.

I move, seconded by the member for Lakeside, as per rule 36(1), I am providing notice of a matter of urgent public importance to be raised today, namely the conduct of Manitoba Hydro towards landowners in the path of construction of the Bipole III transmission line as a result of the direct pressure of this provincial government.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro was begun with the ownership and control of the utility in the hands of Manitobans. As shareholders and customers, Manitobans took pride in this relationship.

Yesterday what I witnessed first-hand by the actions of a Manitoba Hydro supervisor under the direct orders of the NDP was deplorable, despicable and so unbecoming of a provincial Crown jewel.

This Legislature needs to debate the merits of allowing Manitoba Hydro to enter into collective bargaining with the landowners in the path of the Bipole III transmission line to address their continuing concerns.

To date, however, this NDP government has steadfastly refused to allow the corporation to enter into negotiations with the Canadian association of energy pipelines association, otherwise known as CAEPLA, who is representing the landowners in the path of Bipole III.

As I witnessed first-hand yesterday, landowners have legitimate concerns about the lack of bio-security measures at the construction sites, and this is just one of the issues that the landowners have. The landowners continue to rightfully insist all construction equipment be properly cleaned before entering a new property.

Manitoba Hydro's response back has been trying to pin the onus of biosecurity protocols on the

landowners. This is not how to build a level of trust between landowners and Manitoba Hydro.

As well, once the transmission line is built, these landowners will be forced to carry millions of dollars of liability insurance to protect their operations should any damage occur over the entire lifetime of the transmission line.

There is also concern over who is responsible for weed control around the towers and the effect these towers will have on current agricultural practices.

These are just some of the issues that could be addressed with collective bargaining and this is what the debate today should focus on.

* (14:50)

Yesterday, I also witnessed NDP bullying through Manitoba Hydro. The RCMP visited the site in the morning. The officer had no issues with the landowner blockade. All the RCMP officer asked was to have all vehicles parked to one side of the road, a municipal road, to allow traffic to pass through unimpeded. The landowners quickly complied. However, as soon as the RCMP officer left the scene, the Manitoba Hydro supervisor pulled his truck crosswise on the road, and when asked why, he just shrugged his shoulders. Then, after the media left, the same supervisor confronted the landowner and threatened a court injunction if the blockade continued.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the Manitoba way, and if it cannot be addressed here in this Legislature, then what hope do Manitobans have to protect their livelihoods, no matter where they are in Manitoba?

It is incumbent upon this Legislature to begin the process of rebuilding the trust Manitobans should have in their Crown utility, and that starts today with a debate here in this Chamber this afternoon. These issues and many others have been stonewalled by the NDP-controlled Manitoba Hydro. The NDP believes tossing some money at a problem will make it go away, something that has not worked on other departments and will not work for a transmission-line project today and into the future.

Mr. Speaker, a debate is needed in this House today to set up the parameters for collective bargaining. This House needs to debate the merits of letting Manitobans, the real owners of Manitoba Hydro, address the effects of a transmission line across private property in Manitoba. This debate is not just about Bipole III. One only needs to look at

pipeline projects and transmission-line projects across Canada to see that, while this concept may be new to Manitoba's NDP-Manitoba Hydro and totally foreign to the NDP, collective bargaining is a regular occurrence on similar projects across Canada. The debate today in this House can set a precedent on how the Bipole III and other future projects can proceed with public support and restored confidence in Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, as I mentioned, I was sickened to see a Manitoba Hydro supervisor threaten a landowner with a court injunction as a means of pushing the NDP agenda. I spoke with this landowner. This landowner has a young family, a third-generation farm and wishes and is hoping upon hopes that he'll—his family will be able to continue into the fourth generation, and as we spoke, he had tears in his eyes as he talked about the stress this project has had on his family from the NDP's bullying and intimidation practices. This has to be a low point in the NDP-controlled Manitoba Hydro.

Today this Legislature needs to take a stand on the side of Manitobans. Let all of us in this Chamber, every one of us today, debate the merits of allowing Manitoba Hydro to begin collective bargaining with those directly impacted by the Bipole III transmission line. By doing so, we can begin to bring back the respect to Manitoba Hydro it once had as Manitoba's Crown jewel. And, Mr. Speaker, this can only start with a full debate this afternoon here in this Chamber. And I urge all members to join in this debate so that we can bring Manitoba Hydro back to its once cherished position in Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Before I recognize the honourable minister, I just want to indicate that for the record that the appropriate notice was provided to my office today.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): I want to thank the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) for bringing this matter of urgent public importance to the Chamber, because it gives us an opportunity to address some of the issues that he has brought forward.

Indeed, if there was bullying tactics that were employed by Hydro employees at the site that he indicated occurred yesterday, he should immediately call law enforcement authorities and Manitoba Hydro senior officials because that is not acceptable.

We know very well—we know that the hard-working Manitobans, as I said in the Chamber earlier, want clean, reliable, affordable energy, and that is why we are working hard to build hydro to ensure that Manitobans have that advantage now and into the future.

Bipole III is a critical reliability project that is necessary to ensure the supply of electricity to southern Manitoba in the event of a catastrophic storm. Now, such failure has happened before and could cripple the Manitoba economy and put public safety at risk, especially if it were to occur during the winter months, and that is why we are proceeding with the Bipole III.

Now, I overheard in the Chamber today about still talking about building down the east side. I think we're beyond that. We are proceeding with the efforts on the west side, and today over \$1 billion has been expended or is committed in signed contracts for Bipole III with 90 per cent of the land secured for the construction of 14—a 1,400-kilometre line. Now, cancelling the project at this point would be far more expensive.

Now, let me tell you why the decision was made not to build down the east side. Now members eventually will learn about this later on down the road into the future, why the people of the east side, the people that live on the east side, why they don't want a transmission line down that area of Manitoba. And that is the protection of Mother Earth, the lungs of Mother Earth in that boreal forest that the indigenous peoples are fighting so hard to protect, and protecting the integrity of Mother Earth on that side of the province of Manitoba. And that is why and, you know, perhaps members opposite will have an opportunity to sit in ceremony, to sit inside a teepee to get a teaching about the integrity of our Mother Earth and how we must work very hard in protecting our Mother Earth.

And many people hear about climate change. This is a part of that, Mr. Speaker, and we have to address that issue very seriously as legislators in this chamber. And I don't have to quote the experts that have spoken on the issue in the past.

Let me address the issue of Bipole III. In order to build the Bipole III it is necessary to reach agreements with over 500 landowners to use their land. In large part this has been achieved through voluntary easement agreements in which landowners are compensated. In about 20 per cent of the cases, agreements have not been reached and expropriation

has had to occur. Now, some of these farmers have protested as recently as this weekend, and we know we must build hydro in order to provide the reliable, affordable, clean energy for our fellow Manitobans.

And we're also pleased that voluntary land agreements have been reached with 80 per cent of the landowners—who have been generously compensated, I might add. Hydro is offering fair and generous compensation for easements amounting to 150 per cent of market value per property, plus additional payments for structure impact, 'constructure'—construction damage and ancillary damage. And Hydro has been negotiating with landowners for voluntary easements and compensation agreements since July of 2012.

Now, for those who haven't signed the voluntary easements, Manitoba Hydro has secured easements along the Bipole III route through expropriation.

*(15:00)

Now, every property owner in the city or in the country has an easement from Hydro and other utilities on their property. The public has been consulted, as I said earlier in question period, on Bipole III, the reliability project, since 2008, with more than 400 meetings that have occurred with landowners, RMs, First Nations communities, stakeholder groups and others. The route selected for the line has the least impact on agricultural land among the three alternatives that were presented at public meetings in 2009.

Now, based on recommendations from the Clean Environment Commission, 74 route adjustments were made, and that was based on their recommendations, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba Hydro worked with the key agricultural organizations to develop the robust biosecurity policy that has been in place now for well over a year. And I know that on matters like food security my colleague the Minister of Agriculture will further elaborate on the measures that have been taken to ensure the safety of that side of things.

Manitoba Hydro has worked with key agricultural organizations to develop the robust biosecurity policy that has been in place now for well over a year. There are strict procedures that apply to all work that's being carried out on agricultural land, which will prevent the introduction and the spread of disease on agricultural land. It'll help prevent the introduction and spread of disease, pests and invasive plant species on agricultural land and

livestock operations, by ensuring that workers are entering fields with clean clothes and even footwear at all times.

The Community Development Initiative provides an annual benefit of \$5 million per year for 10 years to 74 communities in a vicinity of the Bipole III project.

Now, I want to reiterate my cautionary recommendation to my colleague the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen). If there was any abuse of power by workers at the site that he indicated, please report that to the law enforcement authorities or, at the very least, please advise senior Hydro officials and I'm sure the CEO will take care of these matters immediately.

Mr. Speaker, we have done very well on this corporation and the work that it's doing in ensuring that all Manitobans benefit from Hydro development in the province of Manitoba, and cancelling Hydro at this point in time or—and killing export deals, like the recent one we signed with Saskatchewan, would kill 10,000 jobs in the province of Manitoba, and that is something that I don't want to see, and I'm sure my colleagues on this side of the Chamber don't want to see that.

And we don't want to be like the members opposite and privatize, as they did with Manitoba MTS. And we want to keep Manitoba Hydro publicly owned just so that Manitobans—all Manitobans—indigenous, farmers, non-indigenous peoples and into the future are generations that are going to be here in replacing us as leaders will have something proud to speak of in the time ahead.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague, the member for Midland, for allowing us the opportunity of setting the record straight on some of these matters that he's raised in this Chamber.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), wishing to speak to the matter.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. You will need to seek leave of the House first.

Mr. Gerrard: I seek leave of the House to speak on this matter which has been raised, the matter of

urgent public importance, and whether we have a debate on it.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the honourable member for River Heights to speak to the matter of urgent public importance? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I want to support the importance of this issue and the timeliness of its being brought forward. It is important—Manitoba Hydro is important for us in our province. Farmers are important for this—in this province, and it's important that we have a resolution to this issue which is—meets the best interests of those farmers and of Manitoba Hydro.

Farmers are vital for producing the food which is so important for healthy Manitobans. Farmers are a tremendously important part of our economy for jobs and for the wealth that is created in our province, and they need to be recognized.

I want to add, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, not only is this matter of urgent public importance critical, but the bill, I think five, that we are to be speaking on, hopefully later on today after this, even if we have to extend the session, is important to farmers to reduce flooding and it's important to reduce flooding in Manitoba. That's Bill 5. And so we need to make sure that we're looking at the best interests of farmers from this perspective of the MUPI and also from the perspective of other legislation which we have before us.

I have argued for quite some time that there is a solution which would be good for Manitoba Hydro and good for farmers, and that is to use the compact line technology to run many more of these lines along roadways instead of across the middle of fields. And, hopefully, Manitoba Hydro will undertake to look more seriously at doing this, because it would save, I believe, a lot of trouble.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to debate proceeding on this issue and a full hearing of the important issues which are around it. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: With respect to the matter of urgent public importance raised by the honourable member for Midland, I'd like to thank all honourable members for their advice on this matter.

The notice required by rule 36(1) was provided to my office, as I've indicated earlier, and under our rules and practices the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the

public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise this matter.

I have listened very carefully to the debate on both sides and carefully to the arguments that were put forward by honourable members commenting on this matter. Although the subject matter is one that some Manitobans could be concerned with, I do not believe that the public interest will suffer if the issue is not debated today. I would also note that there are other opportunities available to raise concerns regarding this issue such as asking questions in oral question period, making members' statements or raising a grievance.

And, with the greatest of respect for the above-noted comments that I've made, I therefore must rule that this motion is out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I respect your ruling and I thank you for it, but I'm wondering if there would—you could canvass if there's leave of the House to move to a debate on that issue for the balance of the afternoon until 5 o'clock.

Hon. James Allum (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe that you've just put a ruling in front of us and a decision, and we want to respect and follow your lead on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: A request was made of the Chair to canvass the House to see if there was leave available, and I'm going to put the question to the House.

So is there leave to allow this matter that has been reflected in the matter of urgent public importance to be debated this afternoon until 5 p.m.?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: It's been agreed; I hear no nos. So therefore it's agreed?

An Honourable Member: No.

An Honourable Member: It's already been agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: No?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no. So then the leave has been denied. So that will conclude this matter.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move on to grievances.

Are there any grievances?

* (15:10)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

Hon. James Allum (Acting Government House Leader): We would like to call for second reading the following bill: Bill 5. After that, Mr. Speaker, we would like to call debate on second reading of Bill 4, then second readings on Bill 3, Bill 16 and Bill 17.

Mr. Speaker: It has been indicated that bills will be called in the following order: starting with second reading of Bill 5, and then we'll move to a debate on second readings of Bill 4, and then to be followed, again, by second readings of Bill 3, Bill 16 and Bill 17.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 5— The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands)

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I move that Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act, amendments—start again, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (Mr. Kostyshyn), that Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

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

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Conservation, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, that Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands), be now read for a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's recognized as a leader in water management, a distinction we have achieved by being proactive and willing to implement changes. The Surface Water

Management Act supports a number of lake-friendly initiatives that significantly advance efforts to protect Manitoba's lakes, rivers and wetlands.

Bill 5 demonstrates Manitoba's ongoing commitment to an integrated approach to surface water management. While there is existing legislation, additional measures are required to enable the Province to advance a number of complementary initiatives.

An increased emphasis on surface water management is one of the priorities of TomorrowNow, Manitoba's Green Plan, an eight-year plan that strives to protect the environment while ensuring a prosperous and growing economy.

The Surface Water Management Act also supports the priorities identified in the province's Surface Water Management Strategy. The strategy, released in 2014, was the product of extensive consultation with the public, directly impacted stakeholders, environmental groups and others. The strategy lays out a comprehensive plan to better manage surface water in the province, and some aspects of this plan require legislative changes.

The act will make legislative change to five acts: The Conservation Districts Act, The Water Rights Act, The Water Protection Act, The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Act and The Planning Act.

The Province is taking a strong approach to protecting water quality across Manitoba and, in particular, to reducing nitrogen and phosphorus loading to our rivers and lakes. The bill enables nutrient targets for Lake Winnipeg and its tributaries to be set through a regulation under The Water Protection Act. The development of specific targets through our regulation will be done in consultation with stakeholders. Building consensus around specific targets is important because nutrients are contributed to our waterways by virtually all of our activities, meaning joint goals and collaborative efforts are essential to reducing nutrients. The proposed amendments will also require the Province to report every four years on progress made toward achieving our targets.

The Province is fundamentally changing the way we approach drainage while protecting wetlands and taking a fresh approach to managing water right across our province.

Bill 5 will establish a new water drainage registration and licensing regime under The Water Rights Act that will reduce red tape and streamline

approval processes for drainage projects that are considered low impact and low risk.

These changes will help ensure landowners can more easily undertake minor projects and allow provincial regulators to focus on projects with potentially bigger environmental impact.

Additional officer powers and increased fines and penalties, a maximum of \$50,000 for an individual and \$500,000 for a corporation for illegal drainage, are also proposed to strengthen enforcement and compliance.

To promote sustainable development, the bill will require landowners and developers to compensate for approved losses of prescribed types of wetlands. Compensation can be in the form of wetland replacement or by funding wetland restoration projects. This formally establishes a sustainable, no-net-loss-of-wetlands benefits approach to development going forward.

Under the no-net-loss-of-wetlands benefits approach, the alteration or drainage of a wetland may be justified on the basis of broad social and economic benefit, but compensation will be required to ensure that overall there is no net loss of wetland of benefit.

Under Bill 5 the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation has been provided the authority to be the no-net-loss-of-wetland benefits oversight body. Manitoba recognizes that drainage and storm water management planning can be enhanced through improving—through improved planning, including through provincial land-use policies and regional strategies.

Surface Water Management Act proposes amendments to The Planning Act that will require consideration of drainage and storm water management in provincial land-use policies and regional strategies.

Bill 5 also proposes modernization of the Conservation Districts program that will strengthen integrated watershed management planning, implementation and engagement of all stakeholders. Amendments to The Conservation Districts Act will provide enhanced protection and stewardship of Manitoba's watersheds through the establishment and operation of watershed districts, formerly called conservation districts. Through these amendments Manitoba builds on the success of over four decades of land and water stewardship to further a truly comprehensive, holistic and integrated approach to

watershed management in our province. For the first time local watershed districts will be able to form voluntary partnerships between individual communities, bands and other groups that have an interest in working with the district to protect and enhance the health of their watershed. Through this legislation districts will finally be able to share knowledge and co-ordinate efforts with all land interests in their watershed, regardless of government jurisdiction.

The bill further strengthens watershed governance in Manitoba by streamlining and modernizing many administrative aspects of the Conservation Districts program. Board operations, sub-district committee composition and budget approvals will all be improved to maintain a high level of local decision-making capacity while providing oversight and accountability at the provincial level. The mandate and existing composition of boards will not be changed. It will be enhanced to respond to rapidly evolving climatic and socio-economic conditions to ensure that measurable improvements continue to be seen on the landscape.

Conservation districts are governed by local boards whose membership and function is specified in legislation that was written over 40 years ago. The changes we are proposing will help to build local capacity to respond to emerging or unique local issues by enabling board membership beyond the existing municipal appointment regime. This will provide boards with the flexibility to seek additional perspectives to support decision making at the local level if local conditions or interests warrant. Strong municipal partnerships and engagement is the cornerstone of the conservation districts' success over the past 40 years, and these amendments will help to further strengthen and enhance communication between all conservation district partners.

Manitoba receives 70 per cent of our water from upstream jurisdictions, and it is imperative that we establish partnerships with other jurisdictions as well. The Surface Water Management Act establishes principles for transboundary water management, including the need to share information, develop joint strategies to reduce flooding and co-ordinate drainage practices. Under The Water Protection Act, two transboundary water boards are formally recognized: the Red River Basin Commission and the newly formed Assiniboine River Basin Initiative.

* (15:20)

Amendments also establish the Lake Friendly Stewards Alliance and recognize the Lake Friendly Accord. The Lake Friendly Accord represents a shared pledge by all signatories to improve quality by reducing nutrients.

In conclusion, the proposed Surface Water Management Act will integrate and advance efforts to be lake friendly and protect Manitoba's wetlands, lakes and rivers.

This act supports integrated watershed management planning and the Manitoba Surface Water Management Strategy and initiatives committed to under TomorrowNow, Manitoba's green plan.

Just in closing, Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the hard work of my predecessor in this department, now the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), for the good works that he did leading up to this act today.

I look forward to the support of this House for the passage of Bill 5.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this matter? [*interjection*] Oh, pardon me, questions. Sorry, are there questions on this matter?

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to actually participate in what is a new process here in the legislature and which will be an ongoing process as we move forward.

Specifically, under part three of The Water Protection Act, I'm wondering if the minister can provide a definition of nutrient that is referred to. I did not see that in the legislation.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: I thank the member for the question.

Nutrients, in general, I think are, as we're all aware I'm sure, something that we've been discussing for a many years, certainly, on this side of the House. Nutrients apply to things like phosphates, phosphorus and nitrates that can enter into the water stream in any of a wide variety of ways, whether it be through runoff from agricultural lands, if things like, you know, manure management plans, for example, aren't working as effectively as they should, as we've planned in conjunction with the

farming community and entities such as Keystone Agriculture Producers.

Nutrients can also enter into the stream in the form of effluent from waste water treatment. As we're well aware, there's great demand within our province to rectify this. We've got proposals before this Legislature in regard to the various different municipalities, in particular the city of Winnipeg, to upgrade waste water treatment facilities. I know we've had differences with members opposite in regard to nitrogen; in particular, they felt wasn't necessary to remove. We disagreed with that. We'd like to runoff water as clean as humanly possible into the lake.

So that's a rough definition of nutrient, from my perspective, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I—not often do I find myself in agreement with the minister but I will—in that case, I will agree that is a rough definition.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister advise how the targets are to be established, specifically what measurement parameter are going to be utilized? Is it going to be parts per million, or will it be some other measurement?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

When it comes to targets of nutrients, in particular tributaries flowing into our major rivers and lakes, it's important to note that we have an aspirational approach to this that—constituting any parts-per-million-type targets or discharges will be done in full consultation with various different interest groups.

We want—I think we do have good co-operation, up to this point, widely across the board. I think all Manitobans agree that we should be doing our utmost as individuals as larger entities such as farms or cities or towns to achieve what is best for the environment so that we can leave to our children an environment in better shape than we inherited from our parents. That's a worthy objective, but it's also worthy to try to achieve this in full co-operation with all of the people of Manitoba that we represent.

Mr. Martin: Can the minister advise, does his department have any current measurements of which to form a baseline for a go-forward process?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Obviously, across the various different spectrums of government, there are a range of baselines. For example, if you're looking at

discharges from waste water treatment plants, there are specific numbers legislated in that regard. We will achieve—or we will seek to achieve those types of standards, as I said already, in consultation with various different stakeholders with the, you know, scientific organizations, with the scientists that we have on staff within government, so that we can set records—or targets that are achievable, that will help us to achieve what we need to do here to, as I say, leave things in a better state than we inherited them.

And we also have to set an example, Mr. Speaker. The Lake Winnipeg watershed is a massive, massive watershed. It spans four provinces right from the Rocky Mountains all the way to within, I believe, 50 or 60 miles of the Great Lakes. It also extends over 500 kilometres into the United States, in fact, encompassing four states there as well.

So this is an act designed to generate co-operation at a national and a multinational level, Mr. Speaker. That's what's important here. More than 70 per cent of the water that comes into the system comes from beyond Manitoba's borders. So we here in Manitoba cannot complain to other jurisdictions about the state of affairs unless we can also set the right example. So that's our objective here.

Mr. Martin: I appreciate the continuing answers, or information, from the minister.

Can the minister advise what—would the measurements be taken automatically through equipment that's permanently placed at the target sites, or is this a on-site measurement from staff?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: As I've already indicated to the member opposite, this will be done in conjunction with staff, with the various different entities out there, scientists; these are the people that manage these affairs and report back to the department. I hope that's clear enough for the member.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the—sorry—the minister identifies or indicates in the legislation that there is a number of targets that are to be set, although he's not able to identify what those targets are or where they're going to be; I'm wondering if he can advise at least how many target sites within the watershed that they've identified that will be used as their measurement for nutrient loads as part of the reporting mechanism.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: And I would've hoped we'd have a little more co-operation from members opposite. This is a very important act. And you know, I—[interjection]—well, here we have some

heckling. I'll pause for a drink of water, Mr. Speaker. My throat's a little sore today.

Mr. Speaker, if we really want to get into the politics of this, then why don't we just project ourselves back to 1999, for example? And I was first elected in 1999. And, when I came to this Legislature, one of the first three acts that passed through the Legislature was The Water Rights Act.

* (15:30)

We as a government actually had to reconstitute The Water Rights Act because under the administration of the members opposite under the Conservative government of Gary Filmon, they had been so lax in their responsibilities in managing water that a judge in this province in the Hildebrand case actually threw The Water Rights Act out the window. We were living in a state of anarchy when it came to water management under the domain of members opposite.

Since that time we've made great strides forward, I think there's no question in anybody's mind, and this particular act, The Surface Water Management Act, is the capstone to that effort.

If members opposite truly want to join us in the 21st century, in the third millennium, they will do their utmost to see that this bill passes in an as expeditious a manner as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate that this is a new process, and I'm asking for a ruling from yourself if whether or not you'd be able to direct the minister to answer the questions that are being presented. The minister has an opportunity during debate on the bill to put forward his ongoing rhetoric related to the bill, but specifically we're trying to get through a new process of where reasonable questions are being put forward, very specific questions are being put forward, and the minister's decided to allot or burn through his time through ongoing rhetoric, and I'm wondering if you can define or encourage the minister to participate more fully in the process.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear a question there. If it's got some issue, then there are mechanisms that he can apply, which I don't think he chose to do so. So, you know, I stand here available to do my utmost to answer his questions should he choose to put on.

Point of Order

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. You may have not heard me at the front end. I did indicate that it was a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, my apologies to the honourable member for Morris. I did not hear that, so he's indicated that it's a point of order.

The honourable Minister of Education, acting Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. James Allum (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear the member indicate—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: I thought he said he did. Just give me a minute here, then.

Just so that I completely understand, I'm going to ask the honourable member for Morris to repeat his comments with respect to the point of order that he's indicated he has raised here. So, if you'd please put that back on the record, then I'll have a clearer understanding.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, while I appreciate that the question-and-answer component of legislation is a new process, I am asking if you'd be so kind to make a ruling or direct the minister to attempt to focus his answers as to the questions. I think the questions that are being put forward are very specific questions that don't require the rhetoric and the verbiage that the minister is clearly using to burn off the clock on his end. The minister will have more than ample time to do that within his own comments when the bill goes forward to debate.

This is a process that was negotiated by all parties in good faith to allow legislators to put forward questions on bills before the House and to find and solicit additional information, not an opportunity for the government of the day to simply put more rhetoric on the public record.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Acting Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member needs to articulate in making a point of order the rule that has been violated. In this case, this is a new process, but the fact of the matter is this is a dispute over the facts. I think you'll find that there's no point of order here.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin), I thank honourable members for their advice with respect to this matter.

I listened very carefully to the comments that were made by the honourable member for Morris. I did not hear what particular rule was breached with respect to our procedures and practices in this House. And I do know that it is a long-standing practice, House of Commons Procedure and Practices, Beauchesne's—and it's been determined a very long period of time in the practices of this House that the Speakers do not judge the quality or the content of the answers nor the questions, and so I leave that to the members of the House to make that determination themselves.

So I must respectfully rule in this case that there is no point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, any further questions?

Mr. Martin: I appreciate your comments and clarification.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the minister can advise whether the working group that's identified in the legislation will have an ongoing role in the implementation of the legislation once it becomes law, and will there be provisions from a review of processes in conjunction with the four in—or four-year time limit, in terms of the preparation and disbursement of the report?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and, you know, a point of order and so forth—I am doing my utmost to answer these questions. I thought I had explained to him when it came to the actual parts per million, that there are various different entities in play here. There are other acts of the Legislature, for example, that have domain-specific targets, parts per million of nutrients, such as legislation—The Water Protection Act that governs things like effluent discharges from waste water treatment facilities. So, you know, in regard to specific numbers, I encourage the member opposite to maybe peruse some of the other acts of the Legislature, and he will find that these numbers, in fact, do exist.

As I did tell him, in regard to this particular act, in regard to parts per million of nutrients into tributaries, that this will be done in consultation with people, that we're not just going to impose things

upon people without actually listening to them. That's where regulation comes into place. So, you know, I thought that was clear enough. So I hope that that satisfies the member opposite.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, it's—there is a certain richness of the irony. The minister gets up and says that they will not impose on the people of Manitoba something that they're not willing to accept, and yet when it comes to the provincial sales tax, which—of which there was a law in the province of Manitoba, they did, indeed, impose that on the people of Manitoba. But I guess they will have their opportunity on April 19th to make judgment on the minister's comments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that this government does talk about in terms of their targets and the nutritional levels—nutrition levels that are being set as part of Bill 5, they—there is no corresponding consequence should the government fail to meet those targets. Again, this approach to legislation isn't new. We've seen it in the government's failed approach in terms of their greenhouse gases and Kyoto—in their Kyoto legislation. So I'm wondering whether or not the minister can outline the consequences to the government should they fail to meet their own targets as outlined in Bill 5.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, I have to say I'm surprised at the approach of the member opposite. We know they have differences with the PST increase. Of course, members opposite have a different approach to dealing with flood mitigation in this province, which is, frankly, to do nothing. That's certainly the position of the Liberal Party. It's in their platform, as a matter of fact, where they state specifically that they will not address the challenge of mitigating the effects of no less than climate change. It's unconscionable.

You know, I'd really hoped that members opposite could put politics aside for just a moment and all of us collectively could support this important piece of legislation. And, you know, I still have that hope, Mr. Speaker. And I guess it remains to be seen as we enter more fully into the debate here. That is my objective, though. But we will all try and accomplish our goals in full co-operation with all the people of Manitoba, whether they're municipal entities, whether they're farmers, whether they're individuals, whether they're on the lakeshore or inland, what have you. I think our objective is pure, is sound, is modern thinking and I just invite all

members of this Chamber to participate and support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The question period allotted for discussion of this matter has elapsed.

Are there any further debate on this bill?

* (15:40)

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to continue to make comments on Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act, and, as outlined by the minister, this is a substantial piece of legislation in terms of the encompassing and other appropriate provincial statutes that will be amended as a result of our passage of Bill 5. I mean, The Water Rights Act, The Water Protection Act, Manitoba heritage—Manitoba Habitat Heritage Act, The Planning Act and The Conservation Districts Act, obviously, all being renamed the watershed district act.

There has been, Mr. Speaker, and I will agree with the minister, there has been a significant amount of conversation surrounding this act. I have not—I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of these groups, from the Keystone Agricultural Producers to the Lake Friendly alliance, and, needless to say, all these groups have a comment when it comes to this government's approach to environmental protection.

Now, I come at this piece of legislation from an interesting perspective in that in my own riding of Morris, I've got both the Red River and the Assiniboine River. So, if I'm not flooding one year, I seem to be flooding the next in those particular waterways. And so as I go and speak to constituents, especially speaking to the communities that lie beside those tributaries, there is concern about the approach of this government when it comes to water.

Now, we're well aware, Mr. Speaker, the role that wetlands plays in a healthy watershed. Not only do wetlands maintain a healthy water supply, they are, indeed, essentially filters to do take some of those contaminants and nutrients and other effluents out of the water as it goes through the system—in the water system, and, really, that's the key and operative word here, that we are talking about a water system. And this is just what one part of that system is, but we need to look at, obviously, at the wetlands as not only a component in terms of their ability to filter and make clean water, but we need to look at the

larger component of the role of wetlands in the province of Manitoba. Part of the role of wetlands is, obviously, the—to provide a habitat for nesting birds or migratory birds as they're making their way back to—back from their sunny times south. And a lot of times these wetlands, and there are different stages, I believe, and the minister is more than welcome to correct me, but I do believe there are five types of wetlands.

There are those wetlands that simply exist for a very short period of time; we're talking about maybe a couple of weeks as a result of maybe a particular heavy rain or an early part of the year where the ground simply saturated and is unable to absorb the moisture that is prevalent. But, actually, it's during these times that you sometimes have the greatest biodiversity that's offered in these particular waterways until they naturally dry up again as part of that cycle.

And then you have those wetlands that may last an entire month and—just because of the drainage system that is on a particular property. And, again, that—in that cycle weather that we're in, they may sit there for a significantly longer time. But they, too, will dry out at times, which is part of the cycle, which is why at Oak Hammock Marsh they also use that process of draining and killing the marsh again to get that natural component of the system integrated in essentially what is an artificial system.

I listened with extent to the minister's comments during the question and answer, and while the minister did a great—made great effort to, obviously, reach around and pat his government on the back for what he displays or what he would suggest is their unbridled enthusiasm for all things environment. Unfortunately, the actual public record belies the actuality of those efforts, Mr. Speaker, especially when it comes to our waterways.

Mr. Speaker, since the day I've been elected, I have brought this issue forward, and that is, the—obviously, the issue of the zebra mussel infestation that is occurring in our lakes.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I remember, in fact, one of the members opposite, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), said we've known about this issue for 20-some-odd years, and yet it turns out that this government really had no plan as to how to address what was a known foreign component of the ecosystem that was coming our way year after year. Zebra mussels and other

foreign invasive species were making their way to our watershed, and yet this government did nothing and we've seen the calamity that has resulted: a government that was more interested in headlines than hard work when they stood above—stood in front of the SS Minnow and dropped their mission accomplished banner only to publicly declare mere days later that the 'vestibels' were still in existence in the lake, and I believe the words used by the minister at the time, or at least a spokesman—spokesperson for his department was that the lake was a, quote, writeoff, Mr. Speaker.

And it's really unfortunate that one of the single largest lakes in this world would be deemed a writeoff by this ministry and by this minister and, really, as a result of their own inaction, Mr. Speaker, which is quite shocking to see. And it is not for lack of public effort. There are a number of advocates outside of government that warned the government that their approach in terms of putting in the silt screens and closing off the harbours and the dumping in the hundreds of tons of chemical to kill the zebra mussels was a errant approach and that those hundreds of thousands of dollars being used to address the situation was simply misused and would have been far better used as a part of a larger preventative measure in terms of preventing their spread and as well as containing their spread. Because every scientific journal you read, every individual you interact with who has an expertise in this field will tell you that once—the science simply hasn't caught up to the infestation of zebra mussels who can lay literally millions of eggs in a single cycle.

So, Mr. Speaker, those funds that they spent on their Photoshop would have been far better spent, say, on the purchase of portable decontamination units. And I believe in the entire province of Manitoba, the land of 100,000 lakes—which was, at one point, one of our licence plate slogans—I do believe that there are only four or maybe five of these portable decontamination units as part of the government's fight against zebra mussels.

And, of course, of those four or five portable decontamination units, this minister has actually paid for zero of them. They have simply been donated to him. So, again, that gives you an idea of where the fight of this invasive species rests in terms of the scale of priorities for this government. And when you talk about priorities for this government, and the government talks about, you know, they'll be doing all this monitoring of nutrient loads, Mr. Speaker, but

the minister can't quite identify what nutrients that he's looking for, when they talk about multiple target sites and the minister can't identify where the targets will be.

And then you look at the actual, you know, the legislation, Mr. Speaker, and it is a—like I said, I pointed out earlier on it is a significant piece of legislation, and with many bills that are brought forward by members opposite, it does require a significant financial commitment and financial resources to ensure that, obviously, they have an ability to follow through not only just in terms of doing the actual physical monitoring of the nutrient targets but the analysis and the publication of those results and all the components in between, because it isn't simply a matter of taking a water sample and reporting on it every four years. It's—it is working with all the stakeholders; it's working with the agriculture sector; it is working with the Lake Friendly Manitoba; it's working with municipalities and any landowner that—within the watershed who's affected that there's a recognition of our collective will to make sure that we are successful in protecting our waterways.

*(15:50)

And so we see the resources that—the financial resources that will be a component—or a required component of this bill, Mr. Speaker, and yet when you look at the history of this minister's own activity as minister in government since 2011, the last election, we have seen a almost \$20-million reduction in funding to Conservation and Water Stewardship, which is an over 11 and a half per cent cut, which is always interesting that the members opposite run around miming scissors in the air, when they, in fact, are the ones that are most detrimental to the front-line services, especially when it comes to Conservation and Water Stewardship.

And you only need to go and talk to any conservation officer out in the field, and they will share those same comments too, that there's simply not in a position to follow through and to enforce the legislation and the requirements set out by government that they are to enforce. Again, and it's because of resources, Mr. Speaker, or lack of resources and a continuing reduction in resources. But despite that, the government continues to pile on their requirement and their workload without giving them the necessary resources.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the minister's comments is nowhere in this legislation

does the act deal with the issue of the raw sewage that is currently being dumped in the Red River and, obviously, the accompanying costs being associated with that. Recently, there was an issue of the disposal of 5 million litres of raw, untreated sewage being dumped in the Red River over a nine-day period. That was only in January of this year, and it was caught by, actually, a citizen who happened to notice something strange in terms of ice melting and steam near a sewer outflow—

An Honourable Member: Storm sewer.

Mr. Martin: —storm sewer, Mr. Speaker, and identified that to the City's 311 system, and upon investigation, they discovered that there was some sort of a blockage. I believe there's some wood panels or some such that had blocked the outflow from that storm sewer.

And so, Mr. Speaker, and we're well aware, or has been publicly reported again, I hope the minister will make comment on this, that the potential cost of dealing with this issue, an issue that this minister and his government has ignored in 17 years as government, could be upwards of \$2 billion, not an insignificant sum, and considering this government is running deficits of half a billion dollars a year, it makes you wonder again where these financial resources are going to be acquired from. It could be that these members, members opposite, the NDP, are again looking at another increase to the provincial sales tax. I am aware that this—the government, in fact, had looked at a 9 per cent provincial sales tax before settling down on what they felt was a more accommodating 8 per cent, a palatable 8 per cent, to the people of Manitoba.

So I wouldn't be surprised, Mr. Speaker, if in the upcoming election that members opposite, when they're not being chased off individuals' properties, are telling them that, don't worry, we will maintain the PST at its hearty 8 per cent, that we will not raise it to 9 per cent, and then should they, unfortunately, be re-elected, I have no doubt that we could well see the PST again increase due to this government's insatiable appetite to spend.

Mr. Speaker, I note, too, this—the minister, again, when he was making every effort to pat himself on his back as a great protector of our waterways and such, he failed to talk about how Lake Winnipeg was actually nominated for threatened lake of the year in 2013, and the organization that made that, the Global Nature Fund, noted, and I quote, that the—as one of the largest lakes in the world, Lake Winnipeg is very

well known, but not so much is known internationally about the dramatic environmental problems of the lake and the wetlands in its watershed. End quote, and that was by Global Nature Fund.

And they went on to indicate that the 10th largest freshwater lake in the world, spanning 1 million square kilometres and stretching from the Rocky Mountains to Lake Superior, was, indeed, one of the most threatened—one of the most increasingly threatened by activities that destroys natural habitat, exacerbates flooding, reduces biodiversity and contributes to climate warming. And, again, that nomination for Threatened Lake of the Year was in 2013. So it's funny that the minister likes to go back in his DeLorean in 1999, but doesn't go back to simply during his own mandates, to 2013, to discuss what happened under their own watch when they'd been in office at that time for 14 years. And, even with that length of time in office, after 14 years, the best that they could contribute to Lake Manitoba was the title of Threatened Lake of the Year.

And then, of course, Mr. Speaker, who couldn't forget that Lake Winnipeg went from obviously being nominated for Threatened Lake of the Year to actually winning the award for Threatened Lake of the Year, and hardly an award that any government would be proud of. So, yes, in that instance, I can understand why the minister and members opposite didn't trumpet this component of their record, when they're spending their millions of dollars in their feel-good ads. And whether it's their, you know, their green ads, of which they spent several hundreds of thousands of dollars propagating what turns out, actually, to be invalid or incorrect information that may have been off by 'somewards' of upwards of 30,000 FTEs. But, again, that's just another day under the NDP.

I note, too, Mr. Speaker, that the minister, again, when he was talking about the public record and all the good things that they have done under their benevolent watch, made no effort to talk about the fact that a eco-certification agency, SeaChoice, just again, recently, within the tail end of last year, declared fisheries on Manitoba's great lakes among the, quote, worst managed in the world.

Now, if you can imagine that. I mean, we obviously live in a very large, big blue ball here, of which we have a great diversity of land and of governments and of approaches to the environment and to fishers. And we'd think that this is simply

somebody else's problem of how they treat their environmental stewardship. And then we find out that in our own backyard, under the—under members opposite, under the NDP, that Manitoba and our great lakes are under—again, this is SeaChoice's words—the worst managed in the world. So I can understand, again, why the government is not quick to make reference to the more scathing headlines that have occurred under their watch.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I noted in my earlier comments, that there was a significant number of groups were engaged in the development of this legislation: Ducks Unlimited, obviously the Lake Friendly alliance, and the Keystone Agricultural Producers. And it's their comments recently that I think should be a concern to all legislators in this House.

And I'm quoting from Dan Mazier, Mr. Speaker, who happens to be the president of the Keystone Agricultural Producers, or KAP, and I quote: I hate to use the phrase the devil is in the details, but it really is. End quote. Any time you are part of a working group and then the government says, we're going to establish this in regulation, we really don't know what it will be in the end, said Mr. Mazier.

It also went on to talk about how discussions with the Province has spanned two KAP presidents as well as two Water Stewardship ministers, but that the tone of those long-running discussions weren't necessarily reflected in the Province's announcement when it came to The Surface Water Management Act. And I'm quoting Mr. Mazier, here, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Acting Speaker: The tone of the release is definitely not where we were in the discussions. We're back to where we were when we started these discussions. End quote.

* (16:00)

So this is really quite interesting to hear that there are groups that were involved in the consultation process—a consultation process that the minister loves to tout as validating his approach. And yet those same groups that were part of the consultation process are now saying that what we discussed is not actually being reflected in the legislation being brought forward by the Province, and that, once again, and this isn't unique to Bill 5, Mr. Acting Speaker, that it is actually a problem symbolic of this NDP government, and that is that most of the pertinent components of this bill will be dealt with behind closed doors through a regulatory process which, again, is not open to debate in this

Legislature; it is not open to public scrutiny. It is instead a small cadre of individuals that surround the minister that will decide what these targets will be and at what point there will be any ramifications to their—to the nine non-compliance.

And, again, given this government's track record, I wouldn't be surprised at all, if the NDP should form government again, that there would be continued non-compliance, because if there's one thing this government is very good at, it is setting targets and failing to meet those targets. And what's always interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that they do so—they do this with such relish and fanfare. I think back to their former leader, Mr. Doer, and who—under his watch, they brought in mandated greenhouse gas emission targets. And, again, they did this with great fanfare, and they said, you know, here are our targets; we're going to achieve our targets: the 25 per cent reduction over a certain number of—a certain time frame. But, of course, once again, they didn't bother following through on what would be the consequences should the government fail to achieve its own legislated or regulated targets.

And the comment actually made by the former premier, Mr. Doer, actually, I think will come to haunt this government at least on April 19th, and that was that if we fail to meet those targets, then we deserve to be tossed out of—tossed on our ear and out of office, Mr. Speaker. And, when I go and interact with Manitobans, whether it's on issues of wetlands, whether it's on issues of flooding and whether it's on any issue, that sentiment is clearly out there. There is a recognition among Manitobans that this government has failed them—has failed them—at every turn, and that simply their values are not being reflected by this administration that is more interested in the—in staying in power than remembering why they were first brought into power. And I think those comments were made loud and clear, actually, last year or the year before when there was the so-called rebellion from the rebel five who made it very clear that this government's priorities were not—or the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) priorities were not the priorities of Manitobans.

So here we are, Mr. Speaker, on leap year, no doubt, on February 29th, and we find ourselves finally debating Bill 5. And the government will—as I understand it, the minister is out there running around telling anyone who will listen that, you know, that—

An Honourable Member: Less and less people.

Mr. Martin: –well, yes, which is a—my colleague from Morden-Winkler indicates is less and less people. It is a shrinking subset of individuals that will give the NDP time, but, that being said, that the minister is running around trying to tell people that, you know, that it's really—it's an opposition issue as to why they have failed to make good on Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

But they don't actually note to those same individuals that it was this government that could have brought this legislation in at any point, Mr. Speaker, and, if they had wanted, we could have actually gone to committee in January, should they have desired that. They have the legislative tools; we have a legislative agreement that allows them to designate certain bills as priority bills.

And it was this government, this NDP government, that did not identify Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act, as a priority for their own government, and yet now they'll say that, you know, oh, it's not us; it's them. I think they might have a bit of a persecution complex. But that doesn't surprise me from what I read in the newspapers as of late.

What the minister also doesn't talk about, and a component when we talk about wetlands, especially when we talk about the more long-term, permanent wetlands, is that of the bio-economy and the role of wetlands when it comes to bio-economy. The International Institute for Sustainable Development has done a number of very interesting pilot projects in terms of the harvesting of cattails as a biofuel that they hope to displace traditional biomass plant species and obviously coal as well, and if you look at simply the data being put forward by the International Institute for Sustainable Development, the data to support the use of cattails as a biofuel clearly is there.

For example, Mr. Speaker, the average yield of cattail is 14 tons per hectare. It has a heating value of 17 millijoules per kilogram and takes about 90 days to mature. You compare that with, say, corn, which has an average yield of about a third. It's—well, it has a heating value similar. It actually has a longer—again, about a third longer time to hit maturity, and, I mean, obviously, when you talk about coal, yield and time to maturity aren't really relevant factors, but their heating value is comparable to cattails. And, interestingly enough, coal doesn't even meet that standard set by cattails.

In my own office—and I've had the opportunity to meet with IISD on a number of occasions because I think it's quite interesting the work that they're doing in terms of cattail harvesting—I've got some of these small sample jars that they hand out, again, of the actual process—cattails. Now, we're obviously not there yet, Mr. Speaker. You simply can't create an interest or create an industry with a few vials of sample cattail pellets, but, again, how you do it is through data. You do it through a pilot project, and that is how they're going about doing it.

Now, to create an actual sustainable market for the product is going to continue to take work, and I know I've spoken to some of my own colonies, Mr. Speaker. I'm home to about 15 Hutterite colonies, and obviously the ban on coal is an issue that affects them, so they—a number of these colonies are looking at whether it's switching over to, say, natural gas, or, oh, switching over to biofuels and whether or not cattails may form a component of that. But, again, obviously, the—in order to have cattails, we need to, again, have that sustainable wetlands to grow those cattails which ultimately can be harvested for materials of energy and high value.

So this government, in Bill 5, again are making—it's an interesting piece of legislation. I think, in principle, we can look at this bill and we can say that in principle there are many components that make relevant sense, but as with much of this government, they're asking us to support legislation but they're unwilling or unable, as we saw through the minister's bumbling and fumbling through the earlier Q & A, that they're unable to provide us basic information, or simply we're told to wait and see what it will be in regulation, which I'm always hesitant to do. And these are not—again, these are not my comments, Mr. Speaker. These are comments echoed by stakeholders that have been involved in the process in its entirety who have said the exact same thing.

So, Mr. Speaker, the issue of wetland protection is an issue that I think is front and centre for all Manitobans. I think it's something that our next generation is that much more educated in thanks to the good work of organizations like the Lake Friendly alliance that are seeking to make sure that that next generation understands the full value, again, of that water system, that it is not a system simply in isolation, that the Assiniboine River doesn't exist in isolation, the Red River doesn't exist in isolation, but there is a role for all of us to play, whether it is the storage of water on land or whatnot.

* (16:10)

But, again, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing more comments on—

Mr. Speaker: Order please. The honourable member for Morris's time has elapsed.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I rise to speak to Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act. And, before I get too far into it, Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment you and thank you for your tenure as Speaker, your patience for those of us that were rookies. We had quite a bit of learning and guidance for some of our impatience, for our mistakes as we went along, and indeed your fair rulings and guidance in the House.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker, you are the first and only Speaker so far I have served under. I hope to have the good fortune to serve under another, but thank you for your duties here, Sir.

So, Mr. Speaker, moving on to The Surface Water Management Act, I listened intently to the minister's—I can't really call them responses, he went—there were words there, but some of them were actual English words, which is good for the minister; I know he does struggle with that sometimes, but I did have the good fortune last week to go to the minister's dinner at Ducks Unlimited dinner, and the word came out from all of the people that I knew there the minister's department was spreading the word that somehow his department and the government was powerless to ensure that this legislation would pass.

You know, if the minister wanted to make sure this legislation is passed they sort of could've introduced it at any time; it is important legislation indeed. And we have waited this type of legislation coming forward but apparently the minister, when it was introduced, didn't see fit to make sure that it moved to committee. It could have gone to committee in January and the public would've had open opportunity to deal with this legislation, and then it could've come back here even for third reading, and perhaps passed in a timely manner. But now apparently the minister and his government is powerless to ensure that this legislation passes.

The last time I checked, Mr. Speaker, the government still had the majority in this House. They can make sure that their legislation does pass when they want it to. So the only conclusion I could make is that they don't want this legislation to pass because it certainly could've happened at any time. It could

have been introduced earlier, as I said. It could've happened earlier that it went to committee the—plenty of opportunities there. But now apparently the minister is powerless.

You know, when I read the legislation and they did do some work, of course, with Ducks Unlimited and Keystone Ag Producers. Now I am hearing from those groups that, you know, yes they were consulted but the minister put some things in here that they're not happy with. And then there are pieces that are missing; there are no targets in there, Mr. Speaker.

And that's perhaps one of the most troubling things that, you know—I have little experience in waste water and in floods and that type of thing and certainly in agriculture, and what we saw in 2011 with the flood that came across in western Manitoba, and particularly in Brandon, a lot of the agricultural fields were under water for a considerable length of time. So the company that I'm involved with and our producers were very concerned about what had happened to the nutrients that were applied to that land and had sat under the water for that length of time.

Now we have soil records going back with our producers for over 50 years. So we have a very good track record of what happens to nutrients over the year, what happens to nutrients and how they're removed from the crop and what needs to be replaced. And, indeed, we checked with the nutrient—the soil samples to see what was there prior to the water sitting on the land for that length of time and then we went out and sampled the land again. And, because we have the availability of GPS systems, Mr. Speaker, we are now able to go back to the same points, so we have a direct comparison of what we're sampling. We go back to the same place, the same grid, make sure that it's not just somewhere totally ambiguous across the field. So this is very specific, a specific science that apparently the minister is not familiar with.

So we go back to see what's happened, and, indeed, we did find out that, by and large, the phosphate had remained in the soil, it binds with the soil, and I'm sure that the minister may be well aware of that. I'm not quite sure on how the science works, but the phosphate that had been applied and tested was indeed still there even after the water had sat on the farmland for that length of time. The nitrogen was indeed there as well, Mr. Speaker. And I'm not sure if you're aware of this, I know we've talked about agriculture before, but nitrogen can't convert to

nitrate and it can bond with water and follow the water source and sometimes move with the water; usually down into the soil is how this works. But, indeed, the nitrogen was there as well. So we're well—very happy to see that. Of course, the producers were quite happy. They've spent the money to put the nutrients, apply them to the field, and so that's some of the science that we worked with there.

Now, the minister doesn't seem to know much about that type of science. And I've watched this government over the last several years bumble its way through the environment and I really do see that we have some of the worst environmental records with the NDP government of any province in Canada. It's quite sad to watch how nothing has done under this government. They talk a lot but they don't produce, Mr. Speaker.

Well, they do produce something, and that's one of the issues we're talking about here.

So—but they don't actually make things better for the environment in Manitoba. In fact, we see it getting worse and worse in the lakes and in the rivers because of the government's inability to make things happen. And this is just another one of these particular pieces of legislation that we see coming forward with little in the legislation that is actually going to make much difference, other than it's all going to be in regulation, and trust them, it'll be in regulation.

Well, we know how trust works with the NDP government here, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, they promised not to raise the PST and they looked at raising it not just one point but two. They looked at the HST and then they went ahead and did it without allowing Manitobans to vote. So we know how the trust works there with this government.

Now, other areas that I've seen—you know, there—I did a lot of work with the federal government at one time, Mr. Speaker. When there were issues of waste water effluent, and I—we all remember Walkerton and the impact it had on how we deal with waste-water effluent and how we deal with surface water management. And the federal government spent a lot of time on this and they're trying to figure out how to make it work and how to—how they could have some control over it. And their lawyers were very specific. And in the end, they kind of decided that they were going to look at, they talked about ammonia in waste water 'effluent' but—effluent but then that apparently wasn't going to fly in the legal community. And then they decided it was going

to be ammonia dissolved in water is what they were going to regulate; those were things they could regulate.

And, when we went and met with them as an industry, we said, well, there's a problem here, Mr. Speaker, because ammonia dissolved in water is something that the agricultural community actually uses and sells and applies to the land. It's called 28-0-0 liquid fertilizer. It is ammonia dissolved in water. And the response of the federal government at that time was, oh, that's too bad, you know, but we're going to move on with this and you'll just have to deal with it.

So then we brought it to their attention that there was another common product that is used by not just agriculture but by the populace as a whole for cleaning. Ammonia dissolved in water is also known as Windex. And so the government, then they started to back off a little bit and they thought, well, oh, well, okay, that might be a little too close; there's lots of voters out there that aren't just farmers that use Windex, so maybe we're going to have to revise this a little, Mr. Speaker.

But they did have targets, Mr. Speaker. And that's where I'm trying to get at, that this government has no targets in this regard—we're going to regulate things but we can't tell you what it's going to be.

The minister's not obviously sure what actually would qualify as a nutrient, so how is he going to set any targets for those nutrients and what it's—what is it going to be?

So I am quite disappointed with what the minister has presented here, Mr. Speaker, and how he presented it and his attempts to respond to the questions from the MLA for Morris. I thought the questions were all well voiced and, indeed, to the point, but the minister didn't quite come back with anything that was really usable in making us more comfortable about this legislation and making sure that it would be the best thing for Manitobans.

So, you know, these are the types of things that we have to deal with, Mr. Speaker: a government that says they're powerless to make sure that this legislation goes ahead and not really sure what it's going to be. They can't assure Manitobans what they're going to measure.

You know, I look at another thing that I—I'm well aware of, Mr. Speaker, and I have spoken out about it in the House before, where in Riding Mountain

National Park they were having trouble with high phosphate levels in the lake.

* (16:20)

And I remember seeing these large core samples that they had taken from the bottom of the lake and they laid them out on the table and then they sampled from various ables in—various areas in the core and they found phosphate at the bottom of the lake. And they were trying to blame it on—well, first of all, they tried to blame it on agriculture, but the problem is that Clear Lake's kind of at the top of the watershed; there's no agriculture above it, so that doesn't work.

Then they tried to blame it on the golf course, because there is a very beautiful golf course in Clear Lake, in Riding Mountain; I'm sure you know, Mr. Speaker. So the golf course went organic. Now, you still use nutrients in organic production, so, you know, there's still issues there with—phosphate is the same type of molecule and nitrogen is the same type of molecule, whether it comes from organic production or commercial production, it's just—those molecules, they don't change. That's the basic premise that I think the minister—I'm sure he's aware of all the chemistry.

So the golf course went organic, and then they kept testing the cores and the water samples and—very strange, because the phosphate levels in the lake weren't changing. Okay, well, we tried to blame it on agriculture, that didn't work; so we blamed it on the golf course, and the levels aren't changing. And then they discovered that under the marsh, under South Lake, actually, there was an old sewage line that went into the lagoons and, well, they dug that up. It had been there for years and years and, you know, when you put metal in the ground and run sewage through it, it does decay, and it had decayed and rusted away and, yes, we were pumping raw sewage directly into South Lake, what then—which then fed into Clear Lake, and, well, isn't that strange?

So they replaced that line into the lagoons and—with a new line and the federal government spent a lot of money on this, as did cottage owners and the local community and, dramatically, within the first year, phosphate levels dropped by 85 per cent. It wasn't agriculture; it wasn't the golf course; jeez, it was, you know, it was sewage from, well, people. That's what it was from, Mr. Speaker.

So, you have to be careful on the point source. You have to be care on—careful on how you regulate it, and we see in this legislation that there is little of

that care taken. And then I hear the minister—apparently he's powerless. He's—maybe he doesn't have the support of his government anymore; I don't know. There seems to be some issues over there. Maybe he's concerned, if this comes to the vote, that he's not going to have the support of the government to pass it. Maybe that's what he's saying about him being powerless to promote this legislation.

So I know that there are many others. I have much more to say on this topic, but there are others that have some issues that they'd like to speak about in this regard.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I rise to put a few comments on the record on Bill 5.

It is fundamental that we need better water management in Manitoba. We need this for farmers to have the best chance to get in their crops and to harvest their crops and to do well. We need this for reducing and preventing flooding in our province. That is, flooding of farmers' fields, flooding along rivers and around lakes, as we have seen far too much of in the last few years.

It's vital that we have an optimum combination of water storage and drainage. Liberals brought in an amendment about 10 years ago to have a policy of no net loss of wetlands. The NDP opposed the Liberal amendment at that point, but it's good to see that the NDP have finally realized a decade later that Liberals were right all those many years ago, and that they're going to follow in Liberal footsteps but just a decade later.

The NDP, as I've pointed out on quite a number of occasions, have followed policies which have supported very extensive drainage with very little water storage, and we've had huge increases in the amount of flooding, as we saw in 2011 and 2014, in particular in southwestern and western Manitoba.

One of the important models which has shown that good water management can be successful is along South Tobacco Creek, where, involving farmers, 27 small dams creating water storage have been constructed, and there's been a dramatic decrease in the amount of flooding of farmland by comparison with a wet water event. In North Tobacco Creek, it was about a 75 per cent reduction in farmland flooding and an almost complete reduction in the damage to infrastructure along South Tobacco Creek. So it can be done well with farmers

in co-operation, a win-win-win for everybody. It can be positive, not just for decreasing farmers' flooding and improving farmers' yields, but it can also be positive for decreasing flooding for everybody and the huge bills and damage that are associated with it and the infrastructure damage.

It can also be positive in terms of climate change because one of the most potent climate change gases is nitrous oxide, and one of the reasons that it gets produced is when you have water getting on farmers' fields which have got nitrogen or manure on them. And, when that happens and the nitrogen goes up in the air as nitrous oxide, it causes climate change enhancement because nitrous oxide is such a potent greenhouse gas, and it's a loss to farmers because the nitrogen—and I've talked with farmers who've farmed, for instance, corn, who've seen this, that the nitrogen has just gone up in the air and that there's a logical way to approach this, as I've mentioned, to have better water management.

There's a logical way to approach this, as we've seen in South Tobacco Creek and other areas. And one of the major reasons that this government failed to reduce greenhouse gases was that they failed to pay attention to agriculture emissions and they failed to see the benefits from reducing nitrous oxide production by improved water management.

So it's good that finally, after 17 years, we have this bill. It's unfortunate that the NDP waited 'til the last minute to introduce it at second reading. My personal hope is that Bill 5 can be passed and we can move it into law. But I'll be frank. The MLA for the Interlake wasn't very helpful with his overly partisan and inaccurate comments. A smarter minister would have talked a lot less and been less partisan if he really wanted Bill 5 to pass.

I support Bill 5. I hope we can all, as MLAs, see the benefit of this and move it forward to committee and get it into legislation. So, in spite of the approach that the NDP have taken, let's see what we can do to get it passed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to rise today to put a few comments on record regarding Bill 5, Surface Water Management Act. And it's being introduced to replace a number of other acts that have been working somewhat ineffectively to try and deal with nutrient loading and water management in this province.

Manitoba has a long and rather spotty history, actually, when it comes to water management. And the minister, actually, in some of his comments made reference to The Water Rights Act, which was one of the oldest acts in this province, going back into the 1890s and was in desperate need of a rewrite when it finally did get one. But it didn't deal with all of the issues just by rewriting the act because the whole issue of nutrient management is much newer than the water rights issue.

Nutrient management is something that I think we all have to pay increasing amount of attention to, not only here in Manitoba, but it's become a significant worldwide problem. You will find many jurisdictions around the world that has struggled in their own ways to deal with nutrient loading, often in waterways, which are the net result of sometimes agricultural landscapes, sometimes urban landscape issues and sometimes natural source issues. And something that makes it very confusing is nutrients are everywhere. They're also part of the natural landscape, and, in fact, there's some evidence to suggest that one of the problems with Lake Winnipeg actually may be the boreal forest land to the east, in the huge area there, actually may be nutrient loading the lake with the water that comes out of the boreal forest land because the water levels—the phosphorus levels in the water coming out of the boreal forest is quite high at times, and certainly there's minimal explanation as to where that's coming from, why that has developed into such a problem.

* (16:30)

But, here in Manitoba we've—have a—multiple attempts at trying to deal with nutrient loading, and I can't help but think back to the very first time we had nutrient management regs proposed here in Manitoba, and it was the first time we had a minister of Water Stewardship, the very first minister, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), actually, was supposed to be in charge of bringing in something that resembled nutrient-management rules and guidelines for the province, and they were trying very hard at the time to make it look like, you know, the sector that was contributing the most to the nutrient-loading problem in Lake Winnipeg was the agricultural sector and, in particular, they were trying very hard to scapegoat the hog industry as being the major source. In fact, at times, you would think from the rhetoric, the only source of nutrients around Lake Winnipeg. And, of course, we have long since come to understand that—simply not the case.

But, going back to the first introduction of the rules, the minister set out some ideas, with no numbers around it, that he wanted to see, but, of course he's—the bill that they brought forward and passed reminds me in many ways of this bill, where you're saying, well, you know, we don't really know what we want in terms of numerical values. We do, you know, have some general outlines of where we want to go, and we're really not sure how we're going to get there, but someone's got to do this for us because we don't really know how to do it ourselves, and we're going to bring in a bunch of regulations, but trust us on the details of the regulations because we're not really prepared to talk to you about the rules.

And I was involved with a farm organization at the time, and we tried to work with them to try and get some idea around where they were going, what they were going to do and how practical it would be, because the whole sector is a nutrient user. It's also a nutrient sink and it has significant—nutrients are significant to the agricultural industry. We simply don't have an agricultural industry here or anywhere without proper use of nutrients, so it's absolutely key that we figure out how to do this.

And we followed the government of the day down the road and they passed their legislation and then they brought out what they thought was a wonderful set of regulations. Well, that wonderful set of regulations was based on aerial photos that were between 40 and 50 years old at the time, now are even older that were supposed to give you some idea of the soil productivity. And they thought, well, soil productivity must be a measure of overall productivity and therefore it must be somehow linked to nutrients, not that it really is when you actually understand the science, but they thought, well, there must be a connection there.

So they used this out-of-date information and set a set of maps out, and the first set of maps had massive areas in Manitoba that they thought were inappropriate for commercial agriculture, and then further massive areas that they thought were even inappropriate for animal agriculture, and I would remind the minister that where his much beloved sheep farm is, is in an area that was considered to be inappropriate for animal agriculture based on that particular set of maps that was brought out.

And the minister knows full well I'm right, because we talked about this issue on more than one occasion, and it just—it's a really good example of

why Manitobans don't trust this government to come up with regulations anymore.

And thankfully, and I'm sure the minister's thankful as well, we were able to go to the minister of the time on Water Stewardship, and sit down with him after some fairly conflicting meetings and say, look, what is it you think you really want here? And they, well, you know, we want this and we want to figure a way to try and reduce the nutrient loading that is occurring in some waterways, but we're not really sure where it's coming from, so how can we do that?

And we sat down as Keystone Agricultural Producers at the time, worked with all of the various sectors, and we came up with a—not only a set of standards that was workable and one that's been used in other jurisdictions since, but also methods to try and reduce the levels where that was necessary.

And, as part of that process, we—you know, we kind of led the whole process, brought it through the industry. We did a lot of reporting. Just the amounts of paperwork associated with this would—frankly, they make the paperwork for members' benefits look like an easy solution. I remember spending literally days doing them for my own farming operation and we weren't big farmers by any stretch, but it would take literally days to do a good job on doing this.

And the promise was, well, of course, Water Stewardship would, once these were filed with them, they would use them to track what was going on out in the landscape and they would become valuable not only to government in terms of knowing what was actually happening and where the reductions were occurring, but they might be valuable to the producer as well. And so we all did that, and I know I personally talked a lot of farmers into actually doing this, saying, you know, there is a benefit to doing this. You will learn more about your whole nutrient cycle on your home farm, and you'll be in a better position to defend yourself in the future if government comes back and says, well, we think that you're part of the problem, you need to do further in terms of reductions. And we all did that.

And then, after a number of years, I, actually, and a number of other people started to ask the same question: Government, well, what have you learned, when you're tracking this data that we're working so hard to generate? And it did not come cheap; it came at a significant cost to the individual producer either to hire someone to do this or, if you had the expertise, to do it yourself, and there was still some

chemical tests that you had to pay for, soil tests that you had to pay for, that were not insignificant in cost. So we did this, and I know I had filed my own for a period of 10 years. And I finally got in touch with the department people responsible for this, and I said, okay, we've been doing this, what have we learned? The answer was, well, we never look at those things again. They are waste paper. They fill filing cabinets. We're not using them to learn anything. We're not using them to inform our decisions.

Now, if there ever was an insult to producers, that would certainly be it. We went to a lot of time and effort on a promise that this government failed to follow up on. And I would be hard-pressed, frankly, to, with a straight face, sit across the table from a producer now and say, you should really do your nutrient management reports because it's to an advantage for government, because this government did nothing with them. They did nothing with them because they weren't really sure what to do with them, I don't think, Mr. Speaker. And, based on the comments I heard from the minister here now, I would say he's not in any better position than the original minister was to do anything with these reports.

Now, that's only part of the puzzle, because at the same time we got engaged on nutrient management, we were getting engaged on landscape management and how do you manage the landscape to make sure that the water quality is not only maintained but possibly improved. And it is, frankly, it's foolish to say water-surface water management strategy, because without landscape management, you can't do anything to the water. The two things are completely inseparable.

And so we developed programs, and we did this partially through the farm organization as well, and we did develop a model here in Manitoba that was based on ecological goods and services approach to landscape management, where those that did the right thing in terms of landscape management got rewarded and those that did the wrong thing were not rewarded. They were certainly punished in one way or the other for what they had done. But it certainly was an incentive-based program for those that were doing the right thing. It was well received in the farm community here in Manitoba.

And eventually we ran a pilot here in Manitoba, a five-year program, or four-year program, sorry, run in RM of Blanshard called alternate land-use

services, a program that was not only well received by the farmers here in Manitoba, but is now in use in four other provinces in this country and has, in fact, been reviewed. And some elements of it put into the US system; some elements are now starting to appear in the European system. It's a good approach. But could we move that way here in the province of Manitoba? It would appear that anything that doesn't come from government can't be good, so we simply cannot move in that direction here.

* (16:40)

They've had more than adequate opportunities; they've had more than adequate time to introduce programs like that here. But we really haven't made any significant progress. But it made great sense in that it not only increased—or gave producers an incentive to maintain their wetland. But there was incentives there to actually increase the amount of wetlands that you have, and we have talked earlier about how wetlands are significant in terms of catching nutrients, managing nutrients, and we're beginning to find more and more that actually that wetlands now can have a very major role in improving water quality. The previous speaker made mention of some of the Tobacco Creek examples, and those were good research-based programs that provided some level of measurement as to how they would do this. How it would be applied in the landscape was something that we actually figured our way through with an alternate land-use services program. But this government wouldn't move forward with a program like that. It was far too friendly to producers, I gather, gave them the element of control, and isn't that the logical thing to do? They manage the landscape on a daily basis. They grow crops on it. They put the water on it. They store the water on it. They manage the nutrients on it. Why would you want to involve them in a program? Why would you want to be engaged with them? It'd be far better if you would set rules and regulations that would make their lives more difficult and then ask them to fill in paperwork that you would never look at again. That's the route that this government has taken.

So, certainly, it's very hard to be friendly to this bill in terms of where it's going to go because he's not sure what we're going to get in terms of regulations. We'll probably get more rules that they—and more paperwork that they don't know what to do with and that they will never look at again. And will it benefit the water quality? Well, we certainly made great strides in improving the water quality by using

our own type of nutrient management regs that we brought into place. Without the help of the farm organization in this province, I suspect they would still never have put anything in place that would actually work. And a number of farm organizations, including the Manitoba pork producers, have made—have encouraged, through their own programs, significant change in the way that nutrient application is done in this province.

So, yes, we are doing a better job of managing nutrients in this problem—in the province, now than we were before. Is that because of government regulations? I don't really think you can say that that would be a direct linkage. I think you would say that producers, once they became aware it was a problem, found their own solutions because, frankly, as was pointed out by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), nutrients cost producers money. When we apply them to land, we have to pay for them. We have to pay to apply them. And we're very concerned of—about their potential loss, whether it's from flooding, whether it's from erosion, whether it's from other types of in-soil practices that can cause nutrient loss. You can get gasification and things like that at certain times of the year, in certain types of conditions.

And this government just seems to be one step behind and unaware of what's actually going on in the landscape. There are great opportunities to work with those that manage the landscape to do a better job in terms of nutrient management and to reduce the nutrient loads that might be lost from landscape. But I can tell you, no one is more concerned about losing nutrients from the landscape than the producer themselves, the family farm themselves, because they're the ones that need those nutrients to produce a crop and they're the ones that paid to have them put there because they don't come for free. And we certainly have had many—seen many changes in practices driven by farmers in terms of nutrient placement, zero and minimum till, so that they minimize the amount of nutrient loss, maximize the amount of crop that they get from.

We understand a lot more now about better nutrient management on the landscape than we did 10 years ago, and we're clearly not where we need to be yet; there's still some things to be learned, but we are moving forward all the time. But it is not government that is leading this process. It is the producers. It is the farmers themselves that are leading this process, and government should be working with them.

Now part of what's covered on this is the whole issue of agricultural drainage, and agricultural drainage is a contentious issue in many areas. We can have too much drainage in some areas. We can have not enough drainage in areas. If you have not enough drainage, you have anaerobic conditions in the soils, which often lead to gasification, which is greenhouse gas issue: nitrous oxides are lost and then become a greenhouse gas issue. And, yes, agricultural productivity and agricultural production can be lost from lack of drainage. Agriculture production can also be lost by too much drainage, by dewatering soils, and in some areas that's certainly probably happened.

And these days we're also starting to see tile drainage creep into this whole argument. How does tile drainage fit into this? And in looking at the regulations here I would say they haven't realized that this will be their next problem yet. Some of the municipalities are already one step ahead of them in putting some rules in around tile drainage. They themselves have not yet completely figured out what that means in Manitoba conditions. But it is actually a practice that has been used extensively in eastern Canada and in the US and in many other places around the world and when well done actually leads to better nutrient management. But you have to understand what the right set of circumstances are, and we have not really even begun to touch on that in this program—or in this bill.

So, you know, we've seen for a long time this government talk a good act about environment and yet never, ever achieve any of it. They did not achieve their nutrient-management goals in terms of improving water quality in Lake Winnipeg; we're now a threatened lake, one of the most threatened lakes in Canada. We've had ecological disasters. I submit that the flood of 2011 was, in fact, an ecological disaster to Lake Manitoba, one that that lake may never recover from. It is still significantly changed from prior to those years and perhaps may never recover.

In fact, if the government likes making apologies so much, I would submit a really good apology would be to the flood victims from 2011 because they treated them with such disdain and disrespect in many—or frankly, I mean, there's people still out of their homes, but there are people that will never go back to their homes because the land that they were making a living on before is now destroyed in terms of its productivity. You know, they worked with a number of different groups in the consultation to this

and I have heard, as have others, that many of the groups are feeling a little bit uncomfortable with what has been brought forward because it's so vague in some areas and there's so little detail being offered. It certainly isn't something that they want to see.

The intent of this bill and the tone of this bill seems to be at odds with the type of discussion that went on, and the discussion went on for a couple of years and you would've thought that the government could've be in a position to craft a pretty good bill by that time. But it would seem that there's still a long ways there—from being there.

I still submit that I think that this government has a great deal to learn about water management, as seen by the continued flooding problems that we have, and their inability to deal with putting programs in place that discourage people from doing excessive drainage. Some of the municipal governments have taken steps forward to encourage wetland restoration, wetland management, wetland retention with no support from our provincial government.

We have conservation districts that are in a great position to be very active on this program but their funding has been reduced repeatedly. So this government's commitment to dealing with water management and landscape management for the environmental benefit of all appears not to be very solid. It appears to be very much we'll talk about it but we'll not actually do very much about it. And I think frankly Manitobans have given up on this government in terms of nutrient management.

I remember they—when—first time around when we were talking about nutrient management and what can we do as city dwellers, and the government said, well, this is really good; we'll put a ban in place on fertilizer for your lawn. And I think a number of people will remember that. And, you know, some people actually thought, you know, we're doing something significant here. You know, we'll do our bit. We want to help.

* (16:50)

The only type of fertilizer that is really used on lawns is a nitrogen-based fertilizer and it is not the source of the algae bloom in Lake Winnipeg. It can be a problem if it's over-applied, and frankly when people apply it to their own lawn that's usually the rule—they over-apply. A little bit is good, more is better and we'll put lots on to make sure we don't have to do this again, and then we'll have to cut the

grass 16 times more often during the season because we have too much nitrogen on our grass. *[interjection]* Yes, a little bit of loading. But phosphorus is usually not ever used. It's certainly not recommended for that. So, you know, it was a bit of smoke and mirrors

An Honourable Member: But they didn't restrict the gardens.

Mr. Wishart: Yes, we will—no, they didn't restrict the garden or the golf courses. The golf course had to file nutrient-management plans. Nobody ever looks at them again. We've established that. So they were valuable. But people actually did believe that they were doing something significant.

And this government also made a bit of an issue out of phosphorus removing from dishwasher detergent. Well, that is a good thing, frankly. That water doesn't go out into the landscape; that water goes down the drain, and that water ends up in urban waste water situations, and worldwide, we're seeing a move away from phosphorus in dishwasher detergent, because they don't get it out again. It stays there. We really have almost no facilities here in Manitoba that actually remove nutrients from waste water. If I'm not mistaken, the only really significant waste water treatment facility in the city of Winnipeg's actually the Tuxedo one that does nutrient removal. And we're seeing some construction at the south end that, I'm told, will do partial nutrient removal, but—and the one at the north end, the large plant—we hadn't even started on that yet.

The city of Brandon does have a good facility, but, outside of that, most are very much behind the times. Really—and they talk about how, you know, we're moving very quickly to be state of the art in how we do this. Edmonton has been doing full nutrient removal for more than 20 years. So, yes, you're really leading that curve. You know, you're a generation out of step with where you need to be in regards to that.

And, you know, whether you've figured out the technology or not, there are a number of different options; some are chemical-based; some are more biological-based, but there are certainly ways to do it. It does not come cheap, but it is what you need to do.

I think one of the major reasons—and everybody kind of always wonders, sometimes, why Lake Manitoba doesn't have the algae bloom problem and

Lake Winnipeg does. Well, I think you just need to look upstream. Lake Manitoba doesn't have a major urban centre upstream. Lake Winnipeg does, and I think that alone explains a fair bit of why we are struggling in Lake Winnipeg, and we are not committed to doing what is necessary here.

And I really don't see how this bill is going to make any significant difference in that, Mr. Speaker. I think that they're, again, looking for someone else to blame when they don't want to deal with the problem. And I really struggle to believe that they have finally figured out where the problem is.

Now, every now and then, we have—in agriculture, we have disaster years. Not—I mean, we've had, certainly, some very wet years in 2014, 2011, and when that happens, we do run into some problems with nutrient loads that come off agricultural landscape. In those same years, of course, we have heavy rainfall within the city of Winnipeg, and we have overloads in our—in the city of Winnipeg system, and we have waste water that goes through the storm sewers, because the systems are not completely separated, and we have problems there too.

And if you look at the amount of nutrient that follows years like that and the data out of Lake Winnipeg, you do see significant jumps in the nutrient level, and of course that contributes in a significant way to algae blooms within the lake, usually not in that year but the following year. There seems to be a one-year time lag involved in that. And they say, well, that's an agricultural problem.

I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that that is a Manitoba problem. It is not just from the agricultural landscape; it comes from a number of different sources. And I remember, didn't agree all the time with the minister—first minister of Water Stewardship, the member from Thompson, but he did say one thing that I will agree with. At a time, he said it was 1.2 million; I would submit now that we're almost up to 1.3 million, point sources are the source of nutrient loads in this province, one for every one of us. And if you're not prepared to do your bit, you will never solve this problem. Trying to find someone else to blame it on is simply not the way that this is done.

And that's what we repeatedly see from this government. Let's blame someone, and maybe the electorate will believe what we're saying, and maybe we can talk our way through this environmental issue

one more time. But will we actually deal with it? Not a chance, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I know that you enjoy a cabin and on a very pristine lake, and you would hate to see that lake become contaminated. *[interjection]* Nothing wrong with having a cabin on a lake, believe me, Mr. Speaker. And I would know that—I'm sure that you would hate to see that lake become contaminated because someone didn't care. I think that we all need to step up and show that we care, and I would submit that we—the agricultural sector has been one of the areas that has done the most to deal with nutrient loading and change their management to try and minimize this. They've done it through filing the paperwork that this government never looked at again. They've done it through changing their agricultural practices, spending money on technology. They've done it by changing the way they manage the landscape. They've done it by changing the type of agricultural practices that they do. The nature of crops out there are quite different. We've done it by going to zero till, which has certainly been very positive in terms of reducing the amount of erosion and actually probably raising the carbon levels in the soil which has some—besides having some greenhouse gas benefits, it also has a nutrient retention benefit. You tie up more carbon in the soil; also, the nutrients are tied up with that.

So we've seen some sectors take significant steps forward on this, but we haven't seen results that we would like to see. And I submit it's because this government really does not understand what they are doing with water management because they don't understand the interrelationship between water and the landscape, and they don't want to work with the people that manage the landscape in this province, which is almost entirely the agricultural community.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are many others that want to speak to this because it is actually an important issue for Manitobans, but I—*[interjection]* Yes, I fear that this government has a long way to go yet in beginning to understand how to manage nutrients and this problem.

Thank you.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put a few words on Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act. I believe—like, I was elected for a short term of about two years, and probably the three biggest issues that we face in my constituency of Arthur-Virden is, one, health care, shortage of doctors; second is infrastructure, the crumbling of

our highways and our bridges; and the third one is water stewardship and conservation. I really believe that we have to look after our waterways, and one of the biggest events that I had to deal with was the flood of 2014. I was just newly elected in January, and the first thing that I had to face was—right after the spring session was our flooding that happened in end of June, early July.

And that was a wake-up call of what we have in our—in this province and what the important is of water stewardship. I learned so much in that short period of time when that flood happened. In the month of July, I think I was—probably I had a big learning curve when it came to water stewardship and some of the issues that we're facing in our constituency.

One of the biggest—I think one of the biggest things I faced in April was Whitewater Lake, how big an issue it is for Manitobans that not too many Manitobans even know about. We always hear about Devils Lake and how much, you know, sulfates and stuff go into that lake and how concerning it is to

have that water drain into the Red River watershed into Lake Winnipeg. Well, the other thing is we always hear about Devils Lake, but, you know, we have our own Devils Lake in Manitoba, which is Whitewater. And one of the biggest issues of Whitewater, Mr. Speaker, was that this failing—this government failing to have solutions for that lake. Many, many times throughout the years—they had 17 years to deal with it.

The biggest—in 1999, they got new—they were elected as—in government. And that was when the water issue started in our constituency, when the—we had the wet years in 1999. And that's was the start with lake—Whitewater Lake years ago, before 1999, in the '90s—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk) will have 27 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, February 29, 2016

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